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## The New Hungarian Quarterly

**Literature in a Changing Society** — *Miklós Óvári, György Aczél,  
Tibor Déry, Gyula Illyés, Zoltán Zelk*

**A New Civilization Model?** — *József Bognár*

**European Social Democracy** — *János Berecz*

**Exchange Rate Policy** — *János Fekete*

**The Collective Farm and the Private Plot** — *István Lázár*

**On Petöfi and on the Translation of Poetry** —  
*Kenneth McRobbie, William Jay Smith*

**Cardinal Lékai on Church and State**

63

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

*This issue went to press on May 31, 1976.*

## CULTURE, ECONOMY AND BABIES

**T**he General Meeting of the Hungarian Writers' Association took place after this issue went to press. The already overburdened printers kindly agreed to the necessary changes in schedule. As a result these pieces, which describe Hungarian cultural policy as a whole, are now placed at the head of our present number.

For centuries literature has had greater social weight in Hungary than in the English-speaking countries. As a result writers have had greater social responsibilities as well. The relationship between writers and the country's political leadership has always been a reliable measure of the mood of the country as a whole, and not only of intellectuals. This relationship today is sound, constructive, and based on mutual trust, as repeatedly stated by both parties at the General Meeting of the Hungarian Writers' Association on May 17th and 18th 1976. Three hundred and sixteen of the four hundred and sixty-seven members turned up and took part in the election of the new executive. Proceedings were opened by the poet Gábor Garai, the Deputy General Secretary, later elected General Secretary by the meeting. Those present remembered writers who had died since the last meeting, including József Darvas, the President, by a minute's silence. The novelist Imre Dobozy, General Secretary later elected President, in his report surveyed the literary life and works of the years since the last General Meeting, going on to present problems and future prospects. "What should we demand of ourselves? . . . What does the generation to which we belong expect from us, a generation which determined to carry out the largest and most far-reaching enterprise in the history of Hungary, the construction of socialism, a generation which thinks of us not only as their contemporaries but as their very own writers? Who else should then express and record their own struggles in an authentic and high-standard way?" he asked.

As the relationship of writers and power in a socialist country periodi-

cally attracts the attention of public opinion in the West, we thought that publishing two speeches—in slightly abridged form—held at the Meeting by leading Party and Government representatives, would interest our readers. Both are broad, authoritative statements of cultural policy, spelling out clear indications of what is expected from writers within the framework of creative freedom and responsibilities to society. Three letters, addressed to the Meeting by Grand Old Men who were unable to attend complement the addresses.

\*

As we go to press two months have passed since the “population clock” in the Chicago Museum of Science jumped to 4,000 million. The precise time was 9.15 p.m. local time on March 28th 1976. Demographers, extrapolating as is their wont, predict 6,500 million for the year 2000 and 12,000 for 2100.

Today therefore, thanks to accelerated time, anxieties and ideas concerning the immediate and more distant future must be accorded greater urgency. This is the time when openly calling a spade a spade one must ask: what has to be done to turn the achievements of science into everyday technology since that is the only way in which a humanity increasing geometrically can solve the vital problems of today—and not the day after tomorrow—without any sort of Malthusian methods or Swiftian devouring of babies.

József Bognár heads the World Economy Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. As such he is closely concerned with relations between the developing and the developed world. In an article which opens this issue, he describes a “new civilisation model” and suggests a number of ways of coping with these fateful problems. József Bognár starts with the changed relationship between human action and nature, that is the dangers, threatening the ecological equilibrium, going on to further develop ideas concerning the Two Cultures that C.P. Snow first drew attention to close to twenty years ago.

An article on the journal *Demográfia* concentrates on Hungary but the social changes discussed must surely be of interest beyond the country's frontiers. This is a survey of the contents of the latest issue, and therefore of those demographic trends which took shape as a result of the population policy measures taken by the Hungarian government some years ago. It ought to be mentioned there that up to the end of the sixties what Hungary feared was not a population explosion but that the low birth-rate would not ensure the reproduction of the workforce. This negative trend was reversed by family allowances and privileges, improvements in the housing situation, the “child care allowance”—working women who

stay at home with their babies are entitled to for two and a half years—and which together with five months paid maternity leave, ensures a monthly income extending over three years of looking after the family.

\*

Social Democratic parties form the governments or part of government coalitions in a number of countries in Europe and are important political factors even where in opposition. There are a great many reasons—including the future of European cooperation in the spirit of Helsinki—which emphasize the importance of the nature of the relationship that prevails between these parties and the Socialist countries and their Communist parties. In “European Social Democracy in the Period of Détente”, János Berecz who heads the Foreign Relations Section of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, discusses the Western European Social Democratic Parties all the way from the British Labour Party to the Austrian Social-Democrats in a sober and well-intentioned critical spirit. The article which first appeared in *Társadalmi Szemle*, the monthly journal of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, points to this particular way in which the dialogue between the two parts of Europe could be strengthened.

János Fekete, Vice-President of the Hungarian National Bank deals with other, economic, aspects of East-West relations. His subject is the way in which the *forint*, the Hungarian currency, is fitted into the fast-moving spectrum of the current international foreign exchange market, reacting to its fluctuations while maintaining economic stability at home.

The Bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence is not the domestic business of the US alone but an international event. The birth of the US, and the growth of its economic and political power, did a great deal to change the balance of power of the world. Considering a proper way of remembering the two hundred years old events in the light of American-Hungarian relations, it became clear that we could not confine ourselves to the Declaration itself and to the years of the American Revolution. Though Hungarians did fight under Washington, and their names form part of the record, the importance of its ideas was much greater. It continued to inspire those who dwelt in Habsburg oppressed Hungary for many a year. Aladár Urbán’s article, which heads those on the subject, provides evidence of the degree to which the practice and principles of the Age of Reform early in the nineteenth century, and of the 1848/9 revolution in Hungary were influenced by those of the American Revolution. We also print a piece by a Hungarian born American couple, Theodore and Helene Benedek Schoenman on Sándor Bölöni Farkas, the “Hungarian

Tocqueville" who travelled in America in the 1830s, and described the political ideas and practice of a modern, bourgeois society for the benefit of Hungarian readers who were trying to rid themselves of the shackles of feudalism. A volume of letters and notes by János Xantus, another Hungarian who travelled in America around that time, appeared in 1975 in the Schoenman couple's English version.

\*

The present, like every issue of the NHQ, contains fictions, verse, criticism etc. since the literary approach to Hungarian reality has always proved effective. In our last issue we started a poetry parade, containing material from an anthology to be published in the near future in the US. On this occasion we publish versions of poems by Gyula Illyés, József Tornai, Szabolcs Várady, translated by William Jay Smith as well as five poems by Zoltán Zelk translated by Barbara Howes. These are followed by the text of a conversation between William Jay Smith and István Bart, on problems of translation and producing versions in another language that are poems in their own right. Contemporary short fiction in this issue is by Gábor Thurzó and Gergely Rákosy.

\*

Another interview was conducted by an MTI staff member with László Lékai, the new Archbishop of Esztergom and Primate of Hungary who has since been created Cardinal by Pope Paul VI. Cardinal Lékai describes the position of the Roman Catholic Church and its relationship to the socialist state and socialist society with great precision and understanding. The press survey which on this occasion reports on church papers published in Hungary, supplements the picture with information on the other denominations as well.

\*

This issue once again contains a number of articles dealing with Hungarian reality in a more direct way. István Lázár's interesting, informative and straight-talking article is about Hungarian agriculture, which once was a source of many problems but which has lately progressed with great success. The role, present and future, of household plot farming by cooperative members and state farm workers has figured to a considerable degree in the western press of recent years. We are convinced that our readers will appreciate Lázár's *engagé* arguments that stick to the facts throughout and that bring out many aspects that are not widely known.

\*



Opening the Books and Authors section László Ferenczi writes on collected and abandoned verse by Gyula Illyés, and Kenneth McRobbie, a Canadian poet and academic who frequently contributes verse translations and articles, on Illyés's biography of Petőfi which recently appeared in English translation, as well as on a volume of selections from Petőfi's prose, chosen by Béla Köpeczi.

New Protestant and Catholic Hungarian Bible translations recently appeared in quick succession. Éva Ruzsiczky, who acted as linguistic advisor to the translators, writes on the Catholic Bible translation, an article on the Protestant one is scheduled for a later issue. A Hungarian linguistic project of extraordinary importance was accomplished by Attila T. Szabó, a retired professor of the University of Kolozsvár. In work that extended over a number of decades he collected material on the history of the language spoken by 2.5 million Hungarians in Transylvania. The fruit of his labours, "The Etymological Dictionary of Transylvanian Hungarian" is being issued by Kriterion of Bucharest. Samu Imre has contributed a review of the first volume published recently. Zoltán Iszlai, a regular contributor, writes on recent Hungarian prose fiction.

A piece on Imre Nagy, the Transylvanian Hungarian painter's Budapest exhibition, was contributed by György Horváth. János Frank and Zoltán Nagy, who regularly write on art for this paper, discuss exhibitions of textiles and graphic art respectively. Desiderius Orbán, the Hungarian born grand old man of Australian art, is the subject of an article by Iván Dévényi.

The Theatre and Film section offers more than usual thanks to an article which goes back early beginnings describing the present in terms of a long developmental process. O. W. Riegel carries out this anamnesis for Hungarian films. Notices of recent plays and films by Levente Osztovcics and József Tornai add a timely note. Frank Lipsius writes on the Budapest State Puppet Theatre.

We rarely manage a punchline at the back of the paper, such as the text of a conversation between Professor Denijs Dille, one of the founders of the Bartók Archives in Budapest, and Imre Antal who is on the staff of Hungarian television, which touches on little known aspects of Bartók's life and work, as the occasions are recalled when the great musician and the Belgian musicologist met. Dezső Keresztury's meditations on Bartók's Prince Bluebeard are published in conjunction with photographs by Károly Gink, while Denise Bacon who did so much for the Kodály method in America, writes on her work and results she has achieved.

# LITERATURE IN A CHANGING SOCIETY

## THE WRITER IN THE COMMUNITY

by

MIKLÓS ÓVÁRI

**I**t is my task to express the greetings and best wishes of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party to the General Meeting of the Hungarian Writers' Association. I do so secure in the knowledge that this meeting will well serve our common inseparable objectives, the continuing socialist transformation of Hungarian society, and the promotion of Hungarian culture, and of Hungarian literature which is part of it.

I feel certain that there is every justification to speak of the *common* aims and objectives of the Party and of writers. The letter and spirit of the rules of the Association entitles me to do so, as does the written report distributed by the steering committee, supplemented orally by Imre Dobozy, and so do all those conversations and conferences which prepared this General Meeting, sometimes in a brooding mood, at other times buoyantly, but generally filled with a sense of responsibility and an intention to improve.

The ordinary literary round, the sense of responsibility and confession of faith present in what is written, and commitment expressed towards the socialist present and future of the Hungarian nation offer even further justification for my usage.

Taking these common aims as a starting point it will not perhaps seem a digression that I do not intend to discuss literary problems in the first place leaving them to others present who can speak with greater authority, but those questions which basically define the position of the country and its people, and therefore also the context in which Hungarian literature lives and grows. If it were torn from that soil it would waste away without roots.

Let me start with a few generally known facts. There are no exploiting classes in Hungary today, no irreconcilable class antagonisms. The foundations of socialism have been laid and consolidated. Under the aegis of

building socialism national unity has come true in a manner that never was, nor could be, in the past. The conditions are present for all sections of society to come closer to each other still, lessening, and finally putting an end to altogether all essential differences between town and country and between manual and white-collar work.

I am well aware we have not reached that stage yet, nor can we say that we are close to the target. But there is plenty of evidence to show that socialism can create national unity of the highest order, and we are also entitled to claim that we are moving in the right direction, on the way to the desired goal.

One should not forget that, in the thirty odd years since the Liberation, the country has succeeded in overcoming the backwardness of centuries. The figures speak for themselves. In thirty years national income increased fivefold and agricultural production by 60 per cent, and standards of living rose accordingly. Those of us who were there "some with the plough, some with a hammer, some with the pen", or who only smiled and contributed a few kind words, know what efforts those cold figures conceal, and let's say it, what sacrifices.

It turned out that our work and struggle was not in vain, and though our numbers are not like those of sand on the shore "soul, and a free people work wonders!" I do not think it out of turn, let alone shameful conformism abandoning intellectual independence, if such achievements are recognised and honoured, achievements that are our common work and due to the efforts of the people as a whole.

It is in the full awareness of all this that we train our sights on what remains to be done, facing up to the stubborn relics of the past, day after day, patiently, if need be in anger fighting imported cashew-nuts,\* or the latest home-grown crop, our own errors and weaknesses.

The Party's 11th Congress confirmed and further developed a policy that took shape over a period of twenty years, a policy proved in practice and supported by the people. A plan to create a developed socialist society was elaborated, one which opens the gates wide to creative thought and action. A realistic Five Year Plan is in operation which, even in more difficult conditions, ensures the soundly based growth of the economy and, therefore, improvements in the standard of living and that of available social and cultural facilities.

\* In the spring of 1976 the writer Bulcsu Bertha argued in an article that shops were full of expensive imported cashew nuts that no one wanted. He cited other instances of miscalculation, inefficiency, and disorganization, visible in the day-to-day working of the economy. A lively press debate followed in which numerous writers, economists, and others described their own "cashew nuts" experiences, also proposing solutions, thus turning cashew nuts into a sort of symbol.

The cause of national independence and social progress often coincided earlier in the turning points of Hungarian history. Neither could be consistently realised without the other. Fighting for independence and social progress always closely linked Hungarians and the progressive forces of the world. This was as true in 1848 as in 1919. In 1848/49 when the fires of revolution were burning longest on Hungarian soil Engels wrote: "The war soon lost its early national nature, and it was precisely an apparently most national step, the declaration of independence, which clearly gave it a European character."

It is a source of justified national pride that, following the October Revolution, a hundred thousand Hungarians fought on the Soviet side, and that, in 1919, the Hungarian Republic of Councils was amongst the first to follow the example of Soviet Russia.

Unfortunately we know as well that the 1848/9 Revolution reached its peak in Hungary when Europe was quiet already. In 1919 the revolutionary upheaval was still on but it was also the year of the great counter-revolutionary counter-attack. In the past international conditions generally did not favour the Hungarian fight for independence and social progress.

Today the situation has changed. We belong to the camp of progressive forces. The ever more powerful community of socialist countries is our natural ally. Progressive forces throughout the world show confidence in and sympathy for what we are doing. This not only means great opportunities but also great responsibilities. We have to carry on in such a way that progressive forces should not feel we let them down. They are looking for answers to the great questions of the age and, trying to chart their own future course they keep a watchful eye on how our people fares as well.

For that very reason, using János Kádár's words, we are unshaken in our loyalty to our national interests and feelings, symbolically speaking to the Red, White and Green, our flag, but to the Red Flag as well which expresses international solidarity. The two are indivisible in the way of thinking of our people.

Patriotism and internationalism are unimaginable without each other. Those who reject the Red Flag of the working class and socialism, which every revolutionary from Petőfi to the Communists called his own, cannot be true patriots, on the contrary, they do harm to the interests of their people. Nor, on the other hand, and in the same way, can one be faithful to socialism and to the international unity of progressive forces, if he loves not his own people, and his immediate surroundings, the men and women with whom he lives and at whose side he fights and works.

All of us who are Communists, or non-communists and yet progressives,

can be proud that there is no period in Hungarian history like the present where so much was done to help national self-awareness to grow, so much in the service of national selfknowledge, and in nursing the progressive traditions of the Hungarian people. What is even more important: things are done as part of the workaday world which raise the people and the country to heights unknown, on the road of economic and cultural advancement. This has been so since the working class and its vanguard, the Communist Party, have shouldered responsibility for the nation as a whole.

One could also say, quoting the poet Gyula Illyés, that the country is now shielded against headwinds. I do not like to explain someone else's words, this expression however calls to mind two things.

One is that the age of the great battles of the class war has come to an end in Hungary. When there was need to fight, we fought, for that was what the interests of the people demanded. But the Hungarian working class and Hungarian Communists brought not only the sword but pacification as well, as soon as it was feasible.

The Hungarian people has suffered more than enough in the course of its history. No one can promise a carefree life even now, but for that very reason everyone who loves the people must do his best not to demand unnecessary sacrifices from anyone, or unnecessary suffering, nor if possible, should they cause anyone unnecessary vexation.

There is a duty to try and live up to this, though the truth is that this does not always happen, or every time.

One can speak of being shielded against headwinds also, at least that is my opinion, because a lasting peace has been assured to the country, and that is a necessary condition of constructive work. Hungary, due to its location in Europe, has seldom been by-passed by armies on the march. Whenever the stormclouds gathered over Europe, and it rarely happened that they did not, the storm tore and beat Hungary as well.

There has been peace in Europe for over thirty years now. This is not the work of chance, nor the gracious gift of fate, but the result of a radical change in international power-relations.

The situation is maintained by the unity of the partisans of peace, and their determination not to let humanity rush into a suicidal war.

The Hungarian people has every right to feel proud that it succeeded in creating and maintaining this situation using its own strength and thanks to the stability of the political system. If what we wish is that the people should continue to live shielded against headwinds as it well deserves, then inner unity must be strengthened, and material resources

must be increased, as well as moral values. We must join forces with progressive and peace-loving movements throughout the world, since peace, as well as social progress, are the common cause of the whole of humanity. Neither can be secured for ourselves alone.

To address the general meeting of Hungarian writers on the present position of the country, its progress and prospects, is, I am convinced, more than politics. A knowledge of social reality, and its study through art has always been a necessary part of creative work. What has been here said in the idiom of politics is expressed by you in another and irreplaceable method of seizing hold of reality, and that is the language of art, more precisely literature. The status and vocation of literature always commit it to a specific reflection of social reality and to the support of progress. In all the centuries of Hungarian literature it ever fought for social progress and national independence; its efforts were based on the strength of the people, increasing that in turn. In the thirty years since the Liberation it also bore witness of its strength by lasting artistic experiences which set a monument to the progress and advancement which socialism has meant in the life of Hungarians, not neglecting the conflicts, errors, and often bitter struggles.

Literature is facing new and difficult tests these days. It must not only keep up with changing social reality, something that is not easy, it must learn to cope with new problems, more complex than the earlier ones, as developed socialism is being constructed. Progress, and the multiplication of material and intellectual goods, offers prospects of a more meaningful and more colourful life but, at the same time, it makes it more difficult to find one's way. Higher standards and an extension of choice and decision taking make greater demands on consciousness, education, morality and taste. Increasing independence, self-awareness, and power to represent its interests of smaller collectives makes it necessary to learn how to cope with the coordination of narrow and more general interests in an unprecedented manner. Given security and stability it is still necessary to take care of dynamic growth, and to ensure that the whole of society is prepared for action and initiative. Communal life, the flowering of socialist democracy and the enrichment of the inner resources of the personality stir hitherto unknown psychological aspects into action and call conflicts into existence.

The working class and the peasantry, the Hungarian people as a whole which creates the new reality day after day, through work and struggle, put a whole series of questions of this sort. Writers and artists are expected to provide the answer. Doing so through works is the pledge of the inner

growth of literature. What ensures true creative originality and permanence, innovating art forms in a meaningful and authentic way, rendering the relationship between writers and readers more extensive and intimate is following the line of the revolution which society is undergoing.

That is why in my view, in Hungary today, the general meeting of the Writers' Association, if it wishes to do its job, must in the first place think through the relationship between literature and reality. The literary rank, social role and vocational fulfilment of Hungarian writing depend on that in the first place; that is the measure of its situation, and it is on that basis that concrete tasks can be outlined.

You are more familiar with the problems writers meet with in their work. What should arrest the attention of us all however is that approaching reality through art now, as always, has attitudinal and ideological preconditions. In this age, when a new society is under construction, it is particularly true that social-awareness, identification in work with the lives, anxieties and joys of those who work on constructing socialism and, based on this, a sense of responsibility aware of the influence exercised by literature on the lives of men, are all essential aids in creative literary work.

The ideas of Marxism-Leninism are present in an intensive way in Hungarian literary life. This is proved also by those achievements which were highly praised by the Party's 11th Congress, which Imre Dobozy had every right to mention in his report. It would be a mistake however not to note that there is attitudinal doubt in the way the new questions are answered, ambiguity and mistakes occur. This new testing period has led to a retreat here and there.

Perhaps a reminder that the basic principles of policy on literature remain unchanged is, for that very reason, not amiss. Unambiguous support is granted to realist literature inspired by socialism. We expect and demand an expression in art, rooted in reality, of socialist ideals, the work of the people creating a new life, and of social progress. We reject the dogmatic view of art and continue to make room for every truly valuable, humanist, work. Such a broadly based policy presupposes however, and even demands, that Marxist criticism should fully carry out its job, offering guidance on matters of principle, and establishing a hierarchy of values. There is no need for an apologetic attempt to gild the lily, or for the sort of veneer which only destroys credibility.

It is the right and duty of literature to discover and criticize everything that is opposed to socialist principles and that is not in keeping with the norms of morality or of public life, all negativist generalization, cynicism, or literature that deliberately turns its back on social questions

will continue to be rejected. A literature that ceaselessly grows richer in style, methods and form is receiving all possible aid, and meaningful experiments are encouraged. Everything is done to help access to valuable new forms on the part of sections of the public who have not become habituated to them, socialist society cannot however be the home of an empty formalism that conceals poverty of content, or of literature that cannot be understood because it has no meaning; it cannot, on the other hand be the home of a conservatism either which uses the fight against formalism as an excuse, nor of drabness, and efforts to impose uniformity.

Every writer and critic is competent not only when it comes to literature, but also in the discussion of comprehensive or day by day public questions, giving full expression to his political and ideological responsibility.

The active participation of writers in public discussion has, in the past as well, helped socialist social self-knowledge, contributing to clearing up more than one essential question, in theory and practice. Democratic political life demands such activity, if possible even more so in future.

I am convinced that the community of writers does not merely support the basic principles of literary policy, it also agrees that the stress should be on the affirmative, forward-looking and unity creating aspects and not the denying and rejecting ones. They are nevertheless valid integrally. It would be a pity to gloss over politely that there is need to argue against certain views and notions under the aegis of the Party's policy of alliances, such discussions having both an aesthetic and an ideological and political nature.

Marxist literary criticism must base its arguments more effectively than heretofore on realism, commitment to the people and partisanship. I think there is a need to prove that links based on mutual trust between politics and literature grew stronger in the past fifteen to twenty years not in spite of but thanks to these principles.

In my view it is beyond doubt that the tried and proven literature policy, insisting on continuity and enrichment, of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party contributed to the literary successes and achievements of the sixties and seventies. One must not neglect this, though there were misunderstandings, tensions, conflicts and arguments in ways of looking at new tasks and new contradictions, however mutually fertilizing and replete with confidence that relationship was and is. Such contradictions and problems are discussed with a sense of responsibility and yet there is every justification for putting the stress on basic unity and on collective action coming true in the building of developed socialism.

What then can be, and should be the most important objective of



literature in the social situation outlined, and under conditions that so favour Hungarian intellectual life?

Summing up it is obviously the job of literature to aid and abet the creation of a developed socialist society; to assist the extensive growth of socialist democracy, the creation of a state of harmony between individuals and the community, the complex growth of the personality, and the general implementation of new socialist norms of behaviour which are in many respects already in existence, as well as a further rise in educational and cultural standards. It is no secret, we are always open about our aims, that everything is done using persuasive arguments and action of paradigmatic force to bring about a situation where the whole of the Hungarian people is ready to call the ideas of scientific socialism, and the ideology of Marxism-Leninism its own.

The creation of unity amongst writers was one of the principal themes of Imre Dobozy's report; with every justification, I think. The basis of this unity is our national programme, the building of a developed socialist society, and the commitment of writers to such aims. The implementation of this programme is the true existential question of the socialist Hungarian nation.

Is it possible to think of a nobler and more beautiful task for Hungarian intellectual life, for Hungarian literature then working together with the whole of society, integrated with the people, fulfilling its high calling by taking the same road ahead.

## CREATIVE DISCONTENTS

by

GYÖRGY ACZÉL

**P**oets preceded me. I shall speak in prose about prosaic things which, I imagine, will stay with us awhile yet, long after this beautiful day in May has gone.

A difficult road lies ahead. This is true for a number of reasons but also because, as Tibor Déry put it, we can all be united in accepting the socialist system of our country as our own. It might sound funny but it's true: the more we are united, the more we can permit ourselves to argue on some of the most important questions affecting us.

I shall start with something which, I think, all of us agree on. Not only is there no alternative to détente and peace except destruction and death, but there is no bourgeois-liberal alternative to a socialism that has come true either. The people has conquered power and it has no choice, it must hang on to it in an age when what one has to ask is not what is worth dying for, but something more difficult, what is worth living for.

First let us look at those causes which are no longer the writers' business. It is an established Hungarian convention that writers first raise burning issues and first propose solutions that may be painful. That is how it was done for centuries. The defence of the Hungarian language, the Hungarian theatre, and good schools were such issues in the past, between the two wars the education of talented peasant children, and "the thousand ills the nation suffers from": infant mortality, single-child families, the land question, unemployment: in each case the alarm was first sounded in verse, in fiction, in the prose of writers. These days it is up to the Party and the government to look after such matters, but it does not follow that writers now play a lesser role. The very contrary is the case, the importance of literature and of the part it is called to play has grown. Those questions, however, which only writers could raise in the difficult times between the two world wars are now the business of the people's power. In their solution writers join in as all citizens do, and not because of some special vocation.

Early in this sitting we listened to the roll call of the dead of six years. One could not take it easily, there were many talented, tested, outstanding men and women amongst them, enough to make up a Writers' Association. Many who were amongst us at the last General Meeting six years ago now have streets named after them, their works and their memories are still with us. Going back further still we remember men who are now literary classics who fell victim to war and fascism in their thirties. Death kept them young. I ought to add to this list that I hope we do not cause each other unnecessary trouble and anxiety thus further lengthening the roll call of the dead at the next General Meeting. I am not describing an idyll, as you will hear, but I do not want to cause anyone unnecessary anxiety.

I have been reading the minutes of Writers' Association General Meetings going back twenty-five years, not for the first time, I did so in 1957, and now once again. What makes it clear how much things have changed since the 1951 Writers' Congress is that there is no pseudo-unity now. There are questions that are debated in a lively way now, and this is true though we do not always know how to argue.

May I make a short confession now? There was no real opportunity to do so before, and I am not fond of the genre. I was not given a chance to err at the 1951 constituent General Meeting of the Writers' Association. If I had been there, I would have erred as well. It would be presumptuous to pretend that I always saw perfectly well what was going on in the world. I was never ashamed to admit—I told the story at a 1962 meeting of the Central Committee—that I had no chance to cheer Rákosi in those difficult times, but I would have done so, for I believed in him. What would be shameful is to deny that faith today, or to stick stubbornly to the fallen idol. That a man should face up to his own past self can be accepted from both writers, and others, but to deny past mistakes and pretend that we never made an error, is not worthy of any of us.

There is something one now and again feels in this hall, and beyond it. Pseudo-debates are often mentioned. In Anna Karenina Tolstoy describes how Anna, not long before she took her own life, drinking tea, becomes aware that Vronsky took note of her manners with aversion since by then Vronsky felt aversion for everything she did. Sometimes I feel that the way to get rid of unpleasant emanations in literature is to recognise right at the start that table manners do not matter. Let's try at least not to look for that which makes us reject each other. The people and literature find it difficult to put up with these unpleasant arguments, what they want is good debates. That is why I should like to refer to a number of subjects for discussion.

One such subject could well be the major public issues, standards of living, the implementation of the Five Year Plan, the furthering of socialist democracy which it is the business of writers to emphathize and describe. In other words the relationship between politics and literature, and the place of literature in society. Miklós Óvári mentioned this and I should like to amplify. A huge problem in this country, referred to by a number of writers who spoke here, was the rise of the working class and of the peasantry, and the welding together of the working class, the peasantry, and professional people, what sociologists call social mobility. That workers, peasants, and professional people are members of one family. Seventy-two per cent of Hungarian extended families now have what is called a mixed character, including peasants, workers, teachers, engineers, public servants and clerks. I wish I knew the literary work which displays every joy but every pain as well of this process. Where one can read how difficult and painful restratification, or changing ways of life can be for some even if one moves upward on the social scale.

#### *New human problems*

There is another connected anxiety. I am very sorry that the number of pigs and cattle kept on household plot farms has declined. Don't look at me as if I had gone off my head, as if I wanted to get back to the production literature of the 'fifties. No. I should like to talk about another aspect of the problem.

One million and seven hundred thousand families engage in household plot farming.\* Socialism really cares about the prospects of the old. Who worries about what is going to happen to those one million seven hundred thousand families if they are merely payed a pension, even a tenfold pension? Who thinks of those who need something to get up for mornings? Who wrote up the tragedy of the chairman of the Bóly Producers' Co-operative? When he was retired, he was a member of parliament and his pension was large, and yet he died after two and a half months. He said in hospital at Pécs: "I am perishing because there was nothing to get up for in the morning!" This problem did not exist earlier. There was a time when people based their lives on getting a job on the railways when 18 so they could get a pension at 60. The lengthening of the expectation of life is a great joy but it causes headaches also. It is a source of anxiety to writers as well. If we do not want a gerontocracy then the old must be fairly dealt

\* For a more detailed discussion see István Lázár's article on p. 61. of this issue.

with. The only way to make room for the young is to give scope to the old to lead creative lives. This is a great subject for the theatre and fiction alike.

New problems thus arise in socialism which writers and politicians must both cope with.

The past is often mentioned in literary works, and it has been mentioned here, at this meeting. There are many kinds of problems in Hungarian history, I entirely agree with the prose poem Ferenc Juhász read to you. Everyone must make a choice. One can't be both Dózsa and Werbőczy!\* One or the other. Both are historical figures but it does not follow that we identify equally with both.

Let no-one misinterpret Attila József. He wrote that Werbőczy and Dózsa swirl in this heart but his whole life shows that this means sickness and health, and not two traditions, two heritages with which we can equally identify.

The facts must be respected but the facts can only provide the truth in their proper order.

Or take another major problem: housing. There are not enough dwellings. I do not propose to discuss the housing problem at this stage, but please bear in mind that the very day someone moves to a new house, household appliances are needed, books are needed, if I may use a fashionable expression, living space has to be given a human face. The decision is hesitant and they buy books. Jókai's works.\*\* This upsets highbrows. But have we done enough to give us the right to trumpet about the dangers the people is in because they like Jókai? I am not a Jókai fan, and yet I only wish Jókai's works, and Gárdonyi's\*\*\* were there in the bookless houses in those four thousand flats in the new town of Leninváros-Tiszaszederkény, so people there would start to read. For the first time in history intellectual culture has become an existential need. We have not, unfortunately, as yet been able to satisfy this demand.

We have not yet prepared neither our people nor ourselves for the fact that every task accomplished gives birth to new contradictions that things were not idyllic, nor will they become that. When something is complete and done with, new problems have to be faced. This goes for humanity, and for the Hungarian nation and socialist Hungary as well.

\* György Dózsa (?-1514) led the 1514 Hungarian peasant rebellion. István Werbőczy (1458-1541) jurist and high official, author of the *Tripartitum* (1517), a compilation of the law of the land including the repressive measures taken after the suppression of Dózsa's revolt.

\*\* Mór Jókai (1825-1904) Author of more than a hundred historical romances that are still in favour with readers.

\*\*\* Géza Gárdonyi (1863-1933) A poet and writer whose historical novels are still much read by young teenagers.

I think this is a good General Meeting. As I see it, here the writers can put up with each other all right, standing up well to the debate and even to recriminations. I should still like to draw attention to the fact that we've got something to lose. It pays to be united. Power has its dangers and it will always have them. The time will never come when everything is conquered. The road ahead is very difficult in many respects, because the path is still untrod. This goes for ways of life, the way living conditions shape, and much else.

Allow me to play the spoilsport and discuss another question. Thank you for the many kind words addressed to the government; I do so in the name of my colleagues as well. But add something to what has been said. We did not deal in heads to achieve unity with writers, scientists or artists, we did not buy backbones. We did our best to argue honestly with everybody, fighting if need be, but staying on good terms if possible. But we did not promise a villa, or a building plot to anyone, nor an office. Nothing at all. Not a single head was sacrificed to create the illusion of popularity.

Having said so much that is awkward, what I shall say now will pass as well. Why don't you feel as well as you should? To quote the "cashew nuts"\* debate which went on in the pages of *Élet és Irodalom* for some weeks. For my part I don't believe that there ever will be a general meeting, and God preserve us from such a one, where they say: How wonderfully we all feel, how happy our lives are. It will be an ill day if that should happen. There is a contradiction in socialism which does not operate under capitalism. Babits\*\* already complained in a preface he wrote in 1938 for the János Vajda Society\*\*\* anthology that there were too many versifiers and too few poets. There is no properly operating system of selection. And it is needed. Let hundreds start on the way, but let them not be stuck there if they lack the proper talents. This is something worth discussing in greater detail on another occasion.

I should like to tell you that a special anxiety comes over me and I don't now mean this in the sense of a tricky sort of fear—when, around the first of the month, the thousand odd pages of the literary monthlies (*Kortárs, Új Írás, Mozgó Világ, Vigilia, Tiszatáj, Jelenkor, Nagyvilág* and many others) keep coming in and one has to chew one's way through them. No peaks rise from it. This literature lacks those sensations, the way a good poem can appear like an explosion, or a good short fiction, or a really outstanding piece

\* See the footnote on page 9 to Miklós Óvári's article.

\*\* Mihály Babits (1883-1941) One of the most respected literary figures in Hungary between the two wars. A noted poet and translator, as well as a critic and writer of prose fiction.

\*\*\* János Vajda Society (1926-1952) A progressive literary society named after a great nineteenth-century poet. The popularisation of literature and art was one of its major aims.

of criticism. It is a huge mass. Western papers say our desk drawers are filled with great quantities of really good works. Where are they? The executives of publishing houses are here amongst us. They look for them, and search for them, but in vain.

I don't know the answer, but I do know that a literary life that is healthy and functions well would do a great deal to change things in this respect.

A young writer told me by way of reproach the price of how many cows Pál Szabó\* earned with his first book. I didn't check the figures, but at this moment I would sooner look at the other side. There is not a writer of the older generation who could not have taught him that you have got to work hard, and sit at your desk every day. Capitalism educated them to know that. It taught Gyula Illyés to work in the National Bank; taught Géza Féja, Tibor Déry and everyone else; István Vas was taught to work in the office of the Standard Electric Works and in a Cannery. And yet I know a twenty-six year old young man who says today that "my creative powers as a writer cannot coexist with working in a job."

I am asking writers as a collective to help them to coexist. I am asking them to look at those older colleagues, and I feel moved as I say this, who do creative work and came along to the General Meeting of the Writers' Association, or who sent a written message, urged by a sense of duty. I would be good if such a sense of duty could be taught under socialism.

*"A Sure Pass"*

There is some kind of trouble in literature. Mediocrity is destructive. The "Certain Two" as schoolboys put it\*\*. Sometimes I long to read something really bad, something really bad that lets you see there is a certain talent at work there, and not all these works, certain of a Two. It would pay to give some attention to such unpopular matters from time to time. Let me say a few more words about the debates. I entirely agree with what Tibor Déry says in his letter; that getting together, establishing alliances, is a good thing, if this does not lead to cliques. Cliques kill that which creates schools and styles. You can't argue within a clique. We all know how seriously all those who wrote for *Nyugat* early this century argued with each other, what fights there were among those who contributed to that

\* Pál Szabó (1894-1970). A novelist and politician who was born as the son of poor peasants.

\*\* Five is the best mark in Hungary. Two is a bare pass.

journal. For that very reason *Nyugat* was able to generate a truly creative atmosphere. But you can't create that if: "Sir, you are a genius". "And you no less, Sir" is the way writers talk to each other.

It is frequently said that there are pseudodebates on the populist v. metropolitan issue. As the Burgomaster of Vienna, Lueger used to say: "Wer ein Jud' ist bestimm' ich". "I'll tell you who a populist is, and I shall determine who is metropolitan." That's false thinking, but false thinking is social thinking as well, that is why one has to say and do something against it. Action can also mean that those who travelled the same road, whose stylistic intentions are identical, are the only ones who can really criticize each other. It is they who understand the strength and weakness of each others works. Such action creates an atmosphere in which cliques fade away.

I think it would pay to deal with such things, in the workaday world of the various sections as well, and not only on such festive occasions.

Many here have praised the Party's policy of alliances. Let us not forget its meaning; we are ready to ally ourselves with say our Catholic writer and poet friends, János Pilinszky, György Rónay and many more, and friends of other ideologies, for the sake of socialism and a better life for the people. But I am well aware that socialism is the ideology of the great majority of the writers who are here present. Perhaps I am prejudiced, but I am ready to argue that socialist politics and socialist ideology alone can recognise and express the truth, and fight for it, without granting a monopoly position to any one trend. We proclaim that support for works of socialist inspiration is extraordinarily important since a socialist world view alone can give a true answer to the problems of man. But artistic value is not a minor matter when it comes to judging a work of art. I think it is important to mention this to show we can criticize ourselves too, and fight in support of that criticism. Many remember those jovial clashes, for instance as part of the 1958 populist writers debate. Many have forgotten however that it was a sort of recognition at the same time, homage paid to the creative, if you like. The polemics took place within that. Since then steps were taken to dissolve the Táncsics Circle, the alliance of those who did not agree with the resolution on populist writers. They wanted to exclude the populists from literary life and continued to insist on their Leftish reservations. That is an essential part of the whole truth.

Literary celebration and anniversaries were mentioned. As my writer friends know I am a passionate collector of manuscripts and I collect various curios as well. A beautiful example is a poster bearing the text: Celebrating



the 400th anniversary of the fall of Szigetvár.\* I don't think we ought to remember death in connection with Szigetvár. Let us remember Mohács when the time comes but let us not celebrate lost battles. Let us celebrate victories for there were such as well in our history. Let us celebrate creative work, and put all these things in order for ourselves.

Let me seize the occasion to say something about certain past conditions. Let me refer to something Lukács said first. He expected us to argue with him. And we did. We did so with all the respect due to a great creative mind, I could almost say paying homage. I would not say it if he were alive. Now there are some who will deny Lukács. Lukács has no need of us, we need Lukács, he created much of value for Hungarians and for socialism. Believe me, Lukács can take his time, but we cannot afford to dilly-dally as these values mature.

Attila József did not need a worthy celebration of his seventieth birthday, we did. He will stand up to the seventy-fifth as well. György Bálint\*\* added important hues to the Hungarian past. We need the intellectual heritage which György Bálint stands for. Let us try to integrate all the values. It is part of the huge strength of socialism that it integrates values.

#### *The national minorities*

A number of people talked to me during the break and raised the question of national minorities. Allow me to quote the letter Gyula Illyés wrote to the General Meeting. "...one of the greatest dangers to intellectual life in Europe and therefore to intellectual life as such is differentiating and discriminating between people on the basis of language or race, something that still ravages amongst the nations, humiliating men and impoverishing the life of the mind." He adds that the complexities of the question demand that the scalpel be wielded with great care. All our responsibilities are very great.

Attila József expressed our truth, and I am happy that our greatest socialist national poet could say about himself: "Turk, Tartar, Slovak, Rumanian turn together in this heart." It would be good if poets spoke like that everywhere.

\* Szigetvár in Southern Hungary long resisted the Turks, who besieged the castle in 1566. The last surviving defenders, headed by Miklós Zrínyi sacrificed, their lives during a last, hopeless sortie. Their heroism and death became the subject of a seventeenth-century epic.

\*\* György Bálint (1906-1943) An antifascist writer and critic. He was sent to the Eastern Front as a member of a punitive battalion, and died there.

We cannot engage in double book-keeping. Socialism cannot put up with that.

Lincoln said: you can fool some of the people some of the time, but not all the people all the time. The related Hungarian saying is that you can cheat one man often but many men only once. This applies to the whole method of socialist policy which operates with extraordinary finesse.

I should like to put it on record here as well that I believe in the power of socialism as the only solution to the Hungarian nationalities problem and that we are right when we say: Everyone can be a member of socialist Hungary, whether he speaks Hungarian, or Rumanian, or Slovak, or the *sokac* South Slav dialect. All these not only live together, but they are equal members of this country.

I should like to raise two more questions. One, to return to the discussion, is the following. Here, amongst us, the Marxist ideology predominates, that is why we are not afraid of arguments, not even extraordinarily acute debates. That is always presuming honesty in debate. Even when arguing with opponents, one can only do so honestly. My position is: I must first understand the person I am arguing with to allow me to disagree with him later.

Let me say once again that it is this art of debate that I miss, and it is this spirit that is needed, not groupings, but open debates. I am not afraid of such, the unity we have hammered out in over fifteen years can bear the strain of such debates.

Allow me to refer now to another question, to criticism. I am not as much of an optimist to demand, as someone did who spoke before me, that a critic ought to love literature. What I say is that he ought to love or hate it. Let him love good and hate evil. Let him not fight a man but evil, not offend the man but criticize the mistake committed.

Aladár Tóth\* said "I was unfair to Richard Strauss." Why? "When one had to fight for Bartók I did not do justice to Strauss." As far as I am concerned there is room for such honest unfairness which is not informed by the desire to serve a clique.

The truer our criticism is, the more thoroughly it goes into the essence of a work, the wider one can open the gates to it.

There is something else I should add. We must not allow criticism or scholarship to hide the work. There are many modern trends and God forbid that I should wish to be conservative, but when I hear of people these days counting the relationship of consonants and vowels to each other, trying

\* Aladár Tóth (1898-1968) A musicologist and critic, director of the Budapest State Opera between 1946 and 1956.

to periodicize Attila József's work in terms of the number of dark and clear vowels he used at the time, or when the socialist character of the message is related to the number of no-s used. I involuntarily associate that with the most ancient academism, the kind of stuff condemned by writers at the end of the nineteenth century, which tried to do much the same thing with other poets at the time.

We do not despise any sort of modern method, but if it is unable to make readers like good works and reject bad ones then criticism has no right to the name and should look for another.

The other was discussed by Miklós Óvári, and I should like to support that for the benefit of literature by just one more image. What we have now in Europe is the longest period of peace in the history of the world. We have learnt to live with danger in socialism. It is very difficult to learn how to live in peace and by peace.

#### *Socialist democracy*

We have to open the gates of the world and carry on along that bitter, hard and cruel road which we first took, the road of socialist democracy. Democracy is often mentioned. I should like to dispel a few illusions. Democracy is extraordinarily cruel and very difficult, inhumanly difficult. It has to be learnt. We must honestly put up with each other, and discuss questions which there was no need to discuss in the past. The personality cult had huge "advantages", to give an example: there was no need to think. This was an unbelievably great advantage. Democracy is merciless, but the people need it, literature needs it, socialism needs it. A more honest democratic atmosphere, where we respect each other even more, where we can argue without calling each other names, is needed not only at the work bench or in the producers' cooperative, not only in the village, but also in literature.

The relationship between the writer and political power, so fashionable a subject ten or twenty years ago—it inspired many a sound piece of work—is, I think, a thing of the past. The difference between us is that a writer cannot be appointed, we on the other hand are elected or appointed for a defined period of time. We do not appoint a writer to his office, nor can we take them away. Every one obtains or loses such things for himself.

We pledged ourselves to something, and I should like to remember that now. It was said at the first meeting of the twenty-three strong Central Committee on November 11th 1956: we will do everything to build a

socialist Hungary without spilling superfluous blood or tears, without superfluous sweat. I would be very pleased if we, acting together checked whether we are still true to the pledge we took then.

*"Why do we live?"*

I believe in something that many have tried to formulate better than I could, that history is asking "what are we living for?" now, in the closing quarter century of the millenium. Unfortunately the Bible does not provide a ready answer for us. We do not merely have to say why man is living but also how we should live, what one should call a meaningful life here, in socialist Hungary. There is no prefabricated answer, we could stick to. We know how to explain the world in a scientific way, and we have a programme based on this which guides our actions, but it is no prescription. No one can be excused from thinking or from taking part in the fight.

Years that will put our backbone to the test are ahead of us, my friends. Standards of living will rise slightly, but there will certainly be setbacks as well. Many families will have other problems as prosperity grows, a generation is leaving the "fair", another is coming in, and ideas must turn into ideals. There is great and flattering international interest in the work of this small nation. But I should like to believe that creative discontent will unite us midst these difficult problems.

I am convinced that the objective possibilities are given for us to find that answer which makes us worthy of the confidence which surrounds us.

The Hungarian national anthem is the only one in the world which contains lines such as "has this people paid yet for its past and future sins", the anthem of the working class on the other hand speaks of the oncoming final battle. Every year has its own "final battle"; but there are new ones the next. Perhaps the prophecy will really come true that we are beginning an age when we step from the realm of necessity into that of freedom. I said it in Paris but there is no reason why I should not repeat it in Budapest that the bourgeoisie has dropped "fraternity" from the triple slogan, they have not mentioned it for decades; they have dropped "equality", and they will drop "liberty", reasonable and responsible liberty; since that, like everything worthy of man is realised by socialism.

## THREE LETTERS

Allow me to transmit, on the occasion of your meeting, my brief but all the heartier good wishes, to my fellow writers, and those young colleagues, many of whom I unfortunately do not know. You will, I hope, excuse me for not expressing them in person.

I must ask you furthermore to excuse me for making a contribution claiming the rights of old age, even before the discussion started, to what must be one of the most interesting points of the discussion, and that though I do not take part in the everyday work of the Association. What I have in mind is the unity of writers, that is what we should understand by the unity of writers.

The answer seems simple enough. What we can all be united in is acceptance of the socialist system of the country, and in our commitment to it. Taking that as a basis, it becomes obvious however that no other kind of unity or bargaining can be imagined amongst writers who not only have a right, but let me stress, a duty as well to interpret the world in their own way, satisfied or dissatisfied, agreeing or rejecting in keeping with their character as artists. This is done not by stating things in a manner that brooks no contradiction but, since writers are a questioning lot, by what they chose to question, that is by the nature of the world's grievances or joys to which they direct the attention of readers by the questions they asked.

It may well be that a number of us think more or less in the same way about the business of the world, our own country in the first place. Clearly those of us who find ourselves treading the same path, form groups of friends more closely linked to each other than to our fellow writers. There is nothing wrong with this as long as such groups remain jovial alliances and do not turn into cliques, as long as an idea and a common aim sets the tune and not mere friendly connection or group interest. I should like to preserve every fellow writer from the fate of allowing his only and unique talent to fall into the pit of his worldly vanity, giving way to attractions other than the honest service of his craft.

My apologies for uncouthly interjecting into a discussion that has not even started yet.

*Tibor Déry*

I can only address you like this from my sick room, sending you a message. The ill wind does blow some good: I shall be brief.

To reach an age like mine can be useful, for the common good as well. Eyes that can look back further are credited with greater powers of forward vision, that is if one's experience is authentic. Experienced danger can thus be used to ward off new ones.

To my mind one of the greatest dangers to intellectual life in Europe and therefore to intellectual life as such is differentiating between people on the basis of language or race, something that still ravages amongst the nations, humiliating men and impoverishing the life of the mind. How close to the bone that cuts in our case is beyond argument.

Nor do I think would anyone dispute that what underlies all these symptoms are the chronic pains of nations and national minorities, the unresolved state of equality in many places, scarred wounds and sensibilities which tend to react in the manner of allergies only.

The question has its complexities the world over. The surgeon's knife has to be applied with great precision in fields without number, in the first place when it comes to unavoidable national pride, and national intolerance that should be avoided at all costs. This is the marrow of things the world over, the springboard to heights or depths. What is suprahuman and yet of burning urgency is to turn the paperthin dividing line between the two into an isolating wall so that the justified cutting back of national intolerance should not touch the raw nerve of the nation, nor should a justified inward withdrawal bring into operation an instinct to blackball others expelling them from the nation. Nor can there be any dispute on the only proper way in which one can prepare for this. Our great forebears proclaimed it, and practiced it showing great staying power though failure followed failure. We have to nurse and develop rigorous national consciousness while serving human dignity in the interests of the Hungarian linguistic community that lives in our socialist country and beyond its borders.

My own past experience looking back over a long period suggests that our intellectual life has failed to live up to this heritage which came down to us all equally, and which justifies our existence. There has been no unity of interpretation or expression. An objective observer could classify and decide who served the heritage that justified our existence through ideas, and who did so in their works. In other words who provided the criticism and who did something to criticize.

Throughout the world the critics pullulate, chattering to each other wherever there is no effective criticism, and yet it is their duty to help shape the consciousness of the nation by supporting good works.

Good counsel suggests itself. Works, works, works, however difficult the trade might be. To those who push an easier pen: more circumspection, particularly if you cut into live flesh. We're dealing with a people that has every right to be oversensitive, a nation that was mortally mutilated more than once in its history.

Looking back, it is these that I think of as the causes of the "tensions" in our intellectual life since our last national meeting. A conference does not resolve them. Many are missing who could speak a guiding word. It would make me happy if, by the next big meeting, when even more experienced voices will be absent, all of us would weigh up our vocation with equal responsibility; whether our endeavour be to express the demands of the day, or those of the centuries, in the service of that section of humanity whose native language is Hungarian.

*Gyula Illyés*

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My hospital bed facing the window only allows me to see the crown of trees. A beautiful view all right, but it bores me, I should like to see the trunks, and the ground! And walk that ground, to go and be amongst my fellow writers taking part in the conference that can have no other care except enriching the literature of our socialist country.

Though a sick man I could never be that old not to think of those writing their first books as my friends, in the same way, as I do of those who started on the uphill road when I did, or even some years earlier.

That is why I can send good wishes to all my friends and contemporaries, to all those who are taking part in this general meeting.

*Zoltán Zelk*

# A NEW CIVILIZATION MODEL?

by

JÓZSEF BOGNÁR

The economy and culture have been interdependent at all stages of evolution, they were linked, assumed each other, and even reciprocally created the means necessary for the evolution of the other. Nevertheless, frictions or smaller or larger conflicts have frequently occurred between those who stood for one or the other. Most friction has been caused in socialist societies as well by the contradictions between the preferred values (ambitions) and the conditions and interest relations regulating the functioning of the economy. However enticing it might be to deal in detail with these questions, I shall not do so now—in order to throw more light on the problems of the immediate future. What I want to point out, however, is that radical changes occurring in the world today, on the one hand, transform the system of requirements of the link-up between these two human activities, and on the other, demand the creation of new “civilization models”.

The creation of a “new civilization model” is necessitated by two dangers threatening mankind, the conditions for this existence, and the conditions of human coexistence. The first lies in the fact that the further development of the processes that are indispensable for modern civilization, given current ways of thinking on such matters, leads to a dissolution of the ecological equilibrium. The second is that—in spite of numerous efforts—the differences in economic standards between the industrial and the developing countries have continued to grow in the past twenty years, which puts a question-mark to the international political equilibrium that rules this earth. A major common characteristic of the two dangers is the extraordinary limitation of the amount of time at our disposal. The outstanding scientists of our age differ concerning the “critical orders of magnitude”, but everybody agrees that we are beginning to approach them. Different opinions are expressed on the point in time when the food crisis will reach its climax in the Third World, but everybody agrees, that, beginning with



the eighties, the crisis will be permanent. The first danger threatens primarily the developed world, the second the developing world, but in an interdependent world one crisis adds to the intensity of the other.

One may speak of a "new civilization model", because the relationship of human action to nature changes, modern ways of living and settlement patterns are modified substantially, concepts of rational economic action and organization change, and economic decisions are made on the basis of new alternatives and principles of selection.

In an accelerating evolutionary period, in the conditions of more and more intensive interdependence, more and more complex decisions have to be taken within a shorter and shorter time. The "shortening" of time—to which reference has already been made—is the consequence of acceleration (in the developed world), and of the lack of time (in the developing world).

The cause of the complexity of decisions is that they cover a more extensive area, must take into consideration the movement of an increasing number of factors and must also reckon with the side-effects of the main effects of action. The experience of recent years has confirmed that the effects of the disregarded but cumulative side-effects may in the last resort be more important than the main effect, and give rise to a great number of negative trends.

In such conditions, more integrated systems of decision-taking and action will be needed through the organic cooperation of those who stand for the economy or for culture. An efficient and purposeful integration is necessary

- in the formulation of operative mechanisms and organizations of governmental systems,
- in the perfection of information systems and effects between science and the economy,
- in the modernization of the educational system,
- in scientific research,
- as well as in cooperation between science and practice.

These systems and methods of cooperation increasingly have to face the problem that, given an organization and operational mechanism that was developed in the not so distant past, they will be unable to satisfy the system of requirements of world evolution which has been modified and accelerated in content and objectives. Questions will have to be researched and taught on a massive scale, decisions will have to be made in questions, which contain more interdependent components than such as belong to a particular discipline.

Extensive principles of organization have so far been applied in education and scientific research.

When new phenomena and processes were recognized, new disciplines, new research institutions and specialized educational institutions were established. Consequently, each of them covered an increasingly narrow segment of complex social action. Specialists trained in a narrow area often began to work in organizations which thought in terms of "sectional optimums" and showed a minimal interest in the understanding of the problems of neighbouring areas.

There are few scientific research institutions able to provide a proper foundation for a complex way of thinking culminating in social action.

Interdisciplinary research makes slow headway, and its progress is not assisted by the scientific organizational forms such as specialized committees only.

The fast growth of interdisciplinary research methods is furthered by two very important changes: firstly because the fundamental problems of our days are extremely complex (e.g. ecological equilibrium, population explosion, the limits to production, etc.), and secondly because of a demand for more complex methods also in the solution of known (recurrent) problems. In the past two hundred odd years various economic systems and ways of thinking were an organic and essential factor in the action of human societies, but the future of these systems is determined to a greater extent by the ecological, biological, geological, political, sociological, etc. problems than by the results achieved in the "inner life" of the discipline concerned. Economics will, of course, become neither biology nor geology as a consequence; but its actions, evolution and endeavours will have to be brought into harmony with new requirements the scientific background of which is represented by those disciplines.

Finally it must be pointed out that the growing interaction is not to be limited in the new situation to the relationship between economics and certain natural sciences. The self-movement of the economic system has led to "partial bankruptcy" in the life of capitalist society. The ideals of the "consumer society" have created a dissatisfied and unbalanced human personality and unstable societies at home, and an intolerable and dangerous inequality in the world economy. After this partial bankruptcy the mechanisms and structures connected with the satisfaction of human needs will have to be revised, and the alternative needs of individuals reconstructed with the collaboration of literature, the arts and sciences. What are the needs that must be satisfied in any event?—this will be the great question of the developing countries in the years to come. Education, health and culture certainly are organic and inseparable parts of these needs.

What alternatives in the satisfaction of needs ensure harmonic devel-

opment to the human personality—this is going to be the question in other parts of the world. Let me remind that it was not the commodity-consuming individual in the past either that stood in the centre as the ideal personality of socialist society, although the logic of competition with capitalist society gave rise here as well to similar ways of thinking.

It follows logically from this train of thought that such vigorous action and interaction is brought about between the “two kinds of culture”. Important theories have arisen in the recent past concerning them, which may lead to a certain integration of thought and action. If one realizes this integration circumspectly, there will be greater harmony between the system of requirements and the actual movements of socialist society.

The economic processes and crisis phenomena that have appeared around the periodic change in the world economy also warn that the information systems between science and the economy demand radical changes. The fact is that in most cases scientists discovered new facts and processes earlier.

For instance, the nutritional problems of the last quarter of the century were known to everybody: a small library could be filled with works that deal with the conflict between the population explosion and food production, its causes, and the possibilities for a solution. Nevertheless, parallel to this views existed, and exercised an influence, that underrated the importance of agricultural production for economic growth and misled the political leadership of various countries. There were many who warned of the catastrophe that was threatening in this domain, the mass starvation to be expected, the tragic situation of South-East Asia, but these forecasts and prophecies had a limited effect.

The economy, as a system of actions reacting to different situations, took account of this danger only when the price of cereals trebled within two years, and stocks dropped to a minimum.

There were many who were aware of scientific works stressing the limits of energy and raw material production. We all read the report of the Paley Committee and studied the various publications of the Club of Rome. But for the economy these views, and the dangers signalled, became tangible only through the rise of fuel prices—especially that of crude oil.

In recent years dozens of scientific works have been published on the vulnerability of our planet, the uncertain equilibrium of its life-sustaining systems, the increasing importance of planetary interconnections, without inducing any reaction in the behaviour of existing structures of economic interests. A change in attitude will only follow if the consequences of the changed situation become tangible through price and cost ratios.

There is a grave contradiction between the information which is objectively possible, and the unexpectedness of the phenomena. These contradictions are partly inherent in the nature of the economy, and partly due to imperfect interaction between the information and operation systems.

Concerning the "nature" of the economy two things must be emphasized: the first is that it is capable of perceiving only information which it obtains through its own mechanisms; although it reacts very fast to that. The second is that power (of course, economic power) is needed to change the mechanism and that this power has massive interests in the reception or rejection of impulses, more precisely in attempts to reject them. Consequently, the impact can become an economic factor only if its acceptance, for some reason, agrees with the system of interest values of economic power.

Concerning the question of interaction between the information and operational systems it has to be pointed out that the economy often rejects, or tries to reject, information provided by science. On the other hand, the international political system—which is built on the existence of sovereign national states—is sensitive to information in that sector only (the international organizations) which does not dispose over power, since the sources and factors of power reside in the nation-states.

However, in this respect one cannot expect fundamental changes in the near future. In the world today, in general, and especially in the developing countries, energies that can be mobilized in the course of economic growth by the nation as a historic and economic workshop are still larger than losses caused by national limitations to the market and the rational division of labour.

It will not be possible in the future either to wait with a decision (accelerated evolution) the maturing of scientific achievements and conclusions in the classical-traditional sense of the word when it comes to the relationship between science and practice. It may be assumed that in the interconnection between these two kinds of activities those new forms must be found (intermediate conclusions and recommendations) through the transfer of which certain and well-founded decisions can already be made.

Searching for the relatively best and most easily applicable ways for these huge problems, one has to reckon with a further factor. The importance of technology will, of course, continue to be huge and in many respects decisive, but it will not remain the *deus ex machina* solving complicated questions. In spite of its huge potentialities it has non-economical, non-desirable, or at present not even tolerable forms of application—especially on account of the threat to the ecological equilibrium—and consequently the importance of other methods improving the efficiency of social action

(outside technology, or combined with technology) gathers momentum. In the solution of problems of this nature it will be particularly necessary for the best who represent the economy, culture and technology to cooperate.

The necessity of the creation of a "new civilization model" is convincingly confirmed also by the new requirements and demands of the developing world and of international economic cooperation.

The economic progress of the developing world demands the elaboration of such "developmental models" (types) which see the phases of growth that follow on each other historically, and in their points of gravity, as the organic components of an integrated action programme.

Articulated in time, and points of emphasis, the various phases of economic growth, the following periods are obtained, on the basis of existing experience:

1. A period in which the development of the infrastructure begins and gathers speed,
2. a period of vigorous growth, which is accompanied by substantial economic and social disproportions,
3. the correction of the structural and social disproportions of the model,
4. the reduction of social (income) inequalities,
5. a vigorous increase in standards of living,
6. the fitting of the developmental model of national economies into the world economy on a new foundation.

The stress on the importance of the points of emphasis means that one tries to grasp the most characteristic features (force of cohesion) of an economic system of movements containing extremely complex and many kinds of requirements and contradictions by results, figures, processes and decisions (policies). There is, of course, no economy in the world which could possibly be described on the basis of a single requirement, or a single trend. But there always have been, and will be, points of emphasis in development, which may be decided in advance in a system of planned actions, or be confirmed after the event by a study of figures, results, interconnections and processes. The articulation of evolution in time and content has been necessary on account of the limits of means and knowledge.

However, in the case of the developing countries a model thus articulated in time and content is not applicable. If, for instance, the reduction of social and income inequalities occurred only in the fourth period, a considerable part of the population (30-40 per cent) would be threatened by starvation. It follows that—by social reforms, and through special corrections in income distribution—the 40 per cent of the population living on the lowest level

would have to be assured an additional income already in the first period. But how, at the expense of what, and does this not endanger the acceleration of the growth rate? Such and similar questions have to be answered by active decisions.

If the fitting in a new way of the national economies into the world economy were realized only in the sixth period, the economic progress of the developing world would consume an unjustified amount of material means, and grave disturbances would also occur in the international economy. Consequently, the developing countries wish to obtain, through the "new economic world order", adopted also by the United Nations, international economic conditions which would promote their growth processes in a world economic climate "favourably inclined" towards them. In an international economic context the objective is that the country implementing the growth process should not have to isolate itself from the world economy in order to realize its right and justified ambitions. It is obvious that the transformation of the "climate of the world economy" is an extremely involved and contradictory process, but the economic and political justification of the endeavour is incontestable.

(Let me add in parenthesis only, and to complete the picture, that—in my view—when it comes to the developing countries, it is not possible to bring about a healthy division of labour through making a detour around the national proliferation of multinational corporations.)

It follows from what has been said that the present situation of our sensitive world demands, and our knowledge gradually makes possible, that integrated developmental models be established in which the socio-cultural values and the requirements of economic development approach close to one another. It is clear that this rapprochement will not have an exclusively beneficial effect, since the distribution of part of the income independent of the economic performance may lead to the reduction of interest in material rewards, i.e. a diminution of the growth rate. Those who stand for culture and science are certainly glad to welcome a system of distribution which is better adjusted to needs, but they may be assumed to object if perhaps less is devoted to scientific and cultural ends out of diminishing budgetary resources.

More integrated developmental models are certainly necessary, but the integration must rely on an intellectual rapprochement between the theoretical (and later practical) workers engaged in the economy and in culture. Both parties must understand the content, effect, consequences and limits of the possible alternatives. From the aspect of the growth rate the new requirements of income distribution are a slowing down factor, and

for the assertion of the normative way of thinking it is the necessity (indispensability) of the rational functioning of the economy that sets limits.

The "new civilization model", as we have seen, achieves a breakthrough both in the industrial and in the developing countries—even if for different reasons and in different circumstances. Global world problems (man and nature, population growth, limitations on natural resources, food, the danger of technology) must be solved, on the one hand, in the spirit of the "new civilization model" and on the other, this spirit must prevail also in the economic-political-scientific-cultural relations between the developing world and other parts of this earth.

Let me point out once more in a single sentence that the socialist countries have great advantages in the development of the "new civilization model". One advantage is that the system of values of socialist societies is substantially closer to the new model than any other known. The other advantage is declared in the fact that in the structure and perspective system of thinking of socialist societies a greater opportunity exists for the development and realization of new forms of action and attitude.

It is obvious from what has been said that the conditions and circumstances necessary for the birth of a "new, integrated model of civilization" are *in statu nascendi* both in the world economy and world politics, and in the life of nations.

The creation of these new models is slowed down by the fact that those who shape the economy and culture are separated from each other both by the nature of their work and institutionally. Institutions exist neither on the national nor on a worldwide level which work towards bringing about the necessary rapprochement. The international organizations as well follow the principles of strict specialization and are the top organizations of certain disciplines rather than propagators of an integrated way of thinking.

I consider it to be a decisive objective of the near future that this separation should be done away with intellectually and institutionally and that we should promote the formulation of a new, integrated civilization model by working together for it.

# EUROPEAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN THE PERIOD OF DÉTENTE

by

JÁNOS BERECH

**S**ocial Democratic parties show great activity at present. Their leaders confer at set periods, and when the occasion demands, to coordinate views and actions. Their attitudes are not consistent. On the one hand they argue for international peace—and yet they make bellicose statements about the “communist peril”; they denounce “social injustice”—and support efforts to overcome the economic crisis; they oppose the fascist régime of Chile—and offer international assistance designed to stifle the revolutionary process in Portugal; and so forth. All this has intensified the interest shown in the position, attitude and effective role of the Social Democratic parties.

## *Characteristics of Contemporary Social Democracy*

A correct, objective and dispassionate view of Social Democracy has always been important to the working-class movement. Since the elimination of capitalist oppression and exploitation has become a practical possibility and actuality, since the revolutionary forces of the working-class movement have united in Communist parties, there has been, in addition to a social struggle, much controversy regarding the role of Social Democrats and their actions. It is easy to jump to conclusions, but one should evaluate this movement in all its complexity and intricacy in order properly to determine our relation to it.

Social Democracy is one of the most significant political trends in the developed capitalist countries of Europe. It has brought to life and maintains organizations wielding substantial influence on the masses as well as political parties supported by a great number of voters. Today the Socialist International founded in 1951 reckons forty-eight parties among



its members (not counting nine organizations of exiles that have no reality). Their total number of members can be estimated at fourteen million. At elections held in the 1970s nearly eighty million voted for candidates of Socialist or Social Democratic parties.

The political strength of Social Democracy is augmented by the considerable influence it has in important fields of social activity. Affiliated trade unions have something like sixty-five million members. Social Democrats have run women's and youth organizations, and a variety of loosely organized bodies, clubs and societies are affiliated with it. The Social Democratic parties have called into life several professional federations and business enterprises which have become an integral part of the given country's social life.

The role of the Socialist and Social Democratic parties is made especially important by the share they have in the capitalist power apparatus and its institutions. Twenty such parties exist in Western Europe; they are members of coalition governments in fifteen countries and provide the head of the government in eight.

The Social Democratic movement is not homogeneous, the composition of the parties differs in the various countries. The picture they present is a complex one, and they have to be judged in diverse ways. They are not necessarily workers' parties. The Bad Godesberg programme of the Social Democratic Party of Germany adopted in 1959 did away with the party's working-class character and declared it to be a people's party. Others, on the other hand, categorically declare themselves to be workers' parties, and some even claim to be the exclusive representative of the working class. It can be said on the basis of class composition that Social Democracy, that is the movement of Social Democratic parties, is a specific section of the international working-class movement. In defining the working-class character of Social Democracy the first fact to be taken into account is that the bulk of their membership continues to be recruited from the ranks of the working class. In some of the particularly influential Social Democratic parties the proportion of workers is as follows: Social Democratic Party of Germany, 49 per cent; Italian Socialist Party, 45 per cent; Socialist Party of Austria, 42 per cent; in the British Labour Party and the Swedish Social Democratic Party the ratio is close on 80 per cent. It has already been said that Social Democratic influence is great in the trade unions in capitalist countries. There is continuous interaction between the parties and the trade unions. It follows that the Social Democratic parties cannot altogether repudiate the interests of the working class—not fundamental power interests of course, but social interests in the narrow sense of the

term; consequently their programmes, positions and actions give expression, more or less, to the demands and aspirations of working people as well.

But the working-class character of the Social Democratic movement is relative and peculiar. These parties, particularly during electoral campaigns, try to win over voters of *all* classes and sections of the given society, on the basis of the most comprehensive programme possible. Representatives of a section of professional people and white collar workers, sometimes even small businessmen and certain capitalists predominate in their leading bodies.

It is most essential, however, that, in spite of its relative working-class character, the theory and practice of Social Democracy in our days are still characterized by cooperation with the bourgeoisie and by being reconciled to the capitalist system. In the most fundamental social issues they express the interests of the capitalist class. Consequently what characterizes the Socialist and Social Democratic parties is that, when in opposition, they are more radical, more like working-class organizations, but when in power they are moderate, cautious, and on the most important questions of power they turn out to be bourgeois organizations.

Social reformism is a manifestation of bourgeois ideology in the working-class movement, and it has no uniform theoretical system. The Social Democratic movement rejected and rejects Lenin's doctrines; moreover, it has over a period of time broken with all basic precepts of Marxism. In our days it disavows the class struggle, proletarian revolution, the class character of power and the necessity of the social ownership of the forces of production. In its ranks one can find some whose thinking has been influenced by Marxism as well, a few of their leaders even employ the terminology of Marxism, but they talk mostly and most willingly about some sort of general social justice, a better life, freedom, democracy and peace.

In their official policy the Socialist and Social Democratic parties frequently mention socialism, but the movement as a whole has no conception of it. The parties of the Socialist International maintain hazy ideas of a "democratic socialism" in opposition to existing socialism. When, on the other hand, as members of governments they have the opportunity to translate their ideas into practice, their "democratic socialism" implies only social measures without fundamental social consequences, and does not in the least affect class and property relations. In practice, "democratic socialism" is nothing but bourgeois democracy, or maybe its refinement, adorned with humane and political slogans of a general nature.

On the ideological front Social Democracy is in general anti-communist. This anti-communism is not a criticism of Communist views, supported

by arguments and analyses, but a quixotic fight against a falsified image of Scientific Socialism. The essence of the anti-communism of Social Democracy is that it rejects the actual existence of socialism, denies the existence of workers' power in the socialist countries, and argues that the Communist movement is the enemy of democracy and freedom. All the same, it cannot be identified with the diehard anti-communism of extremist imperialists.

The whole of Social Democracy cannot be summarily dismissed as anti-communist. Among the members, and even among the leaders, there are today a great many who, although disagreeing with the Communists, are not active anti-communists; disagreement with the Communists in itself cannot yet be regarded as anti-communism. It does not automatically follow from ideological and political differences between Social Democrats and Communists that every Social Democrat is also anti-communist. A lack of understanding of Communism or the absence of cooperation with it cannot be identified with conscious hatred. The right-wing leaders of Social Democracy strive, that is true, to efface the dividing line between those who differ in opinion and lack in comprehension, on the one hand, and the anti-communists, on the other, in order to strengthen their own influence.

An anti-communist position does not pervade the whole of this or that Social Democratic party, it fluctuates in intensity. Experience shows that anti-communist views are spread from above downwards in the Social Democratic parties and do not always act with the same strength.

The anti-communism of Social Democracy also changes with the growth in the strength of the socialist countries and with that of their prestige based on their achievements. Today it is no longer possible to adopt with impunity and follow the unconcealed, brutal anti-communism of imperialism. At a time when ideological diversion is exposed and ideological struggle is intensifying, the most concerned leaders and ideologues of Social Democracy advocate a more "reserved", more flexible variant of anti-communism and disguise its real meaning by social demagoguery and phrases about freedom. They act in a selective manner with the intention of setting particular socialist countries against one another and all of them against the Soviet Union. It is to be noted at the same time that there are a growing number of young and middle-aged Social Democratic leaders who are less committed to yesterday's inveterate anti-communism and who, though failing to endorse in every respect the practice of the socialist countries, make sincere efforts to reach an understanding with the Communist parties.

Social Democracy has never been a movement with an irrevocable unity,

nor is it that now. The composition of its membership continually changes. One of the main sources of vitality of the Social Democratic parties is their constant accommodation. Social Democracy gets acclimatized relatively quickly to changing social circumstances, to economic conditions, to the mood of the electorate, to the international situation and to the dialectic of power relations. This "flexibility", which is equally manifest in international and national organizations, makes it a suitable and occasionally even an indispensable instrument for the ruling class in the defence of the capitalist system.

The Socialist International is not a centralized but a coordinating organization, a debating forum which seeks, through different conferences, to demonstrate the international unity of Social Democrats. In this respect the Social Democratic leaders and their international platforms are most successful. Despite differing interests and intentions they succeed for the most part in working out a common position demonstrating their unity and solidarity. Under domestic conditions they can then—often with reference to an agreement they have reached—act differently because their own special interests always come first.

The positions taken by the International are, as they are intended in advance to be, compromises between positions of various organizations representing different tendencies and different national interests, compromises which serve in the first place as bases of reference for identical, but also for different actions. The Socialist International owes its existence precisely to this "flexibility". Individual Social Democratic parties also quite often find themselves in a similar situation. The class struggle waged in the given country, the economic conditions of classes and sections of society, and their political views exercise a direct influence upon the membership and the leading bodies of the Social Democratic party concerned. This leads to differentiation, to the rise of various trends, to the birth of factions and to polarisation. One or another of them is openly anticommunist and rightist, but there are also centrist groups assuming a moderate political position, as well as more radical left wing forces which interpret the interests of working people one way or another and are aware of the elements of class struggle, mainly in their declared demands but sometimes also in their actions. Differences between them sometimes produce a split, but as a rule, especially before elections, they demonstratively adopt a common position.

The Social Democratic parties are thus full of contradictions. Their essence and nature become entirely clear if we examine their position on two cardinal issues of our time, the world situation and revolution.

### *Social Democracy in international politics*

In the period of the imperialist policy of Cold War, at the time of the emergence of the world socialist system and during the decade following this, the right-wing leaders of the Social Democratic parties supported the policy of international tension, arms race and ideological diversion against the socialist countries. This Cold War policy, however, failed and produced an impasse for Social Democracy as well. Cold War and anti-communism made international relations and the internal situation of some capitalist countries so rigid that it hindered that manoeuvring, shifting and accommodating policy and tactics which is inherent in the nature of Social Democracy. This one-sided and open commitment on the part of Social Democracy narrowed down its mass base and diminished its weight and influence in society.

The leaderships of Social Democratic parties, despite their limitations, are as a rule closer to the masses, to the working people who make up the majority of the population, than those of the petty-bourgeois, liberal bourgeois parties. During the sixties it was found that the masses had grown tired of Cold War talk, were afraid of war and the arms race and turned to parties which proposed peaceful aims or promised a realistic reconsideration of former policies.

Social Democracy has not lost its sense of reality, its outstanding leaders are capable of analysing the situation and drawing the conclusions which are important to them. Their actions are cramped by anti-communism, but the more sensible among them do not lose their sense of reality. As a result, they are conscious of the changes in international power relations, of the stability of the world-wide socialist system and the importance of the policy of promoting peaceful developments in international relations. For this reason the majority of the Social Democratic parties have gradually dissociated themselves from the policy of Cold War and have made use of the available instruments of political power, and opportunities, to adapt the international policies of capitalist countries to the new world situation. Thus some Socialist and Social Democratic politicians are amongst those who deserve credit for the fact that the governments of developed capitalist countries have on the whole accepted the policy of peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems, and that, while maintaining their opposition, they urge the development of cooperation.

The dominance of peaceful coexistence and the lessening of international tension make cooperation feasible in certain spheres, between two sides that are diametrically opposed on social and ideological questions. The

socialist countries can represent, demand and propose this on their own behalf, but they cannot carry it out all alone. There have to be forces and politicians on the other side that realize the nature of the situation and are able to impose the changes. Besides other, realistic political circles of the bourgeoisie of Western Europe, the Social Democratic politicians also belong to those who have been able to change and readjust the foreign policies of most of the capitalist states.

Leaders of the majority of Social Democratic parties have altered their attitude towards the socialist countries, but there has been no change in their views of the social system of those countries. They have recognized the viability of these social systems, but they do not accept them as a remedy for their own social ills and economic difficulties. Invariably they claim their own capitalist society to be the better society and the one to offer salvation, and they firmly support bourgeois democracy. They have chosen to promote détente, last but not least, in the hope of being able to exert a greater influence upon the world, to push their policies in the West, to slow down, hold up, or perhaps halt the international advance of the socialist community and, by using their ideological influence, to get the socialist countries to relax their vigilance.

The executive of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), when preparing for its Congress at Mannheim from November 10 to 18, 1975, published its proposal for a foreign and domestic policy of security a month earlier.<sup>1</sup> The programme approved by the Congress sums up the foreign policy of the SPD under three main points: preservation of peace, the renunciation of the use and threat of force as a political instrument; strengthening of the West European integration and of the Atlantic Alliance; more cooperation between Western and Eastern Europe and between the Common Market and the "third world".

Thus the German Social Democratic Party pursues at the same time a policy of détente and a policy of strengthening the military alliance of capitalist countries. Its activity is therefore not without ambiguity. Using the slogan of democratic socialism, it strives to weaken the influence of Marxism-Leninism in the Federal Republic of Germany and on an international scale, but its foreign policy continues to contribute to the peaceful coexistence of states of the two systems and to the improvement of their relations.

The foreign policy of the British Labour Party is much like that of the West German Social Democrats, but its implementation is slower and more conservative. The Labour government took steps in support of international

<sup>1</sup> *Vorwärts*, October 9, 1975.

détente only in the past two years. At the Conference of the Labour Party in Blackpool in October 1975, Harold Wilson, the Prime Minister, boasted that relations had never before been as good, at the same time, with the United States, the Soviet Union and the Common Market. Thereafter, in the foreign policy debate of the House of Commons, James Callaghan, the Foreign Secretary, spoke of Britain's role as an intermediary, explaining that the country had to "build bridges" between conflicting interests and act as "interpreter" between the Common Market and the United States. While supporting a substantial improvement in relations with the socialist countries, he insisted that détente did not mean a smoothing over of differences in basic attitudes which continued to exist.

The foreign policy of the Austrian Socialist Party is still more complex since this party governs a small neutral country in the heart of Europe all on its own. Recognizing the facts of life on the international scene is particularly important to them. The Austrian Socialists as such do not, however, conceal their anti-communism and their obligations to the capitalist world. After their election victory in 1970, the leaders of the party hastened to declare their support for détente. They justified the need for it claiming that "it would be illusory to believe that Social Democratic solutions would be practicable in a world fraught with major foreign political tensions". Another argument recognizes the necessity for improving economic co-operation between the countries of the two systems, which "would animate the economic process", maintaining that "no kind of political détente is possible on the continent without economic co-operation between East and West".<sup>2</sup>

The Socialist government of Austria has also striven, in its foreign political activity, to contribute to the strengthening of détente and peace. It took an increasingly active part in making the European security conference a success, it developed economic relations with the socialist countries and played an effective part in strengthening good-neighbour relations between Hungary and Austria, harmoniously developing them in the interest of both sides. At the same time the Austrian Socialists take every opportunity to express Austria's close economic, political and ideological interdependence with the capitalist countries. In token of this the Socialist government entered into an agreement with the Common Market in June 1972, and subsequently Austria joined the free-trade zone of the European Community.

It is true that the Austrian Socialist Party has retained in its position

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Bruno Kreisky: "Sozialdemokratische Perspektiven für die siebziger Jahre." *Die Neue Gesellschaft*, May-June 1970. (All quotations are translated from the Hungarian.)

many elements of the anti-communism of the Cold War period. It rigidly rejects cooperation with Communist parties and progressive international organizations. Within the Socialist International it argues categorically against the softening of earlier anti-communist decisions.

The Social Democratic Party of Finland held its 30th Congress in June 1975. The document on foreign policy adopted there is based on the recognition of the realities of our age, it establishes progressive aims for the party and reflects the interests of the working people. Let me underline two elements which are certainly not stressed by other Social Democratic parties. The document states: "Within the international working-class movement it is necessary to increase cooperation with a view to solving international problems in harmony with the interests of the working classes." The Congress argued in favour of Finnish-Soviet good-neighbour relations. To quote: "The cardinal point of Finnish foreign policy is the maintenance of good relations and the development of cooperation with the Soviet Union. The treaty of friendship, cooperation and mutual aid created a basis allowing these relations to become independent of changing trends in world politics. The Social Democratic Party wishes this situation to continue in the future". In the interest of strengthening this, it approves of the strengthening of contacts between the parties of Finland and the Soviet Union and "encourages all its members to take part in the work of the Finnish-Soviet Society".<sup>3</sup>

The foreign policy ideas of the French Socialist Party differ from the above primarily in their starting-point. This is a party in opposition, one which has worked out a democratic programme in conjunction with the Communist Party, and which makes no secret of the fact that it wants the country to turn socialist: "The foreign policy of a France progressing towards socialism should be based on respect for the legitimate interests of the country, and on internationalism." The party's periodical formulates this cardinal issue of foreign policy as follows: "The point is to define a socialist way in a Western world that is not socialist." The French Socialists, in alliance with the Communists, want to achieve considerable changes in France in such a way that the balance of forces and the Western system of alliance should remain unchanged. The French position lays special emphasis on good relations with the Soviet Union which are "necessary for a policy of power equilibrium in Europe".<sup>4</sup> Finally, the programme envisages a considerable improvement of relations with the developing

<sup>3</sup> Document on foreign policy adopted at the 30th Congress of the Social Democratic Party of Finland.

<sup>4</sup> Jacques Huntzinger: "The Foreign Policy of the French Socialist Party". *Europa-Archiv*, 12 (1975)-



countries, and it urges compromises as regards certain national liberation movements. The French Socialist Party is establishing close contacts with the Communist and Workers' parties of the European Socialist countries. This is in complete harmony with its foreign policy notions. A delegation led by François Mitterand visited Hungary towards the end of May. Negotiations between Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and French Socialist Party leaders proved most successful. An open and friendly exchange of ideas created a basis for cooperation which is in the interests of the working class of both countries, and of peace and security in Europe.

The foreign policy programmes of the Social Democratic parties contain many common elements and divergent aims. For this very reason the leaders of these parties strive more and more definitely, within the Socialist International, to exchange views on the international situation, coordinating the steps they take concerning particular problems.

This is especially so when it comes to certain important international questions, including that of security in Europe. Ten years ago the Socialist International rejected the idea of a European security conference. The first resolution in favour was passed by the 11th Congress in 1969. In the course of several years' work of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the representatives of Social Democratic governments, like representatives of other governments, showed a readiness to cooperate, on the one hand, and tried to exact concessions from the socialist countries by insisting on "the free movement of persons and ideas", on the other. In the last stage they more and more clearly supported the conclusions of the conference on the summit level, and thus contributed to the all-European acceptance of the conference document.

The Social Democratic leaders generally regard the conference as a good start. At the same time, of course, they have great hopes that the provisions of the document give them the opportunity to spread reformist views in the socialist countries while they demand, clearly and in an increasing number of documents, that a stop be put to the propagation of Marxist-Leninist ideas. They want "ideological coexistence". Recently they have emphasized more markedly that the further strengthening of the policy of peaceful coexistence demands "ideological reconciliation". As usual, the Social Democratic leaders strive, in this sphere as well, to obtain unilateral advantages by stressing this objectively impossible demand.

Military détente is a subject frequently raised by the Socialist International. At its meeting in Helsinki in 1971 the Council of the International expressed itself in favour of general and complete disarmament under

effective international control, for the creation of nuclear-free zones, for the prohibition of nuclear tests as well as of chemical and biological warfare, and for a limitation of strategic arms.

In practice, however, Social Democratic politicians are not consistent in this respect. At the Vienna talks they support NATO tactics designed to obtain unilateral advantages over the socialist countries instead of aiming at mutual security. As defence politicians they join in the measures taken to strengthen NATO; they insist on the stationing of US forces in Europe, and in general support decisions on the development of the armed forces of their own countries and their equipment with new types of weapons.

The position and attitude of Social Democracy in respect to international conflicts are very diverse and sometimes of an extreme nature. There are questions on which views are opposed, while on others they manage to work out a consensus within the Socialist International. A few Socialist parties (those of Sweden, Finland, Italy, etc.) openly condemned the US aggression in Vietnam, and gave material and moral assistance to the Vietnamese people, others implicitly offered such assistance, without making public declarations. On the other hand, some Social Democratic parties agreed with the operations of the US war machine in Indochina and took note of its defeat with regret.

In the Middle East the Socialist International and its member parties for long years supported Israel. One of them was, and is, in power in Israel, and Golda Meir, the long-time Israeli Prime Minister, has been prominent in the affairs of the Socialist International. In the seventies a certain differentiation was initiated in their ranks, and they began to inquire into the "possibilities of extending the influence of Social Democracy in the Arab countries". After the October 1973 war, first of all for economic reasons, they amended their one-sided pro-Israel policies. The energy crisis caused great difficulty to Social Democratic governments, and drew their attention to the importance of "cooperation and solidarity with the raw material producers of the third world". Powerful political reasons as well motivated this change of mind. Until then the Socialist International had only insignificant influence in the developing countries. In recent years its parties have been making great efforts to extend their influence, and to help those who think like them to organize themselves. A conference on "Planned development and the African way to socialism" was held at Tunis in July 1975 under the auspices of the Socialist International and with the participation of twenty-six African parties. The object of the conference was to help to unite "African socialism" and the main current of international Social Democracy, in order to handicap the spread of Scientific Socialism

in Africa. A sort of co-ordinating committee was to be set up to carry on this work. This failed to attain its objective, but the parties of the International have not given up hope; they would like to woo the forces and movements increasingly turning against neo-colonialism and capitalist exploitation as allies placing them on the road of Social Reformism instead of that of Scientific Socialism.

International Social Democracy has no coherent theory of international relations, but certain guiding principles can be discerned by studying the positions and actions of Social Democrats.

In the confrontation of the two world systems the Social Democratic parties do not take the side of the community of socialist countries. On the other hand, leading politicians of Social Democracy have become aware of the dangers which a thermonuclear world conflagration would entail for the whole of mankind and of the masses' desire for peace. They therefore support peaceful coexistence and détente and act in this sense. The third determining factor is that, to develop peaceful international relations, they consider it indispensable to regulate cooperation by treaties and agreements between countries of the opposite social systems, and, in order to diminish the effects of the economic crisis, they particularly urge cooperation in production.

### *Social Democracy and Revolution*

Today's Social Democracy cannot by any stretch of the imagination be "accused" of wishing to change the capitalist system through a social revolution. Social Democratic leaders do not admit the need for revolution. They reject the possibility of revolutionary change in theory and put obstacles in its way in practice.

There isn't a single instance of revolutionary changes carried out by Social Democratic governments. Social Democratic politicians, in a position to do so, introduced important measures of social policy, various socio-economic reforms, and even nationalizations, but they have never touched the essence of property relations, they have not put capitalist exploitation in jeopardy nor have they changed the class content of power.

Developments in Western Europe show that Social Democrats, on becoming the governing party, often succeeded in reducing social tensions, and their measures, even though only temporarily, consolidated the capitalist system.

In recent years, as part of the general crisis of capitalism, serious socio-

economic troubles, inflation, monetary and energy crises, growing unemployment and political crises have shaken the capitalist countries. As a consequence, production has declined, social tensions and discontent have grown. This period is also a test for Social Democracy, since it has had to take measures to settle the situation by making use of its growing influence.

The Social Democratic parties admit that capitalism is now in a crisis. To quote Olof Palme, "Currently the capitalist system is actually passing through a crisis, many basic values of capitalist society are being questioned. Many are those who, morally and ideologically, flatly repudiate capitalism. Many become alarmed and cannot help being anxious."<sup>5</sup>

The Social Democratic leaders find this situation very dangerous. For one thing this led to the collapse of their earlier theories. In the boom of the fifties and sixties Social Democrats spoke of "people's capitalism", the "welfare state" and its uninterrupted development, the definitive disappearance of crises, etc. And now events themselves throw doubt on Social Democratic ideology and the credibility of the leaders as well. This situation heightens the interest taken in Marxism-Leninism and makes possible the strengthening of its influence.

Another aspect of Social Democratic leaderships is political in character. The bourgeoisie is prepared to do all it can to overcome the critical stage which might endanger its own power. There are some who, if all else fails, might even resort to extreme measures, calling on the extreme right. This, of course, is not desirable for Social Democrats either.

The crisis of the capitalist economy in one or another country may have as a consequence the sharpening of socio-political conflicts, the intensification of the class struggle and, possibly, the failure of the power apparatus of capitalist society. In this case the deepening of the crisis may create a revolutionary situation implicit in the increase of the struggle for power and the unpredictable activity of the masses. This is what the monopolists, and also the Social Democrats, are most afraid of. For all these reasons the Social Democrats deliberately seek for a solution to the capitalist crisis, to prepare and introduce the necessary measures. "At the time of the latest world economic crisis," Bruno Kreisky argues, "we did not have to assume as much political responsibility as today when in power in practically all European (meaning: West European.—The Ed.) countries. . . now we have to find the solutions."<sup>6</sup>

During the present crisis as well the leaders of Social Democratic parties

<sup>5</sup> Willi Brandt, Bruno Kreisky, Olof Palme: *Briefe und Gespräche*. Europäische Verlagsanstalt. 1975, p. 118.

<sup>6</sup> Op. cit. p. 123.

take every opportunity to analyse the condition of the capitalist economy and to co-ordinate the joint steps. In working out related ideas they started from two requirements: the measures should consolidate the system of capitalist expropriation, but should not upset the established social equilibrium. To this end, they had to restrain the aspirations of capitalists and to call on working people to make sacrifices so that the Social Democratic Party, "when consolidating the financial situation of the country, should maintain the established social equilibrium", as Willi Brandt put it.<sup>7</sup> This is the gist, the key issue of their endeavours. The Social Democratic governments have increased the role of the state in the regulation of the economy. They have let governments run into further debts, and have introduced economy measures to secure sufficient financial means for stimulating investment activity.

In order to overcome the crisis the Social Democrats have intensified cooperation with the liberal parties, giving them to understand that today it is particularly necessary to carry into effect the "social partnership" which they proclaimed earlier, in more tranquil circumstances. In order to maintain the capitalist order, therefore, they have adopted measures which demand greater sacrifices from wage and salary earners and at the same time restrain, to a certain extent, the capitalist entrepreneurs. The essence is that, as a result of Social Democratic policy, the working people have to put up with burdens and today are given the hope of seeing the burdens lighten at most tomorrow. On the other hand, the bourgeoisie can in the long run bank on maintaining its power. This is the real meaning of "social partnership" in the period of the crisis of the capitalist economy.

The physiognomy of Social Democracy is well mirrored by two examples: Chile and Portugal. The majority of European Social Democratic leaders were shocked at the "consolidation" of the capitalist order by means of brutal and brazen terror which demanded the lives of tens of thousands of people in Chile and swept away the supporters of "social partnership as well". This was the first time in many years that these leaders were ready to join in common actions of solidarity with other leftist movements, in several countries even with Communists.

Why so? They are fighting also for their own future. Chile has again demonstrated: a fascist dictatorship of terror would force Social Democrats into illegality, into a dangerous struggle to be waged under very difficult circumstances. The environment most favourable to Social Democracy is bourgeois democracy bolstered up by social reforms, which is sufficiently well-organized to safeguard the political and economic power of the capi-

<sup>7</sup> *Die Zeit*, 45, 1975.

talists, but has sufficiently "liberal" and flexible institutions to give the masses a lasting illusion of well-being and democracy.

Social Democracy stubbornly defends this situation against revolutionary change as well. Thus when, after the collapse of fascist rule, the situation in Portugal became tense and the governmental crisis grew into a politico-social one, the Social Democrats of Europe immediately came to the rescue of bourgeois society. Ultimately the Socialists there contributed to creating a situation in which their own chances are also curtailed and meanwhile all the working peoples' achievements to date have been put in jeopardy.

Have Social Democrats completely discarded the prospects of socialist change? Over three years Brandt, Kreisky and Palme carried on a correspondence and three times came together for a round-table discussion on the current situation and on questions of the future. Perusing this material is a startling experience, because it appears that socialism has disappeared from the minds of outstanding leaders of three strong Social Democratic parties. They admit that once "there was capitalism", and the working-class movement confronted it with socialism. But the essential thing in society today, in their view, is that an "industrial society" exists, on the one side, in the capitalist environment and, on the other, within the framework of "state socialism", and that this "industrial society" is in a crisis and must be saved through reforms. According to Brandt, "the future will bring something different from what classical capitalism or Eastern State Socialism have produced. . . . Anyway, classical capitalism no longer exists in Western Europe: instead we can find many elements of a mixed economic system."<sup>8</sup> This, of course, is the well-known theory of convergence in a nutshell.

A few common traits can be found also in various party documents which otherwise differ. One is that Social Democratic theories of socialism are vague and confused; giving no answer to important questions. Their second common trait is that they always differentiate clearly between their own ideas of socialism and the example of existing socialism. Their third characteristic is that they reject and deny the necessity of a social revolution—not one or another form of revolution, but revolution itself. And they handle the issue of property relations accordingly.

Reformism has thus remained reformism in spite of the fact that recent ideas contain new elements as well and, though in a distorted manner, mirror the social forces straining the leash; in spite of the fact that the terminology grows ever richer and the Social Democratic governments introduce some elements of state planning and economic adjustment. These

<sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.*

programmes are not enough to eliminate the capitalist mode of production or to create a socialist society. And since, in general, even these programmes fail to be carried out, they do not stimulate the masses to intensify the social struggle, nor do they alarm the bourgeoisie, moreover, in times of crisis the bourgeoisie prefers Social Democratic governments.

*The Relationship between Communist and  
Social Democratic Parties*

The relationship of the revolutionary working-class movement with Social Democracy is complex and rich in both positive and negative experiences. The Karlovy Vary conference of 1967 of the European fraternal parties as well as the declarations issued by the 1960 and 1969 international conferences of Communist and Workers' parties invited the Socialist and Social Democratic parties to cooperate. Broad-based and constructive cooperation between Communists and Social Democrats, once generally adopted would substantially change the political situation in Western Europe in favour of peace, détente and social progress.

Cooperation, however, depends on the other side as well, and today's Social Democrats are divided on the issue of relations with the Communist parties. A reconsideration of this question has been going on also in the Socialist International since the mid-sixties. The Oslo declaration of 1962 still reflected vehement anti-communism. In recent years, however, a number of Socialist and Social Democratic parties (those of Japan, France and Finland) established contacts with Communist parties. The 11th Congress of the Socialist International (June 1969) still condemned these initiatives, and officially it continues to be opposed to the establishment of contacts with Communist parties. The decision passed by the Bureau of the International in April 1972 was a further step forward: it was left to the discretion of individual member parties to shape their bilateral relations with other parties, including the Communist parties. World events and the hope that they themselves might influence the Communist parties, have forced this change on the Socialist International.

In recent years contacts have been increasing between the Communist and Workers' parties of the socialist countries, on the one hand, and certain Socialist and Social Democratic parties, on the other; in some cases these contacts have already become systematic and intensive.

Contacts between Communist and Social Democratic parties can be established on the national scale and in the international arena: these two spheres of contact are closely connected and occasionally become contra-

dictory. Some Social Democratic parties are averse to cooperation on both planes. Others are disposed to build such contacts with the Communist parties on both the national and the international plane. There are Social Democratic parties which endeavour to establish relations with Communist parties in countries other than their own but are against cooperation in their own and even support anti-communist actions there. This is particularly true of the German Social Democratic Party which, while maintaining contacts in the field of information with some Communist parties, flatly refuses to establish contact with the Communists of the Federal Republic of Germany, and accepts and even initiates anti-communist measures.

The relationship with Communist parties is a constant subject on the agenda of the conferences of European Social Democratic leaders. They met at Helsingör, in Denmark, on January 18-19, 1975. This was followed by a conference held in Paris on January 24-25 with the participation of French, Belgian, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese Socialist party leaders. Judging by these two conferences, it is obvious that their positions differ, and even—as is openly discussed in West European bourgeois newspapers—there are divisions and sharp differences among the Social Democratic parties. They think that the “southern” parties, most of which are parties of the opposition, are ready to cooperate, but the “northern” ones refuse to do so. The picture is not so simple, because, for example, the Finnish and Swedish Social Democratic leaders are not averse to cooperation, while Soares chose to go to the United States at the time of the Paris meeting. Much more is at stake than geographical location: it is with difficulty, through serious internal disputes, that the Social Democratic movement awakens to the realities and draws the necessary conclusions.

Social Democracy, as has been shown, is in its entirety a highly contradictory and differentiated movement. Communists will always do their best to unmask and repudiate anti-communist features in their policy. This should strengthen the possibility for cooperation, and not weaken it. Ambiguous elements should be excluded; plain language is needed to disclose entirely the common spheres of interest and features strengthening cooperation.

The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, as the 11th Congress resolution states, “On every conceivable question and in every field, the Party strives for cooperation with the socialist and social-democratic parties, in order to strengthen international détente and security, and the unity of action of the working class.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Information Bulletin of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party XI Congress (Special issue 2. Budapest March 1975 p. 37.)



There are many such fields. Union is in general possible in defence of the economic and social interests of the working people, in fighting the danger of fascism, and the assertion of democratic rights. The negative effects of the crisis of the capitalist economy must be curbed, so that they will not affect the social achievements of the working people of capitalist Europe, nor endanger the system of the international division of labour based on mutual advantage and equal rights: this also makes cooperation possible between parties as well as within trade unions of different political line. They act jointly against the economic and political power of international monopoly interests. There are things to be done in common in the field of environmental protection, in the use of scientific research for the benefit of mankind, etc. A common denominator, or at least a common starting-point, can be found on most of the great questions of world politics. Patience, good intention and concord established in mutual relations between Communists and Social Democrats can lead to common action in many fields in the interest of the working classes and of humanity.

# EXCHANGE RATE POLICY IN A PLANNED ECONOMY

by

JÁNOS FEKETE

**T**he exchange rate policy and the exchange rate system are important instruments of economic control. What they should accomplish cannot however be formulated in a way valid for every country and for every age, since they are dependent, on the one hand, on the social system concerned, and on the other, on the given method of economic control. These tasks are not always and everywhere identical in a socialist planned economy either. If enterprises fulfil plan targets laid down as part of the national economic plan and apportioned in kind, the exchange rates play a smaller role in their economic decisions. In Hungary, where the central decisions involve only the more important questions of economic policy, and the enterprises have to decide themselves on the operative questions of production and development in the knowledge of the plan and the regulative system, the central organs must make sure that all information that may assist in enterprise decision-taking to be most efficient from the national economic point of view is available to enterprises. In such conditions, the role of exchange rate policy and the exchange rate system—as conditions for correct orientation—is obviously much greater.

## WHAT DO THEY TELL, AND HOW?

—Exchange rates create a link between external and domestic prices in keeping with realistic value ratios, and thereby mediate objectively the judgement of foreign markets to enterprises concerning the goods produced and services provided by them.

—They indicate the limit of the input of forints up to which the “acquisition” of foreign exchange income is economical for the national economy

—through direct commodity exports or the selling of services for foreign exchange—and also when it is more advantageous to replace home produce by imports.

—They provide a reliable basis for calculations preceding decisions on development, and thereby assist in joining economically beneficial international division of labour.

Nevertheless, the exchange rates must not be considered some kind of economic “panacea”. Exchange rate policy cannot substitute for price policy or the wages and income policy, just as the latter are no replacement for exchange rate policy. All these important means of control function together, in an interrelated way, but the sequence is very important: price, wages and income policy fundamentally decide the scope for exchange rate policy and the operation of the exchange rate system.

Economic control has a broad armoury for assisting in the realization of the various objectives of economic policy. But except for the exchange rate there is no suitable instrument for objectively orientating the entire economy concerning international value relations. If exchange rates are accorded the role of objective information, rightly so in my view, it is obvious that tasks going beyond this—subsidies and restrictions—can be solved only by the connected financial bridges, together with the latter. The exchange rates provide information for economic calculations and development decisions from the aspect of evaluation on the national level, while the financial bridges are suitable for selectivity between enterprises. The reason being that exchange rates, which are based on the average forint cost of foreign currencies obtained through exports, are not capable in themselves to ensure economical and profitable exports for enterprises, in cases for instance when the forint input in the case of some products is for any reason higher for the time being than the average. The product may be new and not really introduced on markets yet, etc. In such cases the enterprises must be exempt of the additional burdens, otherwise their interestedness in exports is reduced and the creation of an up-to-date pattern of production or exports is slowed down. The chosen solution is to grant the enterprise state help over a transitory period in the shape of reduced taxes for instance, or a tax remission. And in imports the customs tariff is the financial bridge which serves the purpose of putting a brake on imports and partly of protecting industry. Duties are imposed on some imported goods, mainly depending on the degree of processing, and thereby assert towards our foreign trade partners the principle of reciprocity. In exports tax remission and in imports customs duties represent the two fundamental “financial bridges”, which are used by the majority of the countries with an advanced foreign

trade and financial system, to make their exchange rate system function efficiently. The international economic organization controlling the "rules of the game" of international trade, GATT—of which Hungary is a member—accepts the application of such tools. The name given to the financial bridges and the method of their application—especially as far as exports are concerned—it is not uniform; there are countries where the exports are supported within the "value added tax system", in others in other ways, but the reason for their application and the essence of their construction is everywhere identical: the recognition that the exchange rates themselves should not be given more to do than they can manage efficiently.

#### STABILITY OR FLEXIBILITY?

The job exchange rates have to do and the way it is tackled in particular countries are relatively stable categories within the given order of economic control. What cannot however be considered stable within the present conditions of the world economy are the exchange rates themselves. The dissolution of the international monetary system, floating exchange rates and galloping inflation created new tasks in this field for Hungary too. One must react to rapid changes more flexibly than heretofore. A manifestation of this is an active exchange rate policy. Such an active exchange rate policy must satisfy two principal requirements:

—The forint exchange rates of the foreign currencies should correctly reflect—individually and in their totality—domestic and foreign price ratios, in other words, they should provide a realistic picture of the relationship between the purchasing power of the forint and that of the foreign currencies, they should adequately keep up with changes in this relationship, thus ensuring the stability of the value of the forint from the aspect of external markets as well.

—The forint exchange rates of the different convertible currencies should show among themselves the same ratios as these currencies in fact have on the money markets.

The first, the "maintenance" of the value of the national currency, requires economic policy decisions. The second, changing the forint exchange rates of various currencies, is part of the operative activities of the appropriate financial bodies. This raises the apparently contradictory questions of stability and adequate flexibility. The contradiction is resolved by an adequate interpretation of what must be done: it is useful to keep the "level" of the exchange rate of the national currency stable in relation to

foreign currencies over a longer period—for instance one year—and alterations should be made over a shorter period only in case of considerable changes. A revaluation, or if necessary, devaluation of the forint should be decided only on the basis of a concerted examination of changes in the foreign and domestic price level and the cost in forints of the acquisition of foreign currencies through exports.

As far as keeping in step with the exchange rate changes between various convertible currencies is concerned, flexibility is the main requirement, i.e. the forint exchange rate of any individual foreign currency should be changed as required at substantially shorter intervals, monthly perhaps, or if the situation in the money market demands it, even more frequently. Daily changes in exchange rates are not needed, in Hungarian conditions this would be unusual, and in the case of smaller changes it would cause an unjustified uncertainty to enterprise management. On the other hand, it is not permissible to use the need for stability as an excuse for delaying for too long changes demanded by the market situation, perhaps not carrying them out at all, since this would endanger the adequate fulfilment of the orientation function and thus lead to losses of foreign currency.

On January 1, 1976 the following measures were taken:

—The forint was revalued against all convertible currencies, an average 8 per cent for commercial and 3 per cent for non-commercial transactions. The general revaluation of the forint was justified by the considerable increase of the price level in the Western countries compared to the domestic price level. The forint exchange rate of the various convertible currencies was changed to a varying extent, since we took into consideration exchange rates that had developed in the Western money markets last December (for instance, the commercial exchange rate of the U.S. \$ was reduced by 5 per cent, that of the DM by 11 per cent and the £ by 14 per cent). The forint was revalued against the transferable rouble too, the collective currency used in trade among the CMEA countries, since contractual foreign trade prices rose in the years 1975–76.

—The exchange rate system was simplified. The National Bank of Hungary has started to quote official non-commercial and commercial exchange rates, and at the same time suspended the quotation of the basic exchange rates that had been based on the gold parities and had long been eliminated from practical dealings. (The non-commercial exchange rate corresponds to the earlier premium rate, and the commercial exchange rate to the foreign trade multiplier which had not been quoted earlier by the National Bank.)

A flexible keeping up with the exchange rate ratios of the Western money markets is exemplified by the fact that, after the general exchange rate

measures taken on January 1, on February 9 the forint exchange rate of the Italian lira was reduced by a further round 5 per cent, and on February 13 that of the Spanish peseta by a round 10 per cent. The first was necessitated by the reduction of the value of the lira on money markets, and the latter by the devaluation of the Spanish peseta. The strong fluctuations that occurred on money markets in the first half of March 1976 justified new corrections of the exchange rates of nine convertible currencies. Thus the forint exchange rate of the Italian lira was reduced by 9 per cent on March 24, that of the French franc by 4 per cent and the £ by 3 per cent. At the same time the U.S. \$, the DM and the Swiss franc had somewhat strengthened as against the majority of the European currencies, and therefore their forint exchange rates were raised by 0.6–1.5 per cent.

A further fall in the market value of the Italian lira again necessitated a 5 per cent reduction of the exchange rate on May 6.

Money can best fulfil its functions of measuring value, acting as a means of payment and a means of accumulation if exchange rates are uniform in all international financial transactions, in commercial and non-commercial operations alike. A uniform exchange rate will make it much simpler to measure the input on the national economic and the enterprise level as well as the efficiency of the latter, and consequently it will be possible to make economic decisions much more rapidly and reliably on all levels of economic management.

A uniform exchange rate would help one to see clearly not only in the Hungarian economy but also on an international scale, including dealing within CMEA. The achievement of the uniform exchange rate, as a common objective of CMEA countries, is also foreseen by the Comprehensive Programme of CMEA, in order that socialist currencies should fulfil as perfectly as possible their functions of measuring value, serving as means of payment, and of accumulation.

The uniform exchange rate necessitates a corresponding price and tax system. The double-level exchange rate system corresponds to the present Hungarian price system, in which a considerable part of net social income is built into producers' prices—and thereby the producer price level is considerably raised—in contrast to international practice. This is why a separate exchange rate is used for the non-commercial and the commercial operations. If we wish to proceed in the direction of a uniform exchange rate, we have to shift sooner or later the elements of net social income from producers' prices to the sphere of realisation.

# THE COLLECTIVE FARM AND THE PRIVATE PLOT

by

ISTVÁN LÁZÁR

**E**arly in 1976 the Hungarian press and public opinion were most concerned with household plots and the auxiliary farms. The household plot is the small area worked by members of agricultural producers' cooperatives, while the auxiliary plot is a similar endeavour, usually an orchard, vineyard, or the keeping of domestic animals by rural men and woman of differing occupations. These provide for one-third of Hungarian agricultural production. Thus two-thirds of agricultural production comes from large-scale farms, cooperatives and state farms, and one-third from small holdings, owned or tenanted by varying title and usually worked by families.

To understand the situation properly one has to get an idea of the history of agriculture of Hungary and the East European socialist countries for these thirty years past. I wish to narrow down my story as much as possible, emphasizing how an increasingly level-headed view of things has created a Hungarian agricultural policy which, after difficulties and backwardness, strives today to overcome the problems of growth, growth that is rapid and conspicuous but still insufficient, maintaining its dynamism.

## POLITICAL CONCESSION OR ECONOMIC NECESSITY?

At the beginning of collectivization of Hungarian agriculture, in the first half of the fifties, the fact that a peasant joining a cooperative could continue to work a small plot (generally approaching 1.5 acres of ploughland or 0.5 acre of vineyard or orchard) and could keep animals around the house—appeared to be transitory. Whatever view was expressed, all this was done in the hope that the boom of collective farming would soon bring about, and make self-evident, the decline of the household plot.

But all this should not be considered as a simple tactical concession. Did it serve as a mere enticement? Did it want to make it psychologically easier for peasants, who had found it difficult to give up ownership of their land, and equipment, and with it their way of life, to carry on in the new way? This too was involved. But it was an even more important consideration that the new, still weak and inexperienced, cooperatives could not ensure to supply the country, including the rural areas, with agricultural products. It was thought necessary that cooperative peasants should not buy for money the food required by their own family (especially milk, eggs, meat, vegetables and fruit), but should produce these themselves. It was thought necessary that they should have a surplus, which they could take to market, contributing as small commodity producers to the feeding of other classes and sections of society who lived in towns and cities.

Further, at the first stage of collective farming, a period in which much was done that should not have been done, it was one of the major worries' and a reason why members felt bitter, spoiling their relationship to the cooperative, and handicapping the work they did for it, that they received the overwhelming part of their income, almost the whole of their cash income, only at the end of the financial year, after the accounts were drawn up and accepted by a meeting of members. How did they earn their living meanwhile? Grain was distributed after the harvest. Otherwise, they lived mostly of what they produced themselves in their garden and household plot, and what they were able to sell of what was left. The cooperatives began to pay an advance in proportion to work done, and later regularly, only after a number of years. This was how a monthly cash income became general in the cooperative agricultural sector too.

Of course, the first collective farms saw their future in Hungary in many different ways. In one place the people combined to "give the child a name", and intended to continue to do everything as they used to, as individual farmers, as much as possible. In other places the story of *And Quiet Flows the Don* was repeated, and even the last hen was taken from the backyard to the cooperative chicken shed. It was soon discovered that nowhere, but especially not in villages maintaining their old ways, could one enter the world of communism overnight, even socialism could not be so quickly attained.

The general order, which began to take shape after the beginnings early in the fifties, only in a few places made concessions to those far out on the extreme "Left"—but in general it all the same proved very rigid. Nevertheless, it was not so much the prohibitions or the exaggeration of collective property that set limits to household plot farming, but rather a shortage of necessary tools as well as the political atmosphere that prevailed in the



country. The political situation did not favour production on household plots, in orchards and the small vineyards left to peasants, certainly not production beyond the family's needs. The profit that could be made was not always an attraction.

In the meantime the "free market" of small commodity producers survived, at least in the sense that daily or weekly markets wherever they were traditionally held went on uninterrupted. Labour moved from agriculture to industry, and not only surplus labour. When the standard of living declined between 1949 and 1956 demand did not prompt peasants to produce a marketable surplus. Whatever somebody had, he rather hid than sold, being afraid of being branded a *kulak*.

True, however low the purchasing power of wage-earners in general was at that time, the country was so famished for meat that there were always buyers for that. But the household plots produced little fodder, hardly any could be obtained from elsewhere, and thus the keeping of animals was also limited by the fact that there was no fodder available for cattle or pigs. In those times—precisely owing to the meat shortage—those who killed a calf for veal felt all the rigour of the law. Nevertheless, something occurred that never happens nowadays: veal could always be obtained on the black market, even in the worst years. There simply was no sense in raising a calf. Although the state also had its eye on calves, peasants did not report the calving of their cows, since the low prices made selling them to the state a poor proposition.

If one is to believe the official figures the "performance" of bulls, boars and rams was never so poor as at that time. Yet they had done their duty.

#### EXPENSIVE RECOGNITIONS

The post-1956 new agricultural policy was the result of recognitions for which a heavy price had been paid. In 1955 I saw villages where one half or two-thirds of the ploughland was left fallow. "When there is no bread, the country will need us," the peasants said. And they were right. That year I lived at Diósgyőr for several months, a centre of the steel industry. I used a factory canteen. In other places people believed that there was no food because it all went to the centres of heavy industry. Indeed: here the supply was better than in the town of my birth. Day after day breakfast consisted of grisly brawn and unpalatable fat bacon, the like of which had not even been seen in the war years; the midday menu consisted of turnip soup and bread that looked and tasted like mud.

The end of small commodity production was, of course, only one factor in the crisis of agriculture and the country's food supply as well of their exports. Rationing abolished after the war had to be reintroduced. At the same time exaggerated, abstract and impracticable principles and practice were the rule in state farms and cooperatives. This was the economic policy of what is called the personality cult in Hungary. Finally, heavy taxation, the regrouping of capital in favour of over-industrialization, added to by the theoretical and methodological errors of extremely centralized management turned on their purpose, endangering their original objective.

The first point mentioned when describing the new policy introduced in 1957 is generally the abolition of compulsory deliveries. They had involved the compulsory sale of part of the produce to the state at a low price. It could be called scantily compensated requisitioning. Secondly, the number and rigidity of central instructions covering the production pattern, working arrangements and even the designation of the cooperative chairman "to be elected" were reduced. It is however a better reflection of the essence of the changes if one emphasizes that the siphoning off of income from the agrarian sector was moderated, and thus this sector was better able to invest, and an interest in financial rewards increasingly came to the fore. Methods began to be applied that are still employed today. It expresses its own interests, i.e. those of the whole of society, in the first place—though never exclusively—through the purchase price of products. It pays more for what it needs more of. This does not mean a reintroduction of the free play of market forces, since a deliberate regulation of prices—as could be seen—could be fitted into the system of a strict planned economy, and this served the targets set in the plan better than the issuing of instructions by the bureaucracy.

The state-owned equipment stations, which used to do the mechanical work on the land of the cooperatives for payment, were abolished. These valuable means of production also became the property of the cooperatives, i.e. they were operated economically by those who owned the land, the principal means of production. The larger cooperatives were already able to make good use of the more powerful tractors and combines. They later established their own repair workshops. Thus the earlier machinery stations did not survive even as repair workshops. Their personnel either went over to the cooperatives, where they obtained a higher income, or became workers of the factories established on the location of the workshops.

At the same time, the attitudes concerning household plots and other small commodity production, of course, also had to be reconsidered. It was recognized that these would be needed for a much longer time than had

## "ENCOUNTERS"

*Exhibition of photographs by Károly Hemző in Budapest*

Károly Hemző started his career as a sports photographer. After fourteen years on the side of the pitch, he looked for other kinds of experience. With his camera he revisited the Hungarian countryside, where he spent his childhood. We are here publishing a selection of these latter photographs.



*Corn cobs adrying*



*Village square and the new school*

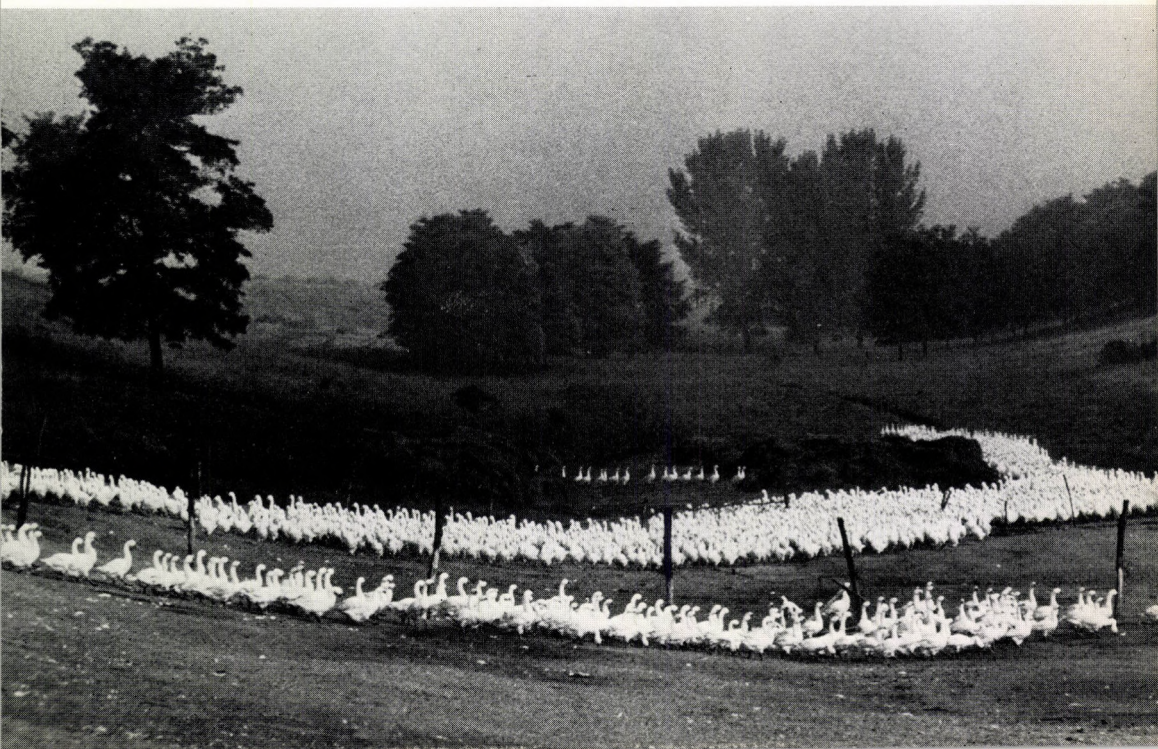
*Hortobágy National Park*

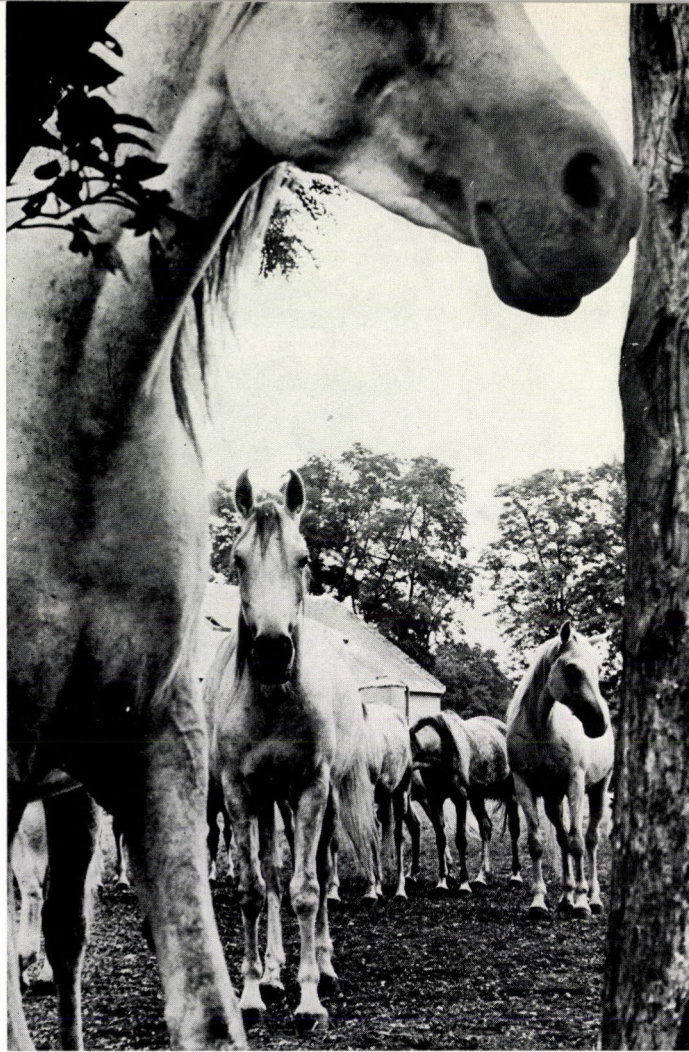




*A friendly game on the village green*

*Goose stepping home*





*In the stud at Bábolna*

been assumed. Once accepted they could not be looked on with constant suspicion. One could not go on restricting them and maintaining an atmosphere of temporariness.

The agricultural cooperatives that were reorganized or set up anew after the troubles of 1953-57, began to work at the beginning of the sixties already in this atmosphere, bolstered by recognitions that had been heavily paid for. This proved to be of fundamental importance when, in the course of their first, still very difficult years, they created a safer foundation for the real boom of collective farming.

#### RICH PEASANT—POOR COOPERATIVE?

The more freely chosen production pattern, higher investments, a safe income from the production of cereals—since this was easiest to mechanize—as well as the greater cooperative democracy resulted in the conspicuous improvement of collective farming. The field is still dispersed, there are great divergences in crop yields and incomes. But—even if not everywhere—Hungarian agricultural production is definitely on the up and up. Peasants have a reason to stay at home in their villages. The young had not moved back yet in the sixties, but there was already a definite and constant improvement.

Little more proved possible than other than the full mechanization of cereal production and the partial and relative development of other work. There was still a tremendous quantity of manual work in the production of root crops and fodder production, and the collective keeping of animals were unable to keep up with the growth in demand. Causes and effects dovetailed. The cooperatives were unable to mobilize sufficient men and women for the production of fodder when the time for feeding, the cutting of lucerne or the cropping of maize came around. It would have been possible to keep more animals on the household plot: there were empty sties and stables, and many women were at home with the children, many old people could no longer work in the cooperative, but would have been able to work around the house. There was also the demand for more meat. The interest of state and citizen coincided. But there was a great shortage of fodder. And what if there was work to be done at the same time on the collective land and on the household plot? Then the latter was given preference. Obviously, a cooperative member was more interested in looking after what was directly his than in looking after what he owned only indirectly.

It happened then that on one of the largest and best cooperatives of the

country, at Nádudvar (under the leadership of István Szabó, who had farmed a few acres of land that was allotted to him after the liberation, then founded a cooperative in which he worked as a coachman, and was later elected chairman) a share-cropping system was worked out. The mechanical work was to be done by the cooperative. But everything else was to be done by members on land allotted individually, to families, or to groups. A share of the crop was their reward. They could feed it to animals kept on the household plot, or sell if they wished.

This share-cropping was received with hostility by many. It reminded of the times when large landowners and the rich peasants offered share-cropping to the poor. This had been one of the most widespread forms of exploitation. But even in those times it was in villages that were in a better position that such work was available. Fewer of their inhabitants had left the country for America.

But the analogy was false. Because then the surplus value that the share-cropper produced belonged to the owner, now—himself being also the owner—he retained the surplus value. It served the cooperative farm, his own, which he enriched by his other work as well.

Others had other objections to the "Nádudvar method". They argued that the fodder so obtained—mainly maize—strengthened household plot farming, solving the fodder shortage. Partly directly, being used by the members' beasts, partly indirectly, being sold on the free market.

In the beginning the objections were so great—of course not among the members—that even the Party membership of the initiator, the chairman of the Nádudvar Vörös Csillag Cooperative, was endangered. He is now, and has been for many years, the president of the National Council of Producers' Cooperatives, a member of the Party's Central Committee, and a Member of Parliament. And he has continued to be chairman of the Nádudvar cooperative.

It should not, however, be thought that opposition to share-cropping was completely without foundation and was exclusively of a doctrinaire nature. The method increased commodity production in agriculture, there was more milk and meat, there was more breeding stock. But in the meantime astute sociologists and journalists discovered the rich peasant in the poor cooperative.

Indeed, in some places the internal balance of power evolved in such a way that while the cooperative farm could hardly make ends meet, and there were hardly any people to do the common work, the members grew rich at home. They only worked in cooperation as much as was sufficient—according to the articles of association—not to lose the household plot and



share-cropping facilities. They put all their additional energy in what they could do and produce at home.

This process was dangerous economically as well but even more so socially. There are natural limits to everything. In Hungarian agriculture cereal production has been the most profitable ever since 1945. This has not been dictated by the country's demand for bread alone, but by the more or less conscious and sound consideration that it is the bread grain which can be produced economically in most of the country in spite of differences of soil and climate. Its profitability has created the general common fund on which the otherwise very differently endowed cooperatives could everywhere rely.

Cereals were, of course, produced in cooperation. Work was mechanized all the way from ploughing to harvesting. Out of the profits, and by means of the development and investments assisted by the state, cooperative farming was financially strengthened, and at the same time also fortified organizationally and in its discipline. As it became stronger and was able to offer more, offering a monthly income in cash, for instance, it was also able to demand more. The "eating up" of the poor cooperative by the rich membership proved to be transitory in most places.

Who were the people who in that transitory period nurtured fears and anxieties? Primarily those who examined the questions of household plot production and share-cropping fearing a rearrangement of the political and social balance of power. But as cooperative farming gathered strength, it created a power relationship which made it impossible for agricultural small commodity production to regain its primacy and determinant role in the Hungarian village. On the contrary, cooperative production based on cooperative ownership became irrevocably the determinant factor.

#### THE SPECIAL TASKS OF THE HOUSEHOLD PLOT

Considerable differences exist in the agricultural policy of socialist countries, partly for historic and local reasons, partly due to differences in judgement. There is a socialist country—Poland—where private property still dominates in agriculture, and collective farming is taking shape gradually by way of cooperatives concerned with sales, and major equipment. In Bulgaria concentration in agriculture is powerful and there is a transition to agrarian-industrial forms. Household plots had once already been entirely liquidated, but this did not prove a success and the trend was reversed.

Since the shortage of capital is always a great problem of collectivization,

and the new cooperatives simultaneously need to accumulate and to obtain credit or non-returnable aid from the state for their investments—the organization of the cooperatives stops at a certain point. Where the soil and the climate are too unfavourable, and thus the accumulation of capital is almost hopeless, and too much is needed from the state, private farming is either left intact or only looser forms of communal farming are established. But in such cases the limits become vague. It happens consequently that in two essentially identically endowed villages there is a cooperative farm in one, and none in the other.

If one is to believe those who put their faith in the superiority of private initiative, then in such a situation, given two villages which had similar difficulties earlier, the one where collective farming is practised either receives very large state subsidies or conspicuously lags behind the other where private farming has survived. It is interesting that, for instance, in Transylvania, in Rumania, after collectivization, some previously very poor mountain villages boomed since the remaining individual peasants did all-right selling their products in town markets.

Much the same occurred here and there in Hungary. It more often happens though that those peasants who were very happy fifteen years ago that collectivization had passed them by today bitterly complain of having been left out. They complain that they have to fight for everything themselves. . . . This refers both to state aid given the cooperatives and to the benefits achieved by joining of forces.

When Hungarian farming began to show signs of conspicuous flourishing in the sixties, though there were always some types or individual cooperatives that caused anxiety, many looked on certain aspects only, stressing them. New, more powerful tractors were introduced, working to greater depth and breaking through a water-insulating layer that had developed over centuries. This was a huge gain in itself. The increased quantity of fertilizers, and their packaging in polyethylene sacks, was extremely important. Earlier half the effective substance had been lost between factory and field; new intensive Italian, Soviet and Hungarian strains of wheat have been introduced. According to others the toleration shown towards the household plots and the thus restored "petty capitalism", newly revived initiative, proved decisive. It would be possible to continue to enumerate endlessly the biassed comments of the technologists, biologists and others.

All this was important indeed. But let us not forget factors that were even more important. For instance: the profitability of agricultural production increased, and the average agricultural income approached the average of the industrial income. A financial interest could be created that

people were aware of, and harmony in cooperatives between the expert management and the control and guidance exercised by the membership was improved. Most important of all, around 1970 household plot work was judged more soberly by those in authority. It should not rival work on collective lands, of course, but it should not be strangled either. Small-scale and large-scale production should form an organic unity, the former should not lose strength, but gain in it. This is dictated by mutual interests, and a rational division of tasks and labour.

Has household plot farming then been unequivocally accepted officially in the long term? If it has then it should be organized better and integrated into the structure of agricultural production as a whole. How? For instance, a member who fattens cattle or kine at home should receive fodder from the common crop, or mixed feed from the large-scale mixing plant. Some members gave up farming household plots concentrating on animal husbandry, chiefly the fattening of pigs, in the backyard. Seedlings or day-old chicks were provided by the cooperative. Piglets as well, but, *vice versa*, those with sows could supply their litters which they had no facilities for rearing themselves, to the cooperative. The division of labour should accord with local circumstances, and the interests of both parties should not clash but serve each other and those of the state.

Numerous cooperatives provided professional agronomic advice for household plot farming. This was needed owing to different methods and crops dictated by the difference in scale. And yet the latest fruits of science were badly needed in that type of farming as well, though personal skills and brawn as well as the wisdom of the ages were naturally given more scope.

#### THE PERMANENCE OF THE TEMPORARY

The household plot assisted peasants during the transitory period straight after their entry, making it easier to adjust their working ways and living habits. They were useful to cooperatives at a time when gathering strength was the order of the day, allowing members another source of income and tying down an oversupply of labour. The state was happy. State farms and cooperatives did not supply agricultural produce in sufficient quantity and of sufficient quality for domestic consumption and exports but household plots did.

As I said above, more than one-third of Hungarian agriculture has not been provided by large-scale production. In the five-year plan period now closed the exact ratio was 64-36 per cent. While some thought not so long

ago that, for various reasons, small-scale production would diminish, even if only to a small extent, the new five-year plan foresees an annual 4.6 per cent rise in the large-scale production of agriculture and an annual 1.4 per cent increase in small-scale production. Not reduction but development? Nevertheless the ratios are supposed to shift to the benefit of the large farm, but—slowly. Why? What justifies the lasting nature of small commodity production, what explains why in the first half of 1976 a broad campaign was conducted favouring surviving small-scale agricultural production that had been attacked so much earlier, and which was put in jeopardy again in 1974-75?

Today 15 per cent of agricultural land is farmed on a small scale. Co-operative members farm nearly 600,000 hectares as household plots; the workers of the state farms and country teachers receive some land as part of their emoluments; what are called auxiliary farms amount to 550,000 hectares: mostly vegetable plots, small vineyards and orchards.

Good results did not settle things. Less than two years ago it was argued that an end should be put to a situation which was alleged to disturb the socialist evolution of property and production relations. It was suggested that private property in land should be abolished completely (including the ownership of building sites, home units flats and cottages); others were content to insist that the difference between group (i.e. cooperative) property and total social (state) property should be reduced and eliminated once and for all.

This debate goes beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it to say about group property that in the cooperatives the share of common property, which is indivisible, is growing automatically year after year. An artificial acceleration of this process would have no practical use at all. It would disturb public opinion, and thus reduce the will to work. There is hardly a peasant today who would wish to farm on his own once again. Given the possibility to leave the cooperative together with land and equipment, there would hardly be a taker except such motivated by personal conflicts and not economic reasons. But the principle of the thing is still clear to the hearts of large numbers of the older generation. When it comes to the unification of group and total social ownership, it is difficult to understand the practical significance, while changing the present set-up would also disturb public opinion. Today's difference must manifest itself in the right of disposal, inasmuch as the principal guiding organ of the cooperative is the assembly of the membership, the general meeting. But today, when expert management is necessarily very important on every farm, and when we want workers in industry to have their say as well, in a way that expert

guidance and social control should complement each other as they do in cooperative agriculture—it would be difficult to justify a “further development” of today’s ownership relations that is divorced from natural evolution.

To put it plainly, what was argued again in 1974 was that while in towns workers and others have to live of their wages, possibly increasing their income only through overtime, a second job, or moonlighting, the agricultural population get hold of high incomes through easy work and no little profiteering made possible by a boom in the free market.

This train of thought is erroneous or gappy in several respects. High peasant incomes are backed by hard work indeed. There is little speculation or unearned income. But it is even more important to see which sections of society are really interested in small-scale agricultural production. The auxiliary farms are, of course, in the hands of non-peasants, either owned or tenanted. But not even household plots serve the welfare of the peasantry alone. Workers and others do their share of the work to some extent, and get their share of the income.

This seemingly surprising fact follows from the contemporary Hungarian social structure. 1.8 million families conduct small-scale farming in Hungary today. This means half the population although the share of the agricultural population is already under 25 per cent. Sociologists find fewer and fewer “pure” peasant and “pure” worker families. This is especially so if one considers the basic unit to be not nuclear families living in one household (parents and young children), but the families in a much broader sense, where two or three generations live in semi-separation, but partly still in touch, assisting each other, and forming to a certain extent an economic and working community, not only a relationship based on sentiment.

Only half of the Hungarian industrial workers live in towns. This means not only that there are many dormitory villages, from which the majority of the working population commutes daily or weekly to another place of employment, but also that in a good number of families the husband is an industrial worker and the wife a member of the agricultural cooperative, or the other way round. It often happens that parents work in agriculture but adolescent children elsewhere. Even where the nuclear families forming the large family are separated by the distance, village parents often help their children living elsewhere using the income of their household plot, and they receive help in return, at peak work periods, at the time of hoeing, harvesting or fruit-picking. Similar collaboration is not infrequent either between brothers and sisters who work in different sectors. All this contributes to the homogenization of society. It helps to equalize differences

of income, and it means a constant flow of information between the basic classes and many sections of society.

Much the same picture appeared when the question of private homes and week-end cottages were considered. Is the role of private resources so great in housing construction because the longing for private property is ineradicable? This is not the only reason. The determinant is rather that the state building industry is unable to cope, and that there are many who do not insist on private ownership but want to have a garden or auxiliary farm, that sort of life can be built up by people these days only out of their own resources, on their own plot, and doing their own building. Seeing the weekend revolution many believed that this was primarily the business of high income professional people and of tradesman. The truth is that today building a week-end cottage—or at least shed—and the cultivation of the garden around it is a working-class pastime as well. Unfortunately, while this is going on collective forms—settlements without fences, with play-grounds and parking lots—are not very popular. Those who work hard want privacy at the week-end. Generations will be needed to produce a change.

News of the 1974 debate and increases in the taxation of agricultural small-scale production already reduced the will to produce. At the same time the price of industrial products necessary in agriculture rose more vigorously than earlier. The price of animals declined on free markets. Consequently profits did too. State procurement was unable to buy all the pigs and cattle. Slaughter-house and processing plant development did not keep pace with the growth in the number of pigs; the meat embargo of the European Common Market created anxiety in Hungary as well, the country being accustomed to high agricultural exports, at least until the Soviet Union showed itself ready to take the surplus.

These accumulated reasons caused a powerful decline in backyard fattening of cattle and kine. In 1975 the number of cattle brought to market was reduced by 200,000 and the number of pigs sold by 1,600,000. The dairy surplus of the preceding years was followed by a milk shortage, and the supply of pork deteriorated. In Hungary pork means *meat* for many. A decline in the production of fruit and vegetables was expected as well.

#### AN ANSWER TO THE BASIC QUESTION

In this delicate situation a general reappraisal of principle and practice was started. This had to be done the more so since, while reservations con-

cerning small-scale agricultural production were formulated mainly in the defence of the (presumed) interests of the working class, it was now suddenly discovered that, if supply was reduced on the free market and in the state shops, this would be felt primarily by workers and their families; it was discovered also that it was not possible to touch the income and interests of the peasantry without hurting workers and other sections of society as well.

Rapid calculations have shown that not only real or imagined injuries and inequities had to be taken into consideration. If it were wished to replace small-scale by large-scale production, approximately 10,000–11,000 million forints would have to be invested and a turnover capital of 4,000–5,000 million forint provided. This is approximately the total amount invested in a single year in the seventies. This explains the importance of household plots and small-scale agricultural output from the financial aspect.

Let us have a look at another, not less important, factor. Labour employed in small-scale production amounts to 230–240 million working hours, which equals the annual work of 750–800 thousand persons. Today the number of active earners in Hungary is somewhat over 5 million out of 10 million inhabitants. There is an acute labour shortage. In other words, small-scale agricultural production increases the labour and working time fund available to social production by one-seventh.

By putting an end to small-scale commodity production, hardly any labour would be freed for large-scale production. What the small farm utilizes is mostly not ready for mobilization elsewhere, or in any other way. Millions of working hours are added mostly by the additional work of those who are employed elsewhere, the activity of housewives and pensioners, and the help at home by children. This represents not only crude labour, not only physical exertion, but also expert knowledge, accumulated skill and special experience which cannot be used in any other way.

Let us now compare two figures which have already been mentioned separately. Small-scale production is conducted on 15 per cent of the agricultural area—and small-scale production provides 36 per cent of agricultural output. 15 per cent thus accounts for 36 per cent. The reason is partly that animal husbandry represents a high share in small commodity production, and fodder does not always come from that 15 per cent area. And in addition, the fattening of cattle and kine, the production of early vegetables, vineyards and orchards, but the list may be continued: bee-keeping, breeding rabbits in hatches, the force-feeding of geese, the production of flower seeds, etc., which account for an export income of tens and hundreds of millions of dollars—are the most labour-intensive sections of agriculture. In other

words, small-scale production is intensive, and is efficient especially where mechanization is most difficult, where the role of skills, know-how and a joy taken in one's labour is the greatest, that is in those areas where large-scale farming has great difficulties.

Small-scale production is especially important where the extension of large-scale production requires much investment, and where the work of one's hands may be used to advantage. The importance of the fact had been obscured for some time, but became clear again by the beginning of 1976, that in Hungary half of the output of beef cattle, of animal products, of grapes and other fruit crop comes from small producers, including 90 per cent of small animals and 70-80 per cent of the various berries.

The household plots and auxiliary farms contribute 14-15 per cent to the agricultural commodity fund, and in the case of some products—eggs, pigs, fruit—25-40 per cent. Half the produce grown on small vegetable patches is used by the producers themselves, and this relieves pressure on the retail trade network.

For example, let us consider the growing of early radish in the Szeged area, in Southern Hungary, a region famous for paprika. The seed is sorted in winter. The most wholesome are then placed on blotting paper in rows 5 centimetres apart, available at the time of spring germination. By this method days or weeks are gained, and with them a high price. The country benefits, since early radish is exported by air to Northern Europe. But only those who know how small radish seeds are, can truly appreciate the work involved. No doubt automation to do the job could be designed. But at what price?

Often the small farm is not only the organic complement to the large farm, but sometimes also its living criticism. Not only the objective difficulties of large-scale production, but the subjective ones as well are among the reasons for its survival. Stabling costs grew to high heavens, because designers and those who commission them insist on something modern and concrete despising cheap local materials; fans are used for ventilation instead of stable doors and gable-windows; fodder is distributed by extensive and unreliable machinery, although a man and his pitch fork may be more efficient, repairs are slow, etc. A pig sty in a backyard in all its simplicity flies in the face of the holy writ of economics that it is cheaper to fatten a thousand pigs together than ten or three. In other words, small-scale production requires much less investment. And this lower investment does not burden the social funds, on which there is so much demand, but the savings of private persons.

These recognitions have led the government to discuss again in February



1975 the situation of the household plots and auxiliary farms, and to decide that their production should be further encouraged. By this the government in essence continued the general policy in force until spring 1974. It resolved that effective assistance had to be given to household plots and other similar farms based on the work of the family, that opportunities should be given for the fuller utilization of production capacities, that the safety of production and sale had to be maintained and developed for them in the long run too, and all this, of course, parallel with the primary development of socialist large-scale farms, the producers' cooperatives and state farms, but not at the expense of the withering away of the household plots and other small farms.

#### WHO PRODUCE AND WHY?

The debate on household plots and auxiliary farms and on small agricultural commodity production ebbed and flowed. In the meantime, those who were looking into the future were not particularly afraid of unfavourable resolutions of principle and practical measures. They knew well that this was a delicate area, where the arbitrary and dogmatic ideas were soon corrected by the severe criticism of reality. Paradoxically, a much greater danger than impatient ideas that thought socialist evolution to be endangered, was presented by carefully watched socialist evolution itself and its real progress. What other reason was there for the fact that as the older age-groups retired, the first factor of agricultural small commodity production—the human factor, the producer—became rarer and rarer.

Indeed: what was it that moved the tireless aged, the tenacious hoary headed, those of middle age who were still preserving the ideas of yesterday to reinvest what they earned? To work day and night, without fun and games or annual holidays? Partly, undoubtedly, acquisitiveness itself, the devil of ownership, but also the ancient instinct to create a better life for their children.

Today this is primarily the task of society. Some know this, some don't. Or if they know it, they don't really believe it. And in many ways, they don't experience it as yet either. It is true that the school and the doctor are free. And yet, those who get a better "start" at home, begin life with many advantages still. In villages the majority still acquire a dwelling only if they build it for themselves. Or rather, if the parents build a house or the larger family unites to pool forces providing financial help, and putting a shoulder to the wheel. The income of young people will not buy a car all

that quickly, especially not if there is a child in the new family, perhaps more than one. Natural instincts and old habits can only partly be faulted and called anachronistic. They are still right to make great efforts to help their children, often their grandchildren, with the work of their own hands. Not only by maintaining society and the economy, but also by maintaining the cohesion of their own smaller community, and as one of the cements of the latter, their small farm.

But these children and grandchildren, although they mostly deign to accept the result of the work of the parents and grandparents, are mostly unwilling to continue. Less and less do they fully fit into the family work organization. Occasionally they are ready to help, but they reject and despise the unceasing work which means rising at dawn, and which rejects going out, holidays, or the watching of the screen be it silver or small. This is the reason why small farms also have to invest. And this is why the situation of pig-breeding and especially of cattle-keeping is the most delicate. Early vegetables grown under polyethylene covers need intermittent work only and a delay of few hours or of a day does not usually cause an irreparable loss, but pigs have to be fed and cows have to be milked.

Is the social basis of small-scale production being reduced then? The number of auxiliary farms that do less for commodity production may increase, since the work done in these is more of a way of life, relaxation and recreation. But given adequate regulation, care and financial interest, the more important small-scale agricultural production on the household plots is not threatened by a sudden drop either, and even the growth planned for the next five years may be realized. The differences in the way of thinking of old and young indicated above is counteracted by the fact that in the countryside small commodity production is still a huge help when starting a family.

In the past many who drove themselves from day-break to nightfall as their own masters, could not change their way of living after they joined the cooperative either, they did not reduce their work, but divided it between the collective and their private plot. But today there are already numerous examples that those who struggled with all their strength in the beginning—until they acquired a house, a car, the goods needed for a more modern way of living—started to lead another, richer, fuller, more dignified life once they possessed these basic goods. They no longer drive their children, they themselves too find time and opportunity to relax, travel, study, enjoy themselves. They are able to change gear. Their life is divided into two stages: the first is the accumulative stage, the second the consuming one.

I am neither an economist nor a sociologist. In trying to sketch an explanation of the survival of Hungarian small-scale agricultural production, its economic, political and social weight, its output and productivity, I am relying on specialized articles and official resolutions of state and Party bodies. But I have not written a specialized study in addition to experience as a journalist interested in many things.

The principal characteristic of Hungarian agricultural policy is the consideration of the realities on which a new light is thrown in the course of the constant changes, the flexible formation of the methods while strictly heeding basic principles. It is not easy even for an eyewitness to make a sober analysis and judgement.

But while analysis is the constant task not only of decision-makers, but also of sociologists, journalists and economists who assist the former and inform others, economic realities provide their own judgement. This is reflected in the shop-windows, in the ample assortment of food products in Hungary, in consumption figures, prices, the balance of Hungarian agricultural exports and imports, but also in the clearly visible progress of the Hungarian village, the building going on there, and the standard of living enjoyed.

All in all, Hungarian agriculture shows an average sort of dynamism of growth. It is on the top, however, if growth of production is seen in the context of investments. This shows that it makes good use of available resources, of the skills and industry of the men and women who do the work. This is so not least because it employs a large labour force, physical and mental energy, that cannot be mobilized elsewhere or in any way other than in small-scale farming, hierarchically subordinate to large farms, and working practically in a co-ordinated and sober way that does not endanger the hierarchy.

# THE LIMITS OF COMPASSION

(*Short story*)

by

GÁBOR THURZÓ

**A**nyone who has suffered a loss or bereavement will have learnt the various versions of sympathy. "We all sympathize with you," they say, "in your great bereavement." Or "Rest assured that we are with you in your irreparable loss." "The Schunda family and grandma express their heart-felt condolences," says a telegram. And—"Think how much better it is for the departed." I am rather sceptical about these expressions of sympathy. I have sent telegrams of this kind myself and generally felt no sympathy at all. They are routine formalities, part and parcel of good social form. If they fail to make your loss or bereavement easier to bear; if you throw the telegram or letter into the wastepaper basket without feeling any relief on reading it; if you can be sure that neither you nor your affliction will ever cross the minds of their senders, they are still good for making your narrowed world expand a little around you. With a bit a self-deception you can even feel that you are not alone. But nothing can alter the nature of things. The black-bordered telegrams and the stammering condolence calls are ephemeral. What then? You remain what you were or what you are in your momentarily none-too-enviable state.

You will have heard about the death—my loss. Fortunately you learnt about it after I was over the first shock. Thus I cannot reproach you with commiseration. It's all for the best because I can tell you everything now. Will you listen? Thanks.

No matter how and why—I have been left alone. Should anyone decide to leave you or die, it's all the same. In certain cases *Lajosmizse* is as far away as the other world. The departed is what matters. And the one who stays behind. In any case I was the one left behind. Nothing has changed much outwardly; in fact everything is more organized than ever. A kind of disorder is gone—to live with anyone is disorder itself even if everything

looks spick and span, the floor is glossy and you can find a shirt or a tie in the wardrobe without opening your eyes. Disorderliness has been ousted stealthily by malignant order. In this case by emptiness. I could have imagined lots of things but this vacuum. Now I can, since I have been into it. To come home from the cemetery or from a railway station makes no difference. I came home too. To sit up by the bed of a dying man or to wait for the end of a dying affair is essentially the same. I went home, sat down, and waited. I had no idea for what. The bed was empty. I waited for the first telephone call, the first visitor, the first telegram. Something, that is, to remind me of what I wanted not to think of. Stupid enough of me. I was waiting for sympathy. In my case, the justification.

Not one single call the whole day! Everywhere I went or sat down aimlessly in the flat—my every movement lacked purpose or meaning—I took the telephone with me on its long cord. I'd pick up the receiver if it rang before the second buzz to receive the condolences. And protest naturally. Shortly after midday I could stand it no longer. At random I called Zsóka first, asking without having the slightest interest in the answer:

"How are you people these days? I haven't heard from you for weeks."

"Oh, is that you?" said Zsóka. "I almost didn't recognize your voice."

"You find it's changed?"

"No, but it sounded sort of funny, you know. Not that I don't understand. If one suffers a loss like yours. . ."

"What loss?"

I waited for her to say what had happened to me.

"Come off it and don't act, okay?"

"All right."

"Your voice gets sort of cracked at a time like this, you know. It's as if that wretched ticker rose in your throat. That's why I said your voice sounded so funny to me."

"I'm feeling just fine." Why shouldn't I tell a lie?

"You know what," said Zsóka, "I'll take it on your word of honour. And to make you feel even better I might as well tell you that both Pista and I are with you. Take this as consolation or sympathy or what you want. All those many true friends of yours who're sympathizing with you now. . . But need I explain? In a month or two you'll have forgotten the whole thing. We'll try and help you over it. You'll spend a lot of time with us."

We said good-bye. Needless to say they didn't get in touch with me for a year.

I waited and waited to be called. In vain, as before. I dialled again, the

line was busy. I dialled a second time. A third time—all the lines were engaged. At long last, the seventh or the tenth number answered.

"I was just about to call you," said Szinner.

"What for?" I wished he would say it. I needed it.

"Why, old man," he fenced, "*schwamm drüber* as we Swabians used to say. I'm sorry for you, I sympathize with you in your bereavement."

"Bereavement?"

"Well, I can't think of a better word. The point is we're with you. If at any time you feel you can't bear being alone any more, just give a call and we'll be over."

I dialled another four or five numbers. All of them assured me of their sympathy and told me time healed all wounds. As usual, Guszti Tormás tried to be funny: "Time's better than a faith healer." And everybody was behind me. That was what was so terrible! Those sincere voices! Those gestures invisibly making light of my loss. Every time I dialled I knew the response. Yet I could not resist. One number after another with more and more superfluous, nauseating consolations, condolences, sympathies. Why was I glued to the telephone? What was the use of provoking the little society contained in my address-book? I can't explain it to you. But you'll find it out for yourself once you're left alone as irrevocably as I've been.

I had two calls. Mrs. Szalóki's, commiserating and tearful, but asking me to dinner—vegetable marrow with dills and paprika steak. I accepted for Sunday dinner though I hate vegetable marrow with dills. I duly arrived when the bells chimed twelve, rang but nobody answered. A neighbour informed me that they had packed in the morning and gone on an outing. I have never heard from them since. But it isn't this I'm waiting you to tell. It's the other call.

The telephone of Karcsi Borenich, my one-time pupil and later assistant at the university, was at first meaningless, even incomprehensible. But I have to tell you it was then I discovered how we can live in a human community. It is never the big things but the small ones that count, the insignificant things, the trivialities. These are what we have to discover in each other; they give us an angle to approach one another. It's no longer sympathy, it's empathy. Not the tears! Not the handshakes with closed eyes, assuring us of loyalty! Tears are cheap; comfort cools in the grasp of hands. What Karcsi Borenich surprised me with was a sign that human relations were not after all so hopeless, and it is not the commonplaces of sympathy that make the link between one man and another. And even if human relations are not always to be trusted, it's still a good thing that they exist.

I hadn't seen or heard from Karcsi Borenich for a year at least.

"Hello," he said now, "it's a good thing I find you at home."

"Hello. Why?"

"I've acquired a three-month-old Irish setter. Fabulous. We hesitated a bit though. I mean Mari and I couldn't make up our minds which to buy, the setter or a poodle. You know what a poodle is like?"

"I do."

"We were a little heartbroken. But two dogs would be too much."

"Is that what you're calling me about?" And I began to feel offended.

"Well, we thought a dog would suit you just wonderfully. I mean Lady."

"Lady? Is that what she's called? A poodle?"

"You can rename her. And then—this is where my selfishness comes in—it would belong to us a little. I wish you'd seen her following with her Gilberto on his leash to the door—so dumb and envious."

"Gilberto? Who's he?"

"My dog. Wait a second," he said, and without asking me if I wanted the dog or not—"I'll give you the address."

He dictated the address and put down the receiver. I held the paper in my hand. Unknown name, distant street, telephone number. All this meant a poodle. Black or brown I had no idea. I crumpled up the paper—what did I need a poodle for? What difference could it make? It would only add to my troubles. I was angry at Borenich when I should have been grateful. A word of comfort was the least I had expected. Some empty and half-hearted comfort! For whatever I might have felt about sympathy, it was what I needed. But going on about a dog for half an hour! I smoothed the piece of paper and went in the evening to see the owner of the dog.

Lady was an aggressive black little ball of hair. An avid, jubilant, yelping, fawning creature, placid and loving at a good word or a rub. I tousled her and fondled her, she lay on her back licking and biting my hands and arms, surrendering herself completely with no idea of my vague intentions. She gave herself to me ardently, wantonly and irresponsibly. I was moved and I only learnt later—when she was mine—that her quickly excited, self-devoting emotions must be kept on a short leash. If there had been somebody else bartering for her, she would have fallen in love with him just as easily. I bought her, she jumped for joy and was all loyalty—only those inclined to infidelity, I know well enough, would look at you with so much devotion.

The next day, early in the morning, Borenich rang me up again.

"I hear you bought her. Congratulations."

"A fortune. Is she worth it?"

"You bet. She's house-trained, I was told."

"Sort of." I glanced at a wet spot on the carpet.

"Your best plan is to rub her nose in it two or three times."

"I'll do that."

"And remember to walk her three times a day, in the morning, at noon and in the evening. Good long strolls!"

"I will."

"You're aware that with a muzzle she can travel on public transport."

"I didn't know that."

"Good long walks in the country once in a while. They strengthen her muscles—and do you good too, sitting by yourself the whole day."

Another call in the afternoon. There's a grassy spot by the Chain Bridge, a romping ground for puppies. Take her down, let her make friends. The next morning the telephone rang again. An important piece of advice, he almost forgot: I should put some shredded carrots in her food. Sometimes he called me up twice a day. I shouldn't bath her for the time being but get her inoculated right away. Take a licence and a pedigree certificate, the Dog Breeders Association sells special dog food rich in vitamins. Have someone send "Kau-Schuh" or "Kau-Knoten" from Vienna, digestible artificial bones made of buffalo skin, to make her teeth stronger; if I have no one to send them he'll try to get me some, Gilberto just loves them. . . . And so on and so on. I did not see Borenich for months but he was always interfering in my life and a friendship deeper than ever developed between us: the intimate friendship of dog owners. The cares we shared! His delicate, fastidious Gilberto, mine the unstoppably active and impudent little poodle. All we talked about, sometimes for half an hour, were things like Gilberto's tapeworms and Lady's bouts of diarrhoea. Borenich never once conveyed his sympathy and never mentioned my so-called "loss".

Gradually my resentment wore off and then evaporated. I began to warm to these telephone conversations. I asked questions, he answered them and turned me into a regular dog's master. Soon, at least on my part, the whole thing became a performance. Why did I have to ask a new hand at rearing dogs about what and how to do it? I know enough living with Csipisz my cocker spaniel for fifteen years. I knew perfectly well a dog demands no different treatment from a man; at best you had to take into account its canine nature and adapt it to the circumstances, that is, your own desires. Borenich was enthusiastic about Gilberto and told me he was worthy of an Irish setter, not only in his appearance but also in his entire behaviour; he glided on asphalt with dignity, like the train floated behind a queen. He wanted to know if Lady trotted daintily with her nose and tuft in the air: for this is how a poodle ought to walk, fastidious, head held high like



a circus horse. It went on like this for weeks, at first daily, then on and off, and by the time it was spring only now and then. But he never once came to call on me because then he would have had to face that certain loss. I was living alone, he could not have helped noticing it.

I nodded approval at his every piece of advice and made a note of it all—without ever heeding a word of it of course. Why should I have? I could have given him advice from my own store of experiences. Lady grew and developed as befit her age. She grew and developed, at least as far as bones and muscles went, as a poodle generally does. But she became what I wanted her to be. And she watched attentively to see what I might want of her. By the spring she had grown a thick coat of hair. Her muzzle became shaggy and fearful like a Chinese dragon-dog's! And she did not step daintily, far from it! She did not go trotting in a circle like a circus horse! She went nosing about and goes like that even today. To look at, the perfect specimen of a poodle but her bearing and behaviour is that of a spaniel the gundog, of the former Csipisz. If it had not been I who reconditioned her to resemble her predecessor, I would perhaps now feel ashamed in her company in the street. Her friend the miniature Bogi possesses every characteristic of a poodle and carries herself trippingly and fastidiously by her master, nose in the air, as a poodle should. She does not go nosing about for a scent, nor does she dash across the road after a sparrow on the wing. Not so Lady! She crawls on her belly and follows every scent and track and pulls at the lead every time a pigeon flutters! She stayed a poodle on the outside but has acquired all the characteristics of a hunting spaniel. The only thing she's never grown to like is water and she still gives a wide berth to every puddle she encounters; only from one of her poodle habits have I been unable to denature her. But only in this way could she become mine. I have been unable to make up for that certain loss but I could for Csipisz. And that was something.

When on that spring Sunday of dissolving mists I met Borenich and Gilberto at last on the Hármashatárhegy, not only Lady was different from the one I had grown to like but, living with her, I was different too.

The green grass frantic and jubilant with new birth, cascading down the slopes, the sprouting leaves, the clearing and deepening sky above the hills and the white clumps of may-bushes huddling together in ecstasy! We walked downhill with the sleek Gilberto, a whitish-greyish blur making lazy long jumps—beside and behind and in front and all around, rolling, somersaulting, now darting after a rising bird with her head held high, now sniffing and nosing a scent doggedly, then rushing forward, threading herself under Gilberto's belly, attacking a tree only to run back at a frenzied trot.

That was Lady. We remained speechless. This spring did not need words.

"I say," I spoke first, "I haven't heeded any of your advice."

"I can see."

"I knew about everything anyway. Except one thing. I didn't know you can take a muzzled dog on public transport. When all is said and done, I was deeply hurt."

"What about?"

"You forgot Csipisz! You give *me* advice—of all people! You hadn't had the slightest idea what a dog was before."

"Of course I didn't and I still don't know much about them."

"But then how did you dare advise *me*, the experienced dogowner. . . ."

We stopped by a blooming may-bush. Gilberto was tired and lay down—the way a beautiful hand drops a silken kerchief—and Lady had come running back too with ears flapping. Borenich laughed in confusion, and went red in the face:

"Look. . . Well, how shall I put it. . . Yes. I knew what had happened to you. And we can't help offering comfort to those we like. What should I have said? Bear up, old man? Or please accept my heartfelt condolences? Or perhaps. . . No, I didn't think any of that would do. It was then I saw this little devil. Very good, I thought, I'd talk you into buying her. Now that you'd been left alone, you must have lost most of your resistance to suggestions. . . Buy that dog. Then let's see a handbook. You can't imagine how long I studied it before I came up with all that good advice!"

"And all the time you knew. . . ."

"Yes, I knew that you could have given me advice. If it gives you any pleasure of justification I might as well tell you that none of the 'helpful points' of the handbook was really worth anything anyway. I ought to have trained Gilberto as the needs of the moment dictated. But it's no use crying over spilt milk. Look at the perfect Irish setter!"

"Perfect!"

The two tired dogs in the shadow of the may-bush were to me perfect and functional. What shall I do now? Shall I thank Borenich for the dog and with her the fact that. . . I didn't speak for a while; we started and went slithering down the slope towards the wide blue horizon. Bolting before us was Gilberto—and rolling and clowning all over the place was Lady.

A glider appeared swiftly and noiselessly from behind the hill, hovering above us. We admired it while Gilberto watched it and Lady went yapping at it. Then the glider banked and disappeared the way it had come, and we continued our way, vanishing into the woods in the wake of the two dogs.

(Translated by L. T. András)

# A LESSON FOR THE OLD CONTINENT

*The Image of America  
in the Hungarian Revolution of 1848/49*

by

ALADÁR URBÁN

**F**or years following the French Revolution, revolutionaries throughout Europe waited for a signal from Paris. After 1830 there were increasing hopes that the reestablishment of the French Republic would at the same time be the first step towards liberation for Italians and Poles, and the other oppressed in Europe. Expecting and working for change, Europe's youth, from the "Young Ireland" movement to a group of writers known as "Young Hungary", shared these hopes. Because of the Metternich system and feudal conditions, the latter were deprived of the possibility of legal participation in political life at home. Since there were no Hungarian political exiles before 1848, this group could not have been connected with the exiles of different nationalities and opinions who had gathered in Paris. However, the flow of ideas could not be stopped; this Hungarian group included members of the nobility, and even those who were not, could find out about recent developments in Western Europe. The French Revolution was studied in works by Michelet and Lamartine hot off the press, and knowledge of the United States was based on a travel book published in 1834 by Sándor Bölöni Farkas (*Utazás Észak-Amerikában*)<sup>1</sup>. This was supplemented by Tocqueville who was published in Hungarian translation between 1841 and 1843.

Indeed, the 1848 February revolution in Paris sparked off the long awaited European revolutionary wave. On March 15, under its influence—but following events in Vienna—the youth of Buda and Pest rose and the feudal Diet meeting in Pozsony also acted and passed reform legislation. This joint action forced the Habsburgs to accept the constitutional separate existence of Hungary within the Austrian Empire, and consequently the idea of a responsible government, the first in the history of the country.

<sup>1</sup> See Theodore Schoenman's and Helen Benedek Schoenman's article on p. 97. of this issue.

The constitutional changes ensured freedom of the press, as a result of which numerous new liberal or rather radical publications appeared, mainly in Buda and Pest. As can be expected in revolutionary times, the number of posters and leaflets also multiplied. Encouraged by an unprecedented freedom of speech, they promptly reacted to events at home and abroad. These publications became important shapers of readers' opinions; at the same time, through frequent publication of readers' letters, they expressed more than merely the journalists' opinions. Though European events, primarily those in Paris, Vienna and Milan, served as examples to Hungarian revolutionaries in the first place, these publications make it clear that knowledge of the United States as the "country of free institutions" was in the minds of leaders and participants in the revolution.

## I

In the early months the revolution in Paris and, even more so, the anti-feudal character and radicalism of the French Revolution seemed to overshadow all other historical precedents in the Hungary of 1848, primarily as regards the Left. On March 17, 1848, two days after the revolutionary youth of Pest had acted with such success, Sándor Petőfi noted in his diary: "For years the history of the French revolutions, this new gospel, has been my almost exclusive reading, my morning and evening prayer, my daily bread, through which the second redeemer of mankind, freedom, preaches the word." At the end of March, Count István Széchenyi, a moderate liberal who supported gradual economic reforms, wrote in his journal that in his view the guillotine would operate in Pest within the month! The events themselves also offered parallels; e.g. when on May 17 Ferdinand, King of Hungary and Emperor of Austria, secretly left Vienna and fled to Innsbruck, it reminded the contemporaries of Louis XVI's flight; when the Croatian and Slavonian provinces led by the Banus Baron Jellačić, who remained loyal to the Crown, turned against the Hungarian government, the press, and the ministry as well, compared this action to the Vendée uprising. The French orientation was backed by arguments as well. In the weekly *Életképek*, a young historian of the Left, Pál Vasvári (who was killed at the head of a band of irregulars in 1849), wrote in the summer of 1848, in a series of articles on the French Revolution: "The history of nations begins with the French Revolution."

Given such obvious French orientation, it would not be surprising if the story and example of the American Republic had not even been mentioned, at least not until events forced the Hungarian Revolution to defend its own

achievements by the force of arms. The contemporary press however tells another story. Despite the understandably increased interest in French developments and the easily drawn parallels, the changes that had taken place on the other side of the Atlantic were not forgotten. This is well demonstrated by an article published in the fifth issue of the leftist *Márczius Tizenötödike*. While emphasizing the importance of the National Guard, the anonymous author warned that the old muskets issued by the Buda arsenal to equip the National Guard were inadequate. They were made for a standing army and the National Guard had other functions, it therefore needed different equipment and a different strategy. The author stressed that such skills could not be obtained in Europe since military strength here was based on the regiments of the line. Referring to the American militia he continued: "Sail across the Ocean and there, in America, they know full well what the National Guard means and what kind of weaponing it needs; they know that when well-organized, it forms a powerful and invincible army." This was shortly followed by a reference to the American Revolution itself, at a time when the journal defended the National Guards, who distinguished themselves with red armbands and who would have preferred a republic to the freshly established constitutional monarchy. The capital's moderate citizenry, worried about revolutionary stirrings, was thus warned: "The revolution, fellow citizens, . . . which took place recently in Europe and America, is the foundation and source of all that is right and good." *Életképek* compared George Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette to János Hunyadi and Miklós Zrínyi, Hungarian leaders in the fight against the Turks, calling them the real hero-saints. In its standing section "Hall of Fame", *Nemzetőr*, a weekly, devoted a five-part series to Washington. Not even Napoleon was given that much space.

This comparison of the American militia with the National Guard, more precisely, the plea that the National Guard be—as were the Minute Men—"a force ready for action all the time", was issued right after the Ides of March that had started the ball rolling. The peaceful and constitutional achievements of the United States were also emphasized in this relatively peaceful phase of the revolution, not yet troubled by a defensive war. Even though, at this time, the official programme of Count Lajos Batthyány's government did not include a written constitution for Hungary, the Left ("the radicals" as they were called) occasionally suggested the need for one. The newspaper *Reform*, basing itself on work done by Raumer in German, described the Federal Constitution at the time of the inauguration of the first Hungarian National Assembly: "Now that the question of a constitution is under discussion not only in a number of places abroad but in

Title page. Károly Mészáros's collection  
of "New Constitutions in Europe", 1848.

**EUROPA**

**LEGUJABB ALKOTMÁNYAI.**

**KÜLÖNÖS TEKINTETTEL**

**EUROPA TÁRSADALMI ÁLLÁSÁRA.**

KÖZLI:

**MÉSZÁROS KÁROLY.**

*Károly Mészáros*

**ALKOTMÁNYA**

az

**EGYESÜLT AMERIKAI STATUSOKNAK.**

Mi népe az egyesült statusoknak, hogy tökéletesb egységet formáljunk, megalapítsuk az igazságszolgáltatást, biztosítsuk a bel csendet, gondoskodjunk a köz védelemről, neveljük az általános jólétet s állandókká tegyük mind magunkra, mind maradékainkra nézve a szabadság áldásait: e jelen alkotmányt készíttjük, határozzuk, s alapítjuk meg Amerika egyesült statusaira nézve.

**Első czikkely.**

**Első szakasz.**

Az egyesültstatusok congressusa, melly egy tanácsból s egy képviselők házából fog állani, fel lesz ruházva minden e jelen alkotmány által meghatározott törvényhozó hatalmakkal.

**Második szakasz.**

1) A képviselők háza fog a külön statusok népe által, minden másod évben választandó tagokból állani; a választók kik minden egyes statusban a képviselők választására megbizva lesznek, tartoznak azon tulaj-

Pesten 1848.

**MAGYAR NYELVÉN**

KÖNYVÁRUDÁJÁBAN FERENCZIEK-TERÉN 410. SZÁM ALATT.

*The Constitution of the United States.  
From Károly Mészáros's collection,  
as an introduction to recent European  
constitutions.*

## FÜGGETLENSÉGI NYILATKOZATA

AZ

### EGYESÜLT STATUSOKNAK.

**H**a történetek folytán egy nép kényszerült politikai kapcsait mellyek azt egy mással egyesíték felbontani, és a földi hatalmasságok közt azon elkülönzött és egyjogú állást elfoglalni, mellyre a természet törvényei és azok alkotója által feljogosítva van, megkívánja az emberek véleménye iránti kellő tisztelet, hogy e valásnak indító okait nyilvánosan hirdesse.

Mi magokban világosaknak és bizonyítást sem szükséglőknek tartjuk a következő igazságokat: hogy az emberek egyenlőknek születtek, hogy ők alkotójuk által bizonyos elidegeníthetlen jogokkal vannak felruházva, hogy ezek közé tartozik az élet, a szabadság és a boldogság utáni törekvés, hogy e jogok biztosítására az emberek közt kormányok állitattak fel, mellyek jogszerű hatalmukat a kormányzottak beleegyezéséből veszik, hogy mindig ha valamelly kormányforma rombolva hat e végezelokra, a népnek jogában áll, azt megváltoztatni vagy eltörlni, új kormányt alkotni, s azt olly elvekre alapítani s hatalmát olly formában rendezni, miként azt önbiztosságára és boldogságára legkívánatosnak tartja. Az eszélyesség parancsolja ugyan hogy rég fenálló kormányok kisszerű és mulékony okok miatt ne változtassanak, s azért bizonyítja is a tapasztalás, hogy az emberek hajlandóbbak eltörni a bántalmakat, míg azok eltérhetők, mint a már egyszer meg-

## ALKOTMÁNY

AZ

### EGYESÜLT - STATUSOKNAK.

**M**i, népe az Egyesült-Statusoknak, hogy tökéletesb egységet formáljunk, megalapítsuk az igazságszolgáltatást, biztosítsuk a belsenedet, gondoskodjunk a köz védelemről, neveljük az általános jólétet s állandókká tegyük mind magunkra, mind maradékainkra nézve a szabadság áldásait: e jelen alkotmányt készítettük, határozzuk s alapítjuk meg Amerika Egyesült-Statusaira nézve:

#### ELSŐ CZIKKELY.

##### Első szakasz.

Az Egyesült-Statusok congressusa, melly egy tanácsból s egy képviselők-házából fog állani, fel lesz ruházva minden e jelen alkotmány által meghatározott törvényhozó hatalmakkal.

##### Második szakasz.

1. A képviselők-háza fog a külön statusok népe által minden másod évben választandó tagokból; a választók, kik minden egyes statusban a képviselők választására megbízva lesznek, tartoznak azon tulajdonokkal birni, mellyek a statusokbeli törvényhozás számosságának választóiban megkívántatnak.

*Az Amerikai Egyesült Státusoknak  
függetlenségi nyilatkozata és alkotmánya.  
(The Declaration of Independence and  
Constitution of the United States of America)  
Introduced and published by M. J. Fraenkel.  
1848*

Hungary as well," the paper argued, "we think it interesting to remind readers of the Constitution of the United States of America." (Those who could only read Hungarian, could refer to Dr. Lardner's many-volumed *Cabinet Cyclopaedia*, sections from which dealing with American history were translated in 1836; Jared Spark's biography of Washington was made available in 1845.)

The reminder proved to be not only a political necessity, but good business as well. Thanks to this, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States were published in the autumn of 1848, the former had already been published by Sándor Bölöni Farkas in 1834, while the American Constitution then appeared for the first time in Hungarian. Subsequently, Károly Mészáros, the secretary for the Society of Equality, published his collection of "New Constitutions in Europe" which included, besides the draft of the Constitution of the Second French Republic, the Norwegian Constitution of 1814, and the 1848 constitutions of the Papal States, Naples, Toscana, Piedmont and the Austrian Empire, the Constitution of the United States. The author thought a knowledge of all these essential for work on the Hungarian constitution. The publication of the Constitution of the United States, as an introduction to recent European constitutions, was considered important by Mészáros "as the greatest example of such institutions". All these show that the Hungarian revolutionary Left undoubtedly showed an interest in and a knowledge of the politics of the Federation of liberated colonies and their constitutional law. This interest was supplemented by the reservations shown towards French constitutional developments by *Kossuth Hírlapja*, the paper of Lajos Kossuth, Minister of Finance in the first Hungarian representative government, who later led the country. In a somewhat conservative article published at the beginning of August 1848, dealing with the draft French constitution, a lawyer argued that the recent trend to centralization it exemplified did not promise to be something worthy of imitation in Hungary.

## 2

Following encouragement by Vienna and flying the Imperial standard, Josip Jellačić, Banus of Croatia, crossed the Drava on September 11, 1848 and moved towards the capital of Hungary. The civil war had started when the Serbs had risen in the South in July. At this critical time, *Marczius Tizenötödike* alluded to the heroic resistance of Carthage and the struggle of the American colonies three days after the report of the attack. "The people of the New World across the seas were prepared to shed blood", to haul



“the ship of independence” into a safe haven and the Hungarians cannot be frightened off by enemy guns either. In November *Kossuth Hírlapja* referred to the American resistance, as a result of which the English army was at Saratoga in 1777, broken “like a common pot” and “an independent power founded on free principles, growing in glory every day, and shaming the whole civilized world, came into being.”

As a result of the armed struggle, major Hungarian papers found the example and experience of America, that had successfully resisted the mother country, and that was building an independent nation, the most obvious. This choice was strengthened by agitation for a republic, getting stronger towards the end of September. It was said then that Greece and Rome had been at their greatest when they had republican forms of government, and the example of North America spoke for itself. In October, Mihály Táncsics, the radical writer born a serf, and a member of the National Assembly, started to popularize the idea of a republic. In his weekly *Munkások Újsága*, he stressed that while in Europe there were only two republics, “America, a continent that is much larger than Europe, has only one country in which a sovereign rules; all the other states are republics.” *Marczius Tizenötödike* also urged that Hungary follow the example of America and France. By the autumn of 1848 the French example had become somewhat devalued. The liberals were threatened by the menace of “a socialist republic”; the radicals were angered by the foreign policy of the republic, active in Italy but indifferent towards Hungary. In addition to this, reports on the powerless English foreign policy gestures related to Eastern Europe led *Kossuth Hírlapja* to exclaim: “Deliver us oh heaven from French and English intervention.”

The feeling of disappointment and being left to themselves dominated the Hungarian press at the end of 1848. At this time, after the abdication of Ferdinand and the accession of Francis Joseph, it was argued more frequently that Hungary should be proclaimed a republic, so that Europe “could recognize it as an independent and mature nation”. The ideal of a republic was less and less exclusively linked to France, which struggled with domestic problems and which, in external affairs, did not care for the interests of other republics or would-be republics. Despite the recent Sonderbund War, Switzerland, the other European republic, was not accorded much attention. There remained only the United States, the distant republic, that seemed to be living in such a problem-free way. A pamphlet published towards the end of 1848 propagating a republic and a “popular government” urged: “Look at America. There the Republic, and popular government, is 60 years old, and this 60-year-old popular government is

more successful than the kings of Europe ever were; though they rule from their sovereign thrones since the beginning of the world, their lustre was derived from the tears of their subjects."

The example of the American Revolution was as obvious and attractive as the earlier parallels with the French Revolution. The foreign policy of the French Republic led by Cavaignac (the final result of Louis Bonaparte's election was not known in Hungary until the end of 1848) seemed to betray the cause of revolutionary brotherhood. Thus, the ideal of a flourishing republic with a written constitution could only be modelled on the example of the United States, a country that had gained its independence, and achieved independent nationhood, at the price of a bloody struggle against the mother country that had subjected it to colonial rule. In this way, the people of the United States, as one of the free peoples of the world, had won a distinguished place in the minds of the Hungarian democrats. Mihály Táncsics's 1849 "new constitutional draft" published on the anniversary of the March Revolution is good proof of this. He proposed that after recapturing the capital, Pest-Buda, the victorious Hungarian army should be divided into two, one half moving against Vienna, the other through the rebel Serb and Croat areas to the port of Fiume. "This army," wrote Táncsics, "will open our coast to the world so free people, Italians, French and Americans, can come and give us their right hand as a sign of respect, earned by us in our fight for liberty."

## 3

With the attack of the Austrian army commanded by Prince Windisch-Grätz in December 1848, Hungary's armed defence entered a new phase. Before it was undertaken, though, having been disappointed by European diplomacy, the Hungarian government, that is the Committee of National Defence, headed by Kossuth, had an opportunity, through William H. Stiles, the American envoy in Vienna, to try and obtain a cease-fire. Informed of Stiles's readiness to mediate between the opposing parties, Kossuth asked the envoy at the end of November "to initiate the negotiations of an armistice for the winter between the two armies standing on the frontiers of Austria and Hungary, and to stop the calamities of a war so fatal to the interests of both countries." Stiles's initiative, however, met with total rejection by Windisch-Grätz, who by that time had received the emperor's order to occupy the Hungarian capital and to put an end to the "rebellion."

Early in 1849 the Prince, at the head of his army, occupied Pest-Buda. In March 1849, presuming Hungarian resistance to be over, the Schwarzenberg government issued the Kremsier Constitution, eliminating Hungary's earlier autonomy, that is, the autonomy that had existed before the 1848 constitutional concessions. The country was reduced to the status of one of the lands of the Crown. The Hungarian military successes of the spring of 1849, the Habsburgs' measures to restrict rights and the attitude of other states which did not wish to concern themselves with the Hungarian struggle, made it seem desirable and necessary for Kossuth and his followers to proclaim a separation from Austria. In the autumn of 1848 *Kossuth Hírlapja* argued that the Hungarians took up arms to protect their independence, not to attain it. In referring to the example of America the newspaper acknowledged the difference in the situation: "When the North American revolutionaries declared the independence of their country from England in the last century, they acted out of necessity. They had been colonies of the mother country. . ." Events since the autumn of 1848, however, suggested two alternatives: either the unconditional surrender demanded by Windisch-Grätz was accepted or the Hungarian issue ceased to be part of Austrian home affairs, becoming an international matter. It is evident to posterity that this decision was hurried and a mistake. The motive, however, that the Hungarian nation should be able to finally enter the "European family of nations as an independent power", as Kossuth put it in his speech to the National Assembly on April 14, 1849, was understandable, and the move had the support of a considerable portion of Hungarian public opinion of the time.

An important achievement of the Debrecen assembly was the Declaration of Independence by the Hungarian Nation, which proclaimed the dethronement of the Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty. Historians have clearly shown that the document was practically drafted by Lajos Kossuth himself. Thus it was he who tried to make use of both the structure and the logic of the greatest and most obvious example, the American Declaration of Independence. The similarity was so striking that Kossuth was later accused by his enemies of simply adapting the original text. (Even a glance at the document will show that this is untenable. Stiles included an English translation in a work published already in 1852.) The great historical model not only suggested the form, but awakened the hopes of informed journalists of the day that the document proclaiming the establishment of an independent Hungary would be honoured as much in Hungary as its equivalent was in the United States. Basing himself on Farkas Bölöni's travel journal, Albert Pálfi, editor of *Marczius Tizenötödike* and one of the most distinguished

journalists of the Left, reminded his readers: "A copy of the Declaration of Independence is to be found in every American household". At the same time he expressed his hope that the Hungarian printers and engravers would satisfy this same need in their country.

The relation between the Hungarian Declaration of Independence and that of America and, primarily, the unquestionable similarity between the historical situations logically suggested that Kossuth send the Declaration to Zachary Taylor, President of the United States. Kossuth closed his letter in the customary language of diplomacy: ". . . que moi même, et toute la nation hongroise, n'avons pas de désir plus ardent, que de maintenir la paix et l'animité envers tous les états, mais principalement avec la république des États Unis de l'Amérique du Nord, et de donner vers l'Orient de l'Europe toutes les garanties, qui sont en notre pouvoir, pour maintenir la paix du monde et pour servir aux intérêts de l'humanité et de la civilisation, que la Nation Américaine fut la première a représenter si glorieusement." The concrete goal of this polite form, however, can be easily discovered; that is, that independence had been declared, and the Governor of a diplomatically isolated Hungary wanted to take diplomatic steps, hoping that as a result "la glorieuse nation des États Unis de l'Amérique du Nord" would likewise recognize the independence of Hungary. Kossuth believed the great overseas republic would lend its support, although the Declaration neither at the time, nor later, meant that a republican government would be formed, and it never was. To the end of his life, Kossuth preferred a constitutional monarchy, but in those days, he clearly wished to avoid any irreversible decision excluding a possible monarchical form of government. He supposedly endorsed, if not proposed, what a pamphlet in the summer of 1849 stated: "The temporary form of government in Hungary today is, if not a republic, at least a government in the republican manner headed by a responsible president."

Kossuth's letter to President Taylor was dated May 6, 1849, in the days when not only well-informed political public opinion, but also the press of the temporary capital, Debrecen, felt that English and French diplomatists could not be expected to place the Hungarian issue on the agenda of an international conference, make it the subject of other collective diplomatic activity. In the second half of March *Marczius Tizenötödike* stressed that Hungarian public opinion would have to be cured of the illusion that affirmations of sympathy by one or the other great power could help bring about success in the country's war of independence. The author of the article voices his bitterness: "Sordid self-interest directs the policies of European governments. The governments are too busy finding

ways of maintaining the *status quo* to have the time to encourage sympathy for a movement that disturbs it."

Under these conditions, reports, not through the diplomatic mails, reached the Hungarian government of the increasing public and official interest of the United States in the Hungarian cause. The joint action of American politicians and Hungarians living in America resulted in the otherwise conservative President Taylor sending a confidential agent in the person of A. Dudley Mann from Paris to Hungary in 1849. At the end of July, Ferenc Pulszky, the representative of the Hungarian government in London, informed Kossuth in a dispirited letter of the views of Lord Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary, who "does not believe that the time has come when he could do anything for us". Within a week, László Teleki, the Hungarian diplomatic representative at the time in Paris, reported—likewise from London—the confidential good news: "The United States of America . . . has already sent an agent to our country who is authorized to recognize the Hungarian government."

Dudley Mann, who only left Paris a few days before the Hungarian collapse, heard of the main Hungarian army's surrender at Világos in Vienna. Undoubtedly, even if he had reached Hungary, his mission could hardly have helped a country fighting against the armed might of two great powers, Austria and Russia. It was remarkable however that the government of the United States was the only one that decided to recognize the independent Hungarian government though this only amounted to a gesture. No matter what kind of considerations led to this decision, the Hungarian case, even at its fall, could count not only on the support of the public—as in England—but also on that of the government. This was shown in the rebuff offered to Hülselman, the Austrian minister, when he objected to the nature of A. Dudley Mann's mission. It was also expressed by the President's State of the Union Message. In December, President Taylor dealt with the unfortunately late steps of his government in clear tones, stressing the intention whereby the United States wanted to be the first to welcome an independent Hungary as a member of the family of free nations.

Thus, the initial theoretical interest of the Hungarian Revolution in the achievements and institutions of the United States, and the later irresolute attempt to establish relations, met with sympathy from the other side of the ocean, a sympathy that to a certain extent looked on the Hungarian people in the eastern portion of Europe in December 1848, and especially in 1849, as carrying on its own cause. As soon as it reached the level of government policy, this interest became a factor in European politics. It

helped Kossuth and his companions, who had fled to Turkey, to escape from internment in Asia Minor in an American ship. It prepared the way for Kossuth's memorable American tour, in the course of which the former Governor of an independent Hungary received a warmer welcome in the United States from the people than any other foreign statesman had done since the Marquis de Lafayette.

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# SÁNDOR BÖLÖNI FARKAS, AN EARLY HUNGARIAN TRAVELLER IN AMERICA

by

THEODORE SCHOENMAN  
AND HELEN BENEDEK SCHOENMAN

**A**lexis de Tocqueville is generally credited to be the first to analyze the social and political life in America in his *De la Democratie en Amérique*.

It is less known that in 1831, at the same time as de Tocqueville, a Hungarian nobleman and minor government functionary from Transylvania, Sándor Bölöni Farkas, was traveling in America and appraising its social, economic and political institutions. He published his findings in a book entitled *Journey in North America* in 1834, one year before the publication of de Tocqueville's classic work. The book was published in the city of Kolozsvár in Transylvania.

De Tocqueville, although an enlightened aristocrat, was the product of an elite class. He came to America with a well defined set of values and a deep insight into the nature of social changes. France had just gone through a triumphant bourgeois revolution and he was well acquainted with the advances of the nascent capitalism and democracy of the West. While a sympathetic commentator, de Tocqueville was a stern critic of popular democracy at work. He recognized both the advantages and disadvantages of the new social order created by the American political system. While many of its features strongly appealed to him, de Tocqueville's belief in the intellectual supremacy of the elite was unshaken. He indicated clearly that the new order is not adoptable everywhere and that it must be modified, adjusting to place, time and social conditions.

The contrast between the assessment of de Tocqueville and Bölöni Farkas is significant. Bölöni Farkas was a reverential admirer not a critic. He judged America with the eyes of a man still living in a most backward country oppressed by a brutal feudal system, in a country where the social and political order ossified through centuries into a cast that only an explosive political upheaval could shatter. For Bölöni Farkas, an idealist, radical

democrat, freedom and oppression were timeless adversaries and to compromise the principles of liberty and equality was unthinkable. *Journey in North America* was a hymn to American democracy and it was destined to become the political timebomb that a little over a decade later contributed to the explosion of the revolutionary War of Independence of 1848.

The revolution of 1848 was the culmination of the struggles of the preceding two decades in what is considered a crucial period in the history of modern political development in Hungary. During this period which is called by Hungarian historians the Age of Reform, a transition took place from the traditional feudal political and social structure to a more democratic and libertarian one.

The seedbed for this awakening from centuries old lethargy was the publication in 1834 and a second edition in 1835 of Bölöni Farkas' political clarion call cleverly disguised as a travelogue in high literary style. It managed to slip by the censors of Metternich's political police until it was put on the proscribed list in 1835. By that time however the seeds germinated. The ideas and practical applications of American democratic principles so persuasively described by Bölöni Farkas inspired not only the radical reformers but timid middle grounders and gradualists as well. It was the first time that they had become acquainted with the political and social organization of the young American republic and its many unique institutions. Bölöni Farkas was not only the first but the only Hungarian reformer to visit the United States who also wrote his book with the deliberate design to introduce the American model into Hungarian reform politics.

While Bölöni Farkas was an intimate friend of many of the reformers, he played a vital role in the reform movement not by having a distinguished career in public life but by focusing his countrymen's attention on the practical and beneficial working of the American political system and institutions through his book.

\*

Bölöni Farkas was born in a Székely border county of Transylvania, the scion of a leading Unitarian family. After completing his education at the Unitarian gymnasium and Royal Lyceum at Kolozsvár his lifelong struggle against inequality and injustice due to birth and religion began. To support himself he accepted a minor clerical post at the Royal Government of Transylvania. He was fated to remain a low level functionary of small means whose talent, initiative and ardent advocacy of the nascent Hun-



garian belle-lettres marked him as undeserving for promotion by his superiors. He was bitterly frustrated in the petty and stultifying atmosphere of his office. It is instructive how Bölöni Farkas described the life of a bureaucrat as one of

*true indolence, luxury, daydreaming in vanities and the most perfect indifference and coolness towards public affairs. Inert sentimentality, rowdy recklessness, aristocratic arrogance, glory in amassing huge debts, allowing starvation among the common people, prodigality at the dinner tables of the great pseudo-scientific knowledge based on novels and short stories, the sparkling of wits, lowly gossips, ridiculing of national origin, the predominant use of German by those who wanted to appear educated, and eternal loafing were characteristic of this era.*

To compensate for his gloomy bureaucratic surroundings Bölöni Farkas withdrew into a period of intense self-education. With his modest earnings he built a personal library of nearly 500 volumes which reflected his encyclopedic interests. One of his most treasured possessions was Tom Paine's *Rights of Man* which had been the most important manual of the Hungarian Jacobins.

Between 1827 and 1830 he plunged into a frenzy of activity as a social reformer. The discrimination, the many personal failures and humiliations turned him into a dedicated radical democrat. Like many other members of the lower nobility he became an ardent supporter of Count István Széchenyi and Baron Miklós Wesselényi, "the father of Hungarian liberalism." As early as 1822 he organized a Providence Society based on the principles of full equality for all members, regardless of rank, age, class, religion, or any other consideration. No mean democratic achievement before 1848. A few years later he founded the first local Casino or reading room which became the center of lively political and literary debates. He helped to organize the first fencing school and the local music association and all the time never neglected his youthful interest in the theatre. To encourage dramatic productions in the Hungarian language he translated Schiller's *Don Carlos*, Goethe's *Young Werther* and Mme. de Staël's *Corinne*, and undertook the duties of secretary of the National Theatrical Committee. He also launched a newspaper *Vasárnapi Ujság* (Sunday News). There was nothing beyond Bölöni Farkas' universal interest. He even drafted the first menu written in Hungarian and he felt that by doing that he had accomplished as much as writing a scholarly book.

After many years of unfulfilled hopes his long yearned for opportunity finally presented itself. A friend of Wesselényi, a liberal Transylvanian aristocrat, Count Ferenc Béldy, planned an extended journey to Western Europe and North America. He invited Bölöni Farkas to accompany him

as his secretary. Happily Bölöni Farkas accepted. His exhilaration is well demonstrated in the Foreword and the first pages of *Journey*:

*... This was one of the best periods of my life. The joys of travel are enhanced in memory and it is doubly so when shared with others. As a French writer puts it: "What good is it to view a beautiful landscape if there is no one to whom one can say — what a splendid sight." This sentiment induced me to write and to publish parts of my notes on America. In the American commonwealth and society I saw many things developed to a state of perfection and I had acquired much knowledge about matters which are as yet unknown in our country or at least never written about in the Hungarian language. If my notes about this happy land would enlighten our people, the rewards of my travel would be multiplied many times.*

Further on:

*In high spirits and joyous anticipation we started out in the autumn of 1830. The images of Paris, London, Philadelphia and Washington made me forget the time and hardships of travel. I asked myself whether reality will measure up to my glowing imagination. Whether the price for the acquisition of new knowledge will be the loss of illusion. Will mathematical facts wilt the flowers of romantic imagination. Or will I too become the victim of my experiences that so often make those living abroad forget their homeland and return with warped feelings and contempt. Will I perhaps return with a sense of regret for the backwardness of my country?*

Bölöni Farkas was overjoyed yet he was somewhat apprehensive at the thought of undertaking the long journey to the West. He felt a great responsibility to explore and to interpret to his countrymen a world unknown to them. He was anxious to study the institutions of the West but he did not want to be deceived by appearances. His constant concern was to be able to apply in his own country the lessons he would learn abroad.

They were fortunate to get passports to America. Széchenyi and Wesselényi both tried and failed. The little known Béldy and the obscure chancery clerk Bölöni Farkas had not yet attracted the attention of Metternich's secret police who had no inkling of the consequences their journey would have.

Béldy and Bölöni Farkas left on November 3, 1830. They traveled through Germany for about a month and reached Paris where they stayed for more than four months during which time they witnessed the violent disturbances following the July Revolution. A few days after his arrival in Paris Bölöni Farkas started his travel diary in which he recorded later all his experiences in France, the Low Countries, England and North America. Many pages of his colourful diary have penetrating comments on French and English political and social institutions. Their visit in England took a

little over three months during which time Bölöni Farkas met many politicians, philosophers, scientists and writers who played major roles in the intellectual life and who later occupied high public positions.

After touring the Midlands, Scotland and Ireland, they sailed on July 27, 1831 on the 500 ton "Columbia" bound for New York. One of their fellow passengers was John J. Audubon the famous ornithologist on his twenty-second crossing. The tedious voyage lasted thirty-nine days, they landed in New York on September 3, 1831.

Over the following three months Béldy and Bölöni Farkas had covered about 2,500 miles throughout the United States and southern Canada. They had left North America late in November and disembarked at Le Havre around Christmas 1831.

Long before getting home Bölöni Farkas was determined to publish his experiences. He was firmly convinced that the example of the unparalleled American experiment will stimulate both study and action in his oppressed country. He had no doubt that he had an obligation to serve the liberal cause even at the risk of provoking the enmity of the authorities. He rearranged his voluminous notes by rewriting the parts dealing with North America in great detail. He considered this politically the most important. He reduced his observations on the revolutionary upheavals he witnessed in France and Belgium and the crucial political struggle in England to a brief introduction. The political message he masked by his apparently judicious style which he employed to avoid the possibility of criminal proceedings against him.

In this political manifesto advocating radical democracy, Hungarians were able to read for the first time the full texts of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. The rights and duties of free citizens and officials elected by the people to represent the popular interest rather than that of the kings and tyrants. Bölöni Farkas conveyed the sense of Jefferson's admonition to the people of Washington just two weeks before he died in 1828: "The Declaration of Independence is a call to revolution throughout the world—a signal to men to burst their bonds."

On closer analysis of Bölöni Farkas' political message one is struck by the wide range of ground he covered during the comparatively short duration of his sampling the American democracy. His commentary on the political, social, economic and cultural scene he found in America is all encompassing. While in New York he discussed the public school and educational system, the organization of public safety and the role of police in it. In Boston he was enthusiastic about the free exercise of all religions and the absence of

discrimination in the highest educational institutions (Harvard). In Albany and alongside the Erie Canal, the growth and impact of the transportation system on the economy of the vast region was the subject of his observations. At Concord he paid tribute to the cornerstone of American democracy, the Constitution. In Buffalo he dwelled at length on the plight of the Iroquois nations and the hopeless future of the America Indians. In Springfield, Ohio, the course of a local election was his topic. At New Lebanon it was the Shakers and a Methodist camp meeting that provided him with the opportunity to emphasize America's tolerance with unusual religious practices and at Economy and New Harmony with the utopian socialist experiments of the Rapp and Owen Societies. The upsurge of industrial development in Pennsylvania and the concentration of factories in Pittsburgh underscored his faith in the freedom of individual enterprise unobstructed by governmental interference. In Maryland however he could not help but to present the dark side of the American picture. The enormity of the contrast between the theory and practice of the Constitution elicited a bitter, critical reaction. For the first time he came face to face with slavery.

*As soon as we entered Maryland we began to see Negroes in far greater number than in the other states. The fields everywhere are cultivated by blacks, but not until we have reached an inn and saw a notice posted on its door did we realize the reason for this. The notice read: "On October 28th the goods of Jacob Caldwell debtor, including two male and one female Negro slaves will be sold at an auction to the highest bidder." I felt as if an icy hand had touched my heart when I read this. So, we arrived in the land of slavery. I sighed in sorrow.*

*During our travels we heard many discussions on the question of slavery. The topic was constantly argued between the states which abolished slavery and the ones which had not. Having observed the unprecedented freedom stemming from the Constitution of this great country, with all its principles based on the natural law and its institutions devoted to the advancement of mankind—the monstrous variance between the magnificent theory and this shameful practice was always incomprehensible to me.*

In Washington the informality and utter simplicity of his reception by President Jackson and Secretary of State Livingston he counterpointed with the social etiquette in Boston. On his excursion to Quebec and Lower Canada Bölöni Farkas noted the lack of progress which he attributed to the colonial rule.

The Quakers of Philadelphia, Unitarianism in New England, the story of Robert Fulton and his steamboat, the unique prison system at Charlestown, the Military Academy at West Point, were among the many

subjects he described in vivacious terms to instruct and impress his compatriots with the unrivaled virtues of the American blueprint. Time and time again he laid particular stress on the salient points in the Constitution by which its drafters sought to protect the fledgling democracy against potential threats: the separation of the executive, legislative and judicial powers, the prohibition of state religion, the restriction of a standing army and the proscription of holding any office for life. His verbatim translation of the Declaration of Independence is concluded with his significant comment:

*This is the document on which the very existence of America is founded and which in spite of its simplicity is a very unusual one. In its text there is no diplomatic evasion and its language is entirely that of the natural law. . . . There is a great deal of difference between this document and the charters or grants of freedom of Europe. . . . They are letters of franchise by monarchs returning some of the rights which until then only they exercised. They were in effect telling the people, from now on this is what is yours, the rest I retain for myself, or they were compromises between the contending parties with clever and artificial loopholes in them. The American document goes back to the very beginning where the basis of government lies. This holds that all rights belong to the people and the people delegate some of them to the government. . . .*

Bölöni Farkas applauded the idea that the ideal government is one which would limit its functions to the minimum and let the people themselves take the initiative in all their affairs. He saw a parallel in the autonomy of the governments of the local communities in America and the traditional control of the county administrations in his homeland. Bölöni Farkas and de Tocqueville both had arrived at the same conclusion about a too powerful central government and that the threat lay in too much rather than too little government. Bölöni Farkas and de Tocqueville were also in agreement about the impressive role of the free press which they considered with freedom of expression the cornerstones of democracy.

It is worth noting that Bölöni Farkas' and de Tocqueville's paths crossed while inspecting the Massachusetts state prison at Charlestown. De Tocqueville's original state mission was to study American prisons and Bölöni Farkas devoted an entire chapter to describe the historical background, the theory and practice of the two best known American penal systems, the Pennsylvania and the Auburn.

Discussing the phenomenal increase of the population of the United States and the expansion of the economy since the War of Independence, Bölöni Farkas' interpretation and explanation was essentially in political terms. He contended that political freedom and uninhibited individual

initiative were the major factors in the demographic and economic growth. He had complete faith in the laissez-faire concept and did not foresee the dangers of unrestricted free competition. He noted with admiration the efficiency of the famous textile mills at Lowell and the rolling mills of Pittsburgh.

Bölöni Farkas' observations on the early stages of industrialization and the status of labor are noteworthy in as much as he makes no mention at all of the growing labor discontent and bitter strife in the working population of the Eastern factory towns. No mention of the grievances over wages, working conditions and other social iniquities. Of course in comparison with the abject poverty of the early factory towns of the Midlands in England but especially the miserable conditions in Hungary, they must have seen superlative to Bölöni Farkas.

His absorbing interest in social and economic experimentations is best demonstrated by his study in depth of the utopian colony of the Rapp Society at Economy. His interview of Rapp and their discussion on Rapp's relations with Robert Owen who had bought the original Rapp settlement at New Harmony, Indiana, impressed Bölöni Farkas. He did not conceal his admiration for the accomplishments of Rapp's religious communism and for Owen's ideas of social and economic philosophy as practiced at first at New Lanark in Scotland and later at New Harmony. Still, he voiced a healthy doubt about the long range effect of these totally egalitarian social systems on the aspiration and free will of the individual.

Bölöni Farkas' distressing moments occurred when plied with questions about his homeland. Told in his own sensitive words:

*We spent almost the entire day in Charlestown. For the evening we were invited for tea at Mr. Everett in Boston where we found a large gathering amidst all the pomp that is customary at English tea parties and French soirées. Before and after the tea the company broke up into smaller groups discussing a variety of topics. Just as the foreign visitor is interested to learn about the host country, so is the visitor questioned about his homeland. I lavished praises to one of the guests about everything I have so far seen in America, its laws, schools, prison system and the many other institutions. Naturally the course of conversation turned to conditions in my own country. What are the guiding principles in our laws? What guarantees of freedom do they embody? What is the situation in our schools and scientific institutions? What is our national language? German or Latin, or a dialect of either of them? What is our penal system? What are our major institutions for the advancement of mankind and the cultivation of national culture?*

*Like a person sailing under false colours but whose honour demands that he give a truthful account—I found myself in an uncomfortable position listening to these*

questions. I felt their full weight. The state of these matters at home and the difference here in America flashed through my mind. I wished I could have retreated from the field with honour but I had the painful choice of either appearing ignorant about my country or to lie and be ashamed before the Americans. I tried to turn the conversation to the situation in other European countries, but they were well informed about that. They were only in the dark about us and the questions again turned back to the painful subject.

My hesitant answers probably did not leave a very satisfactory impression and I was sad and deeply disturbed when I left this house. Much of this bitter sorrow troubles the Hungarian traveler abroad if he has the misfortune to carry the image of his homeland with him and if he would like to exult not only its fertile land but its culture.

For some time to come I was troubled by the memory of my predicament at the tea party. The realization of conditions in my country, its literature and sciences, its cultural standing and all its prejudices and the total lack of knowledge about us in foreign lands made my heart heavy.

Are Hungarians themselves to be blamed for their backward state? Why must this nation yearn eternally for distant dreams? What is this veiled lament which is so characteristic of most of our writers? Why is it that so many Hungarians of good will are trying to promote our progress in a thousand and one way, yet no one seems to have found the right answer? These are the sentiments which disturb the soul and only the hope in the future offers a measure of comfort.

His leavetaking was in a characteristic romantic and sentimental vein:

At Staten Island the "Rufus King" turned back and hoisting our sails we reached Sandy Hook in the afternoon. The water was turning blue which was indication that we were past the dangerous shoals and on the open sea. Our pilot had also returned, thus we parted from the last American. As we sailed further on the great ocean and left the American shores behind, my eyes were still riveted to the bluish mountains in the distance. An enervating sense of depression, a vague feeling of sadness filled my very being. Deeply touched with melancholy I kept repeating with childlike pathos—God be with you blessed land.—I could not tear my eyes away from it. By now the outlines were barely visible. Good-bye for the last time glorious land! Remain the eternal refuge and defender of the rights of man! Stand there forever in stern opposition to the spirit of despotism and be an eternal inspiration to all the oppressed people of the world!

\*

Upon his homecoming tragic news awaited him. Just before leaving on his journey to the West, he broke up with the only woman he had loved.

It was just a lovers spat, a trifling misunderstanding. She was Josephine Polz, daughter of a wealthy merchant of Kolozsvár. While Sándor Bölöni Farkas was traveling in America, Josephine went to Vienna to further her musical education. She met there and married an American, James Swain, who took her back with him to Philadelphia. When Bölöni Farkas returned to Kolozsvár with high hopes of making up and marrying her, he was stunned to learn that she had left for America. In 1834 he was informed that Josephine died in childbirth in Philadelphia and that the child was named for him. Sándor Bölöni Farkas was inconsolable. He had never got over his grief. As his health worsened (he was tubercular) he willed his most precious possession, his private library, to the Unitarian Gymnasium of Kolozsvár. He died on February 2, 1842 at the age of forty-seven. His grave in the cemetery of Kolozsvár is marked with this simple inscription: "Here rests Sándor Bölöni Farkas, North American traveler."

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It is fitting that the American Philosophical Society, founded by Benjamin Franklin and later presided over by Thomas Jefferson, should honour Sándor Bölöni Farkas by publishing in this Bicentennial year the first English translation of *Journey in North America*.

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# SQUIRRELS—AND SQUIRRELS

(*Short story*)

by

GERGELY RÁKOSY

**H**e slept fitfully.

He was standing in front of the large window of the squirrel-manufacturing co-op and peeping in.

He had stumbled upon this strange squirrel-manufacturing plant several weeks before. He had stood there for hours, for days even, staring in, spellbound by the sweeping momentum of the work going on. One after the other big lumbering Diesel lorries arrived, the idling engines roared against the walls of the narrow street, the sides of the platform came down with a thud, and bales of glossy, rust-coloured plush went from hand to hand. From another vehicle sawdust was scooped into bags, and a little further on, excelsior was pressed into wicker baskets. In the meantime small vans braked; when the driver swung the back door open iridescent lights flashed onto the walls of the houses—another consignment of squirrel eyes glittering like diamonds. Less frequently, heavy braidings of horsehair were brought in. Big bundles of brownish sheep fur strips arrived in light lorries, and as the delivery boys in service caps started for the gate, strips from the bundles dangled behind, as though they were already squirrel tails waving like banners.

But now the street looked deserted, so in all probability they were well provided with raw materials for the next few weeks.

He made an interesting observation.

The women making squirrels sat around a large table and worked at their jobs with what appeared to be uniformly quick movements, yet the squirrels piled up in the middle of the table had enormous differences.

He stepped closer to make sure he had seen it right.

Many of the squirrels did look the way a toy animal should: attractive, cuddly, well-shaped. Of course, anyone could tell that their whiskers were made of horsehair, their eyes were glass, their fur from sheep, and their

tails just fur strips stiffened with wire, but it was still nice to look and handle them or to flick their ears.

The women seemed to work with quick uniform movements.

Yet a lot of the squirrels did not even come close to resembling squirrels.

In the latter category were several what-you-might-call-its. (It was impossible to give them a name.) Some of them had rat-bellies, some mice heads, some others rabbit-paws, but in actual fact none of them resembled rats or mice or rabbits. And to make it worse still, these thin gummy freaks of nature looked without exception deformed. They had one leg shorter or longer than the other, tails were attached to the middle of their backs, ears had tufts, not at the tip but at the bottom, lopsided eyes or even an eye stuck in the middle of the head, and one had its whiskers sticking out of its neck like a horse's mane.

All that despite the women working with seemingly quick uniform movements and the same basic materials.

As he was thus inspecting the squirrels piled into a growing heap in the middle of the table, his eyes were caught by one of them. It belonged to the first category and, even more, it was the loveliest of them all. It seemed to be alive. A sight for sore eyes.

As though alive?

Indeed!

The squirrel looked at him.

Was he seeing things? He rubbed his eyes. No, he was not mistaken.

The squirrel moved, disentangled itself from the rest of the squirrels, stood erect, and with nimble movements started to arrange its whiskers.

He looked on with astonishment; he had never seen such a thing in his whole life. Had he tried to speak he could only have been able to mumble and stumble. It was such a miracle! He was flabbergasted, he almost fainted, and it took some time before he managed somehow to regain consciousness.

The squirrel now started to move about the table in nimble leaps. Without the shadow of a doubt it was so alive it could not have been more so. But by then that was not the strangest part of it all.

The oddest thing was that nobody seemed to take any notice.

All right, it could well be that the women working away, heads bent over their work, had really not noticed anything, but it was impossible that the foreman, standing not far from the table, could fail to do so. There he was, blue overalls, hands in pocket, a paunch, stern rather than jovial, flabby, wizened face with a bored look which, undoubtedly, was fixed on the table.

The squirrel had scuttled half way round the pile, stopping every now and then, curious and watchful, and it looked as if it casually sniffed the dextrous female hands as it passed.

He wondered who had made that smart little animal.

No, it wasn't the right expression.

Who had brought it into *being* (in the truest sense of the word)?

When the squirrel reached the other side and came to a sudden and definite halt, it rubbed its charming little muzzle several times on the back of a hand. The woman looked up. She had beautiful sorrowful eyes with a suggestion of some apprehension hidden in them. She put down the piece of sheep fur she was working on and petted the little animal with both hands. No longer apprehension but downright terror flickered in her eyes.

He was perplexed but had not much time to work out the puzzle. "Please, don't!" the woman with the beautiful sorrowful eyes exclaimed. She hugged the squirrel protectively with both hands. "Oh please, don't, please, please!" Her voice came through the glass-pane quite clear.

Blue overalls stood close behind her, hands still in pocket.

She had not noticed him walk up behind her. But anyhow, what was the great terror? Her workmates round the table were speechless and apart from a few casual glances they never bothered to look up.

The foreman said something (he could not hear what), the woman burst out crying, her eyes glistened with tears like beautiful, sorrowful jewels, and the squirrel nestled completely gratified in the warmth of the two shapely hands cupped together.

He stood amazed, a little detached from the events. He had never before seen such an exquisitely beautiful woman—neither on the stage, the screen, in a photograph, not anywhere. (It is such occasions that make the thought of inevitable death so painful.) At any rate he found her beautiful. (It occurred to him that a Hungarian film director had recently picked his female lead from among 3,400—or was it 4,300—women. The woman there beyond the glass would never respond to such an advertisement. She would never go scrambling with a noisy crowd at the gates of a film studio because her loveliness had in it too a certain reserve. But if by some miracle she had gone, the director would surely have passed her up. "Next." He wouldn't notice *this* woman, the man who pasted *that* film together.)

The flat voice of the man in the blue overalls came through now. (There was an editor he knew who had the same dispiriting, toneless voice. For some reason not so obscure, he baptized the editor (for personal use) Mother Hen. Incidentally his magazine was just as flat and vapid as his

voice—and that is a generous description. Once—it must have been a momentary blackout—he gave him a short story for publication. Mother Hen was holding it in his hand and started to speak. “Now let’s have a little chat about your bit. If you allow me to say so, your story as such. . .” No, not that! The story as such! He snatched the manuscript from his hand and ran out. He would much rather have nothing published. To watch the hen labour over every single egg before it’s boiled—no, no thank you!

“Kati, don’t start it again, I’m telling you!” the foreman shouted. He shouted listlessly, without emotion, if there is such a thing.

Kati—ah, he now knew the name of the woman with the beautiful sorrowful eyes. He could take it into protective hiding with him the way she hugged the dear little squirrel to her breast. He did not particularly fancy the name but so what! From now he had something to savour on winter nights and he would protect it from other “Katis” as well.

Kati seemed to say something with a half-turn of her head but the foreman did not bother to look at her. His gaze was roaming over the ceiling.

“Please, only this once!” he heard the girl (or woman—was she perhaps married?) implore him in an audible voice again.

Two hands climbed out of the two big pockets of the blue overalls.

“Only this once, please!” she shrieked.

That moment the two hands lunged unexpectedly. The girl’s arms seemed wrenched apart by two lions, exposing the squirrel as it was ready to scuttle to safety. But one hand was already fastened round its waist, the other smote its head and the smart little thing, the carefully arranged whiskers, the cheerful, tufted ears and all vanished in those huge fists.

Two twists in opposite directions, and finished. The fists let up and the body of the tiny animal dropped lifeless on the table with a soft thud.

Kati dropped her head on the table and sobbed.

That flat voice went on explaining, this time seeming less bored than before:

“You know well enough you can’t do that. And there’s no use starting a row. You’ve been told odds of times it is just not allowed!”

Work continued around the table undisturbed. All that happened was two of them stuck their heads together and whispered something under their breaths, while a fat blonde shrugged her shoulders and a horse-faced brunette sniggered. The latter had just finished a squirrel—one that bore hardly no resemblance to a squirrel.

The foreman placed a hand—the *same* hand—on Kati’s shoulder.

“Leave off, now,” he said.

The girl did not speak and did not move.

The foreman turned his back on her, lifted the squirrel and, as if it were clay, began to mould and shape it, rounding its slender waist into a paunch, pulling a leg further out, rolling the other thinner, twisting its neck, tousling its whiskers, and then, as one who has succeeded in putting something right, threw it complacently on top of the pile in the middle of the table.

No, you would not believe that the same squirrel had been hopping about on the table a few minutes before rubbing itself against Kati's hand. For in fact it *wasn't* true. *This* squirrel had nothing to do with *that* one. This was just another one made of plush, its eyes twinkling with a glassy stare; anyone who did not know what he did would not see any difference from the one the horse-faced brunette had just just finished.

The foreman put his hand on the girl's shoulder again.

"Now, Kati, come off it," he said, then after a brief pause, "You act like it was your baby. . ."

The horse-faced brunette sniggered again.

The girl shook off the hand and lifted her tearful face towards the foreman.

"More!" she cried. "I tell you, it's more, sometimes it's *much* more. It's the creation of your. . ." her voice broke. She shoved the chair back, got up and ran out of the room.

The observer moved breaking the spell that had held him momentarily. He ran to the gate and when he found it locked, started to bang the door furiously.

Nobody, nothing.

The boards gave a hollow sound as he went on striking with both fists. At last a bolt creaked and a small window opened.

"What're you banging here for?"

"I want to get in!"

"Not allowed!"

"I want to go in and speak to the manager. I must!"

"Official business?"

"Not official. But important. There is no more important matter in the world. What I saw from outside. . ."

"Where outside?"

"From the street, through the window."

"I don't understand."

"What don't you understand?"

"How anyone can see in with the shutters."

"Shutters! There weren't any shutters."

"Well, I'm too busy to argue." The window banged shut.

He took a few hesitant steps. Were these people taking him for a fool? He turned and hurried back to the shop-window.

But the shop-window was gone; instead he found himself in front of a large corrugated iron shutter rusted to a rich brown. How was it possible he hadn't heard it being pulled down? And who had pulled it down anyway? As far as he knew shutters of this kind were pulled down from the outside with a pole. But there wasn't anyone around.

He went back to the gate and knocked.

He banged.

He banged for a good long while.

The small window did not open.

He listened, then tried again.

"What are you up to, friend?"

A policeman was standing there, next to him.

How the meanings of certain words could change.

"Friend." He received letters from editorial offices with the salutation My Dear Friend. (Mostly from places where the writer had never been his friend, places in fact where he was disliked.)

"I want to get in."

"This is a warehouse. A locked warehouse, what do you want to go in for?"

"I spoke to somebody just now . . ."

"There's nobody here," the policeman said in a measured tone. "It's been my beat for years, I should know. Only when there's a delivery in or out."

"I mean I saw through the window . . ." he stopped. It was not criminal. Nothing for the police. Really important matters were never the concern of the police.

"Well, come on, say what you have to say."

"Nothing. Nothing important."

The policeman now got suspicious, not officially, but for himself.

"What shop-window are you talking about? The shutters are down. Can't you see?"

"Yes, of course I can."

"I want to see your I.D.!"

The routine began.

"Name?"

He gave it.

"Address?"

He gave it.

"Occupation?"

"Writer." This was the most awkward part. He didn't know why he had always felt ashamed of saying he was a writer. He only uttered it when he absolutely had to, when it was unavoidable—for example, when challenged by an official.

He got back his identity card. He started home; turning the first corner he stole a glance back. The policeman was still standing at the gate and when he saw him looking back he wagged a finger at him. If he had not stayed there he would really have sneaked back and started pounding on the door again.

He did not envy the police—they had to go snooping around forever. Not that a writer, if he was a writer, was so different. Actually theirs was a similar profession. Perhaps the only difference was the greater number of honest fellows among ordinary policemen on the beat.

He entered his room intending to at once to write the whole thing down or at least make a start. But, of course, as usual, he put it off indefinitely. If you know the first things about writing you find it terribly difficult to make a start. A sentence occurs to you, something like an idea, and almost within the same breath you realize what nonsense it all is; it would only mar the whole thing. You begin to worry about the whole thing at once and whether you sit or stand or lie on your back you get tense with dizzying excitement. It's anything but pleasurable tension. Sometimes it took him weeks to get down to anything. Before he got down to it that is. However, he wanted to force himself now. He stood before the mirror and gave his face several hard slaps. His face turned red, his cheekbones smarted. Another round of slaps. "You won't piss your time away, you rotter!" he shouted at his image in the mirror. "You might drop dead tomorrow but you will have this written or at least started."

*I write with ease, with gusto, for me it's the best pastime,* he recalled an old dowager said in an interview.

He laughed coarsely into the mirror. "What, you can't write with ease, chummy?" He hit his face several times. "You don't write with gusto?" Another series of slaps. "It's not a pastime for you?"

Blood moistened his lips.

"Oh, it's breaking my heart! Poor little boy's bleeding, how can you expect him to sit down and write? He can't, can he?"

He smeared the blood over his face with his hands.

"Sit down now, the way you are. No washing or you'll put it off till tomorrow, then the day after tomorrow. You must write what you saw today and you'd be better off dead if you don't start straightaway!"

He sat down to the typewriter, put in a sheet and typed out the title:

*Squirrels—and squirrels*

That moment his doorbell rang twice and long.

Who the hell is that?

He went reluctantly to answer the door. Three people barged in filling the miniature ante-room like the back of a crowded tram. Three men decked out in striped trousers, tails and top-hats. They immediately said his name; they wanted to see him, only very briefly.

"This way, please!" he said and threw open the door to his room. They forged in, their hands clasped behind their backs.

"It's possible they'll send me to Kingdom Come," he thought. "But I made a beginning at least. Well I put the title down—true, anyone would have a hard job finding out what was next. Only one man could put them wise to it and he'll be gone by then."

He went to close the door of the room and as he turned back three bouquets swung towards him. "There I make mountains out of molehills—I thought they might do me in and they've brought me flowers."

"Oh thank you," he said in confusion. "But how and why?"

"We are from the squirrel-manufacturing co-op," the shortest of the trio said. "I'm the president."

Yes, he now recognized the other man, the foreman. What difference it made, blue overalls or tails.

"Where did you get my address."

"Why, you gave your particulars to the policeman right in front of our gate, didn't you?" the president said jovially.

Introductions all around. He had to shake hands with the foreman but he got something good out of it—it felt like he had faintly touched Kati's shoulder. The third man turned out to be the chief accountant.

He had a few bottles of beer, brought them in, poured them out, they drank.

"What is this all about?" he asked.

"Nothing, nothing important," the president said.

"We've brought these bouquets as a modest sign of our respect," the chief accountant added.

"I really don't know what to say, I'm not used to things like this. I'm usually honoured by kicks in the behind."

The three men in tails patted each other's thighs.

"He's funny, wasn't he, eh?"

"That's right!"



"We know every single book of yours. We get so many good laughs out of them, damn it."

"I've always thought that when a writer gets all that ridiculous stuff on paper he gets a good laugh over it too. Is that right?"

"It's probably right," he said, "in all likelihood."

"Did you hear that: in all likelihood? That's a good one." Roar of laughter.

The president pointed at his face, he saw his finger dance by his nose.

"Perhaps that smearing of your face is like Indian war-paint?"

"It must be for inspiration," the chief accountant risked as his opinion.

They again exploded with laughter.

Damn it, he was sitting there with his face smeared with blood. He had completely forgotten about it. Should he start explaining now? He joined the laughter instead.

Then the guffaws stopped abruptly.

After a little silence the foreman spoke first:

"I saw you in front of the window, you know."

"I saw a good deal too," he replied, casting a glance at the typewriter.

The president bent forward eagerly offering his comment: "And obviously you're drawing the wrong conclusions from what you saw."

"That's my business, isn't it?"

"Not at all. For things must be construed quite differently from the viewpoint of the people's economy."

That never failed to hit him in the gut. He raised his voice.

"What sort of a president are you if you fail to see that some of your workers perform miracles?"

"He's talking about Kati," the foreman interpreted.

"Now let's look a little more closely at what you make or want to make such a big fuss about." *He* make a fuss about!

"Let's, by all means!" he said. He was really curious to hear their arguments.

"We have our planning goals, you see. And we fulfil our targets rain or shine. With Kati and her like, however, we can't do it. She's a slow worker. She fusses about with a piece for goodness knows how long."

"Then it should be worth the trouble looking at the result," he said.

"I saw it with my own eyes. All those deformed, grotesque monsters—what do they have to do with squirrels? Her squirrel was alive. A squirrel like that is worth more than a million of those monsters."

"Now that's exactly where you're so mistaken. Those perfect squirrels only give us trouble. A lot of trouble. Or they would. If we didn't see to it. If we didn't do something about them."

"For one thing, live squirrels would need to be fed and housed—the cold

storage would have to be heated to keep them from freezing and I don't know what else. That's impossible. Secondly, if a big consignment of squirrels contained a few really nice ones, who would want the rest?"

He was silent; he looked towards the sheet of paper in the typewriter.

"Don't approach the problem from the angle you're thinking about it from."

The chief accountant also spoke:

"We've got the funds to send you on a trip, even a long one to study the ins and outs of the problem."

"Travelling's a good thing, isn't it?" the president asked. "Have you ever been abroad?"

"Only to neighbouring countries."

"Ah, that's nothing. You must travel. We can arrange for you to go to the Soviet Union or let's say, Canada. Nice trip, unforgettable experience. Now tell me honestly, wouldn't you like a nice long sea voyage? Sitting in the sunshine, deckchairs, gulls, women, hm?"

It slipped from his mouth: "I've always wanted to—very much. But the money my books earn . . ."

"Come on, you'll make it afterwards with a terrific little travel book."

"Travel books are for salesmen in the textile line. I leave it to them."

He rose.

The other three followed suit.

"If you play it right your next book can be plugged on the rotating electric news-board. We've got connections."

"Thank you. It would be a lie if I said I wouldn't like to be publicized on the electric news-board. But what must be written just can't *not* be written. Or it can be but then it's all lost . . . then your latest book's being publicized on the electric news-board means nothing . . ."

He got no answer; nobody was in the room.

He woke up in the morning all in a sweat, his head swimming.

Such nightmares was all he needed!

A shower and coffee steadied him a little.

He pottered about with every delaying tactic he could think of but finally forced himself to sit down at the typewriter.

He took off the cover.

He started back and shuddered all over—in the typewriter was a white sheet of paper with a title on it:

*Squirrels—and squirrels*

*Translated by László T. András*

## POEMS

*Translated by William Jay Smith*

GYULA ILLYÉS

### HOW SOON...

How soon you take quite naturally  
the leaves on all  
the trees; how soon you take it naturally  
that leaves fall;  
how easily you take summer  
and winter to be final;  
how easily you would take  
life to be eternal.

(1923-37)

### COMPLAINT ON SOLIPSISM

Between myself and the apple tree  
there stood my desire.  
It was not the apple tree I saw—  
But only my desire.  
*It was not the apple that I ate;*  
What I wished with all my soul—  
*An sich*—has never been mine.

It is myself that I get back  
from being's slot machine.  
Wherever it is that my steps lead—  
bits of my past come in the way  
and not my future! That's why I'm poor  
in an ever-rich today.

If only I had, in place of my head,  
my liver instead—

.....  
(1938-39)

## IT IS FIVE YEARS NOW

It is five years now that you've been dead,  
 but from the grave you find your way—  
 nothing has changed—to the old café  
 where I waited for you, where last you waited  
 in the smoke-thatched gloom, in a corner where  
 you shivered as in some field lean-to;  
 the rain came down: we fought, we two;  
 and you were mad, but I didn't know then.

You're less than mad now; nothing has remained:  
 on the floor where time that danced so bright  
 has flown away, I sit mute, alone.  
 Absurd it is since you have gone:  
 the whole world seems to have gone mad—  
 and you, being mad, have won the fight.  
 (1942)

## AT THE TURNING POINT OF LIFE

Night envelops us: clouds rest, darkness drizzles—  
 outside, the branches are bare and glittering wet;  
 as the wind sweeps by, they let fall their tears—  
 youth is passing.

Before my window two swallows dive, dip down,  
 almost hand in hand like fish at the bottom of the sea.  
 One is love, I thought, and the other, secret hope.  
 All that accompanied me flees, quietly retreating to a truer homeland.

And now in her loose robes, with large, disproportionate  
 limbs, monster Melancholy sits down beside me,  
 drawing my head to her moist breast,  
 and mocks me: "Weep if you dare, weep, unhappy one . . ."

Mourn if you have anything to mourn for! Examine your life:  
 Around you autumn rain pours down and mist covers the wooded hills;  
 frothy, filthy water rushes toward you down the sloping road  
 where once with secret intent you led your beloved."

Like prayer beads drops run down the windowpane.  
 O you nimble minutes, seasons, centuries!—Autumn twilight covers the  
 over which I lean as to a mirror, twilight that soon will cover my young face.  
 Through trickling drops I watch the brown trees swing, reaching into the  
 paper  
 mist.

## ABOARD THE SANTA MARIA

A dirty fog is swirling in the wake  
 Of a lonely house perched out above the lake.

The trunk of a tall fir tree stands like a mast  
 but even its very tip in the fog is lost.

Buttressed forth, a hanging garden there,  
 the terrace like a ship divides the air.

A table of stone, a rickety chicken coop  
 emerge through holes within the shifting fog;

and farther on, a friend withdrawing from the road,  
 a *ritirato* made of pre-Columbian wood.

And now when the pounding waves reach up to me,  
 I feel I am centuries ago at sea.

On some Santa Maria I sail off through the air,  
 but I, its master, am wondering to where.

Lurching up and down the deck I go,  
 drugged by medicine, not alcohol.

We speed ahead: tatters of fog flutter and play  
 in the trees, signals that time is speeding away.

And now and then a gull sweeps through the fog—  
 but black it is; and crows a pitiful caw.

## TILTING SAIL

The tilting sail careens;  
 scything the foam,  
 the tall mast creaks and leans—  
 the boat plows on.

Look—when do mast and sail  
 fly forward most  
 triumphantly? When tilted  
 lowest.

## WHILE THE RECORD PLAYS

They heated hatchet blades over gas fires in roadside workshops and  
 hammered them into cleavers.

They brought wooden blocks on trucks and carried them across these  
 new provinces grimly, quickly, and steadily: almost according to  
 ritual.

Because at any time—at noon or midnight—they would arrive at one  
 of these impure settlements,

where women did not cook nor make beds as theirs did, where men did  
 not greet one another as they did, where children and the whole  
 damned company did not pronounce words as they did, and where  
 the girls kept apart from them.

They would select from these insolent and intolerable people twelve men,  
 preferably young ones, to take to the marketplace,

and there—because of *blab-blab-blab* and moreover *quack-quack-quack* and  
 likewise *quack-blab-quack*—would beat and behead them,

of historical necessity—because of *twaddle-twiddle* and *twiddle-diddle*,

and expertly, for their occupations would differ one from the other,  
 agronomist and butcher, bookbinder and engineer, waiter and doctor,

several seminarists, cadets from military academies, a considerable number of students,

those familiar with Carnot, Beethoven and even Einstein, displaying their finest talents,

because, after all, nevertheless, *blab-blab-blab* and *twiddle-dee-dee*,

while through loudspeakers records played—music and an occasional gruff order, and they, the zealous ones, wiped their foreheads and turned aside every now and then to urinate since excitement affects the kidneys;

then having washed the blocks and hauled down the large tricolor which on such occasions always waved above their heads,

they too would march on into the broad future,  
past the heads, carefully placed in a circle,  
then out of the settlement where now also  
and forever and ever,

reason, comfort, and hope would be no—

*wrr-wrr-wrr*—that is to say—*we-ep, wa-rp*, the sound (by now the only one without music or words) that the needle makes as the record grinds on.

JÓZSEF TORNAI

## YOU MUST HAND OVER

You must hand over your love  
when they take her  
you must hand her over  
from head to foot  
together with her breath  
the colour of her skin  
her glance  
her buried thoughts  
together with the way she dresses and undresses  
with her flickers of joy  
her caresses





on one antler the sun-disk of your face,  
 on the other the sun-disk of my face,  
 and we say this prayer  
 for all time:  
 do not let our hearts be torn out,  
 sun god,  
 do not drown us in darkness:  
 we dance only once  
 here on the grass,  
 only once before you  
 can we be stone, water, flame,  
 birdwoman and birdman.

## TO DIE FOR SOMETHING

If one could only die for something,  
 all at once, bloodily, for certain,  
 not like this, year by year,  
 tooth by tooth, so that  
 already I am bored, bored to death  
 by death.

SZABOLCS VÁRADY

## CHAIRS ABOVE THE DANUBE

Those two chairs were not really  
 all that ugly. Too bad the springs  
 protruded from them and the upholstery  
 was so hopelessly filthy.

But chairs they were, all the same. And right for that apartment.  
 So we carried them, mostly on our heads,  
 from Orlay Street across the former  
 Francis Joseph, now Liberty, Bridge,  
 to Number 2 Ráday Street where P. lived  
 at the time (as some of his poems will show.)  
 A chair, not to say two, has

many uses. "Two Poets on a Bridge with Chairs on their Heads"—one can imagine a painting so entitled. I hope it would be a down-to-earth painting and not one of those transfigurations. Those two chairs—and it's important to make this clear—were by no means just halos around our heads. About halfway across the bridge—and not for the purpose of proving anything—we sat down on them. The springs protruded more prominently from one—I don't recall which of us got it. Doesn't matter, since what happened later can hardly be explained by that. It was a pleasant summer evening. We lit cigarettes, enjoying this one might say unusual form of coziness.

The chairs later served nicely for a while: at the P.s' they were *the* chairs. But man wants something better than what is: the chairs were sent to an upholsterer. Then the P.s moved also, the first time, because they had to, the second, because they hated their apartment. Nowadays we meet less often at their place. Several things brought this about: G. left A. (P.'s wife) and then M. (B.'s wife) broke off with me, and the other M. (G.'s wife) divorced G. and married me (while the B.s also separated) and P. attempted suicide and has been living more or less in a sanatorium ever since, not to mention the changes in the world situation, so anyway: there's nothing left to sit on.

## AN OUTSIDER, IF THERE WERE SUCH A MAN

An outsider, if there were such a man,  
a baby born with a fully developed brain,  
or a Martian perhaps,  
an outsider, if there were such a man  
would hardly understand

why for his own sake,  
 for his own, and, well, the world's sake,  
 for the sake of the entire history of the world, and, what's more, the whole  
 universe,

it is desirable that  
 advisable that  
 and likewise commendable that

An outsider, if there were such a man,  
 if it were that he would not understand,  
 if he understood it that way, this outsider,  
 he would not quite be an outsider.

Some even farther-outsider, one  
 from some other solar system or from the womb  
 but in possession of human language—though in its most primitive  
 form—would rather think,  
 this farthest-outsider would rather think,  
 indicating the obsolete traditional  
 lexicological meaning of words:

nothing more desirable than the  
 nothing more advisable than the  
 and hardly anything more commendable than the

This farthest-outsider  
 would believe such things from the farthest side out.

But we who to a certain degree  
 (the whole thing may cost us our skins)  
 are inside and obliged to pay attention  
 and follow the revelations of the most  
 superior superiors, our sense of language has changed  
 so that we now perceive directly the indirect meaning  
 of words, we stand on the ground allotted to us  
 for want of anything better and would be content for the time being  
 if things didn't go from bad to worse—  
 we don't, as a matter of fact, understand  
 the degrees of outsideness if things go on like this,  
 nor does the scent of metaphors irritate  
 our nostrils to such an extent that we can suitably abhor it.



the way she climbed on a streetcar in the morning,  
 the way she bought fresh peas in the market,  
 the way she straightened her dress  
 in the foyer of the theatre,  
 the way she woke beside me in bed,  
 the way she stepped out, beautiful, from the bath,  
 the way she stared after me through the window  
 through fog for a thousand eight hundred miles,  
 the way she watched my anguished feet  
 while I dragged myself along the minefield,  
 the way she covered my face with her hair  
 so they could not see me, lifting me to her breast  
 she ran with me through the burning night  
 above burning walls, burning streets,  
 the way, when she had to, she became a flame among flames,  
 became a blade of grass, became shade,  
 the way a closed mouth, a susurrus,  
 the way Schubert's Ave Maria  
 when she sang it to me,  
 the way she, squeezed within four boards,  
 still managed to reach me through the wall of my cell,  
 the way she entered my room this morning,  
 with our dog at heel, who's been dead for twenty years,  
  
 because she knows where I walk, and where I live.

## SALT AND MEMORY

*A tribute to Marc Chagall*

When you arrive in our town  
 I would like to sit on the roof  
 and play the violin, play the violin,  
 play—it is good that you live  
 sweet old man sweet sweet  
 sweet even as was my father  
 your sixty-six thousand colours glitter  
 on the walls of my sixty-six years  
 bearded sky bearded dawn

bearded smoke of my childhood  
 your candles burn in my window on  
 hills that grew from bones of the dead,  
 bundle-carrying shadows carry  
 salt and memories in their headband  
 the calf steps out of the cow's belly  
 so it can lick your hand.

## ECHO

When it is only the echo,  
 when nothing else but echo,  
 when only silence-beyond-stars,  
 and in the throat of this piercing silence an echo—

when in four season solitude  
 in leafless desert solitude  
 your hear rattle of ancient rain  
 and footsteps of old  
 on mired cobblestones of slanting years—

when the flies' autumn dance  
 of death on the old window  
 clatters, echoes above you so  
 there's no sound your ear can take in—

you can only hear what was once said,  
 you are fenced in by what collapsed;  
 wanderer of chasms, ramps,  
 abysses, the black Milky way,  
 you sit, ears primed with echoes,  
 behind the barbed-wire of your memories.

# INTERVIEWS

## CARDINAL LÉKAI, THE NEW ARCHBISHOP OF ESZTERGOM, ON CHURCH AND STATE

*Q: Your Eminence, in the nearly one thousand years of the see of Esztergom succeeding archbishops have right from the start played a prominent role not only in the life of the Church but also that of the country. As 70th archbishop, how do you see your role, since changes in ways of government have also affected the political status of the highest church dignity?*

A: Saint Stephen, King of Hungary, who founded the State and first organized the Church in this country, accorded the Archbishop of Esztergom a special and dominant place among the bishops of the original ten dioceses. To quote: "He placed him at the head of the others, as their teacher and parent."

The first king's intention was respected in the practice of the Church. Pope Boniface IX graciously complied with the prayer of Archbishop János Kanizsai and awarded the title of Primate of Hungary to him and all his successors.

Upon the request of Prince Christian Augustus of Saxony, Primate of Hungary and Archbishop of Esztergom, the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles VI (King Charles III of Hungary) in 1714 raised the incumbent of the see of Esztergom, and all his successors, to the rank of Prince of the Holy

This interview was given to a staff writer of MTI, the Hungarian News Agency on the occasion of the appointment of Msg. Lékai to the see of Esztergom. He has since, on May 24, been created Cardinal.—The Editor.

Roman Empire. This is how the Archbishop of Esztergom acquired the title of Prince Primate, and kept it until after the Second World War. The Holy See, however, realized that with the Second World War an age had come to an end and an essentially new one had begun. This is why, in 1951, it was decreed that heads of the Church should no longer use purely secular titles of rank, not even if these were linked to their office. Since then those formerly known as prince archbishops and prince bishops are officially known as plain archbishops and bishops. Given the constitutional character of the Hungarian People's Republic, it would in any case be an anachronism if I looked on myself as Prince Primate, the senior peer of the realm.

When, following the 2nd Vatican Council, the Hungarian bench of bishops drew up its new organizational statute, bearing in mind the historical position of the archiepiscopal see of Esztergom, it was decided not to elect a presiding bishop, that office being reserved to the Archbishop of Esztergom of the time. Being Primate, therefore, in practice means no more than being the presiding bishop.

This, I wish to stress, is in keeping with the Stephanic tradition. Our first, sainted king placed the Church firmly in the socio-political context of his time. Much has changed since, but this guiding principle is still basic to the mission of the Church in our country.

Towards the end of the Second World War historical and social changes started in Hungary which confronted the Church with an entirely new situation. I need not go into particulars to make clear that at the time the Church's search for ways of coping with the future was not in the least free of problems. The Church has survived many shocks. Our Christian faith and hope, however, encouraged the then leaders of the Church, in spite of initial difficulties, not to waver in their search. More than twenty years ago they sat down at a table with representatives of the State authorities to settle differences in good faith. Gyula Czaplak, Archbishop of Eger, formulated the basic principles thus: "True to God—true to the people; true to the Church—true to the country." The love of God links us to the Church, and the love of man links us to the people and to the country. Successors, such as, especially, József Ijjas, Archbishop of Kalocsa, acted in a forward-looking way. They worked hard on the implementation of these principles.

The 2nd Vatican Council, prompting a renewal of the Church, initiated a beneficial fermentation in the Church in Hungary as well. Simultaneously, Hungarian Church policy produced promising results. In 1964 the first partial agreement was reached between the Apostolic Holy See and the Hungarian State. Co-operation promoting the progress of the country is given effective moral support by the policies of the Apostolic Holy See, and by its serious endeavour to achieve a better regulated relationship between Church and State in the socialist countries. Recent agreements allowed vacant bishoprics to be filled. And now that the Holy See, having earlier received the agreement of the Hungarian People's Republic, has appointed me Archbishop of Esztergom, this appointment has restored the complete hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Hungary.

With reference to my appointment I would prefer to speak of a mission rather

than a part to be played. My mission, at the head of the hierarchy, consists, in my view, in assiduous efforts to help the Catholic Church contribute creatively to the continued prosperity of Hungary and her people.

*Q: When Your Eminence were consecrated, you chose as your motto: Succisa virescit—"the pruned tree greens". In your coat of arms the pot refers to your ancestry, to your father's craft of stove-tiler, and the pruned tree rising from the pot is indicative of a biological law which is operative also in the life of the Church. Following your transfer to the see of Esztergom, in what way do you feel does this symbolism refer to your new mission?*

A: My episcopal motto in an illustrative summary of the dramatically tense history and reassuring recuperation of the Hungarian Church since the end of the Second World War.

With this motto I also make manifest that it is pruning which makes healthy new shoots possible. The weathered storm carried away live and dead branches alike, but the wounds have healed. The virescent tree does not want to return to its state that antedated the pruning, but it is glad of the restored new life even if obstacles have to be surmounted here and there.

As the Archbishop of Esztergom and Primate of Hungary I consider it part of my office to have both feet firmly implanted on the ground, not to try to turn back the course of progress but to further it. The truth is that believers and non-believers live together in a socialist society. We all want to prosper here, and want to make our lives worthier of man, working with our hands and minds. Let everyone base work done for the country, for their families and themselves upon an ideology of their own choosing. Although ideologies are opposed to each other, yet they stimulate us to joint work. To a non-believer his ideology is of value because it prompts him to build the country and to shape his own life in a manner more worthy of man.

We believers cherish our greatest treasure



—our religious faith—as similarly priceless, of sacred value even. It is this that gives us strength to do our daily work. And it is in this ministry that our love of God and our neighbour grows, which inspires us with the hope that at the end of our passing days we shall return home for good to the Absolute, to a loving God, as revealed by Christ, Our Lord.

The people of our country are therefore not homogeneous in the way they look at the world but life demonstrates every day that it is possible to create harmony in the common interest. If we, in our pursuits, consider not what divides, but what unites us.

We, the Catholic faithful, wish to respect the ideological conviction of others, but we expect them to respect ours as well. Particularly once they become aware that what a developed socialist society wants can be approached from the angle of our religious faith as well.

We agree with our Marxist fellow countrymen that the fundamental principles of different ways of looking at the world cannot be the subject of bargaining. This does not mean that we are stuck in the mud and just treading water. A sincere dialogue—even if we stick to our principles—helps us to come closer together in the mutual dependence required by the good of the country.

The Constitution of the Hungarian People's Republic guarantees us freedom of worship. This gives us satisfaction and confidence. Though there are unsettled questions, yet we have improving hopes of clearing them up gradually and in a calm atmosphere, based on mutual understanding and that good relationship which today characterize contacts between Church and State.

There is the question of religious instruction on Church premises, on which an agreement was recently reached between the Catholic Church and the State, and which is contested by many, from varying points of view. I am convinced that this is one of those problems which it is very difficult to settle definitively by a single agreement.

Such instruction is a viable, living organism which steadily develops and changes just as general-school teaching does. I cannot claim that the present settlement makes difficulties and misunderstandings impossible. Church and State have to continue working gradually to remove difficulties and to establish a reassuring practice.

*Q: Not only the government but the most competent leaders of social and public life have stated on several occasions—as the programme of the Patriotic People's Front most recently emphasized on the occasion of last year's parliamentary election—that they count upon the co-operation of all Hungarian citizens in the work of building the country. What is Your Eminence's opinion?*

*A: Indeed, such declarations have several times been made by responsible leading personages. Moreover, they were not just made in a general way but were addressed explicitly to the churches and to citizens who are religious. These manifestations caught the attention of the entire population, including leaders of the Catholic Church and the religious masses. Such encouragement, which invited the churches and their faithful to join forces in building the country, aroused great attention abroad as well.*

Last year, in a circular commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Liberation of Hungary, the bench of bishops already answered this invitation: "The Church, together with the people, has found its new place in the socialist society. It fully accepts a common future with the people."

As a member of the bench of bishops at the time I agreed with this declaration of commitment. And now as I take office as Archbishop of Esztergom, I should like to reaffirm this both personally and officially, and I will make every effort to contribute actively to its implementation.

I cannot be sufficiently appreciative of and grateful to the Holy See for its realistic policy and endeavours with which it has instilled satisfaction into the souls of priests and the faithful in place of the old anxiety

by helping us to harmoniously minister to our faith and serve our country.

*Q: Your appointment as Archbishop of Esztergom almost coincides with the 10th anniversary celebrations of the conclusion of the 2nd Vatican Council. In these days local churches render account, confront themselves with the picture which the Council outlined of the Church of today and tomorrow. How does Your Eminence judge the position of the Catholic Church in Hungary in the light of the Council and in respect of the ecclesiastical results of the ten years that have passed since then?*

*A: I feel we do not lag behind our Catholic brethren abroad as concerns the spirituality of the conciliar renascence. Let me point out some of the many results. Our brethren everywhere use the Hungarian-language mass willingly and actively. Visitors from abroad have been surprised to see the faithful sing during mass with all their hearts and all their souls. They are still more fascinated by the large attendance at some of our churches and places of pilgrimage.*

In most of the churches spatial arrangements to adjust to the needs of the new liturgy, have either been completed or are in progress. Much of this work is highly successful, artistically as well.

The new Bible translation is also complete. We are able to read the Word of God in a modern and contemporary idiom. There is much interest in it. So much so that the number of copies thus far printed has already proved inadequate. The Missal and other liturgical books as well as all decisions of the 2nd Vatican Council appeared in Hungarian. Text-books are in accordance with up-to-date teaching methods. Theological students have at their disposal notes on almost all disciplines, in keeping with conciliar theology.

The clerical advisory bodies and senates of the dioceses function everywhere with the support of the diocesan bishops. And so do the catechetical, pastoral and liturgical conventions on the national scale and in the dioceses.

One of the basic projects of the Council

—the systematic and more extensive involvement of the laity in the shaping of today's Church life and in the work of evangelization—still awaits implementation.

I consider it sound that the Church in Hungary, in its totality, is leaning neither towards the ultra-conservatives nor towards the ultra-progressives but follows the road of renascence in the spirit of the Council.

A sad sign of the times, the decline in priestly vocations, fills us with anxiety as well. We have to find a solution in order to make sure that our brethren will not remain without spiritual care as older priests retire or die.

We have not so far succeeded in precisely charting the situation of the Church, the clergy and the faithful. Thus we have no really reliable idea of the results attained, the deficiencies, the omissions and future tasks. We have to seek to rectify this in order that, in the future, we should be able to define questions of vital importance, and the tasks, of our Church.

*Q: Helsinki is regarded by all as a milestone in the modern history of European nations. The agreement laying the foundations of peace and security on our continent will have an exemplary effect for all parts of this earth. This needs helpful contribution from all honest people, both believers and non-believers. What does Your Eminence think?*

*A: We live in an age when nuclear energy and penetration into outer space open up new vistas before man. But the future of mankind can have only one secure foundation: peace. This alone can ensure that man, having conquered Promethean forces, does not misuse the power he has acquired. Our days also provide numerous examples showing how man can use scientific and technological achievements to extinguish life on this earth. The big dilemma—development or annihilation—still splits mankind. But he who is aware of the teachings of the Church or has perused the Gospels knows that a Christian must take the side of life and progress, continuous creative work and peace.*

Pope Paul VI in his New Year's message

this year especially stressed the significance of the Helsinki conference at which the Holy See was also represented: peace is advancing all along the line. We believers also regard Helsinki as a milestone in the modern history of our continent and in the life of all mankind. The beneficent consequences which honest observance of the agreement promises are still practically impossible to foresee.

Looking at the Helsinki agreement I was pleased to read the chapter on freedom of religion. I naturally consider this section important also from our own point of view, but all other chapters of the agreement are just as vitally important. Only in its entirety can this agreement guarantee the safe development of our continent and co-operation among the nations of Europe. This is where we have to join forces to make sure that this

peace agreement does not become a source of new disputes, animosities and divisions. In this joining of forces an important role is assumed by the Church which during its two thousand years has been the teacher of the nations when it comes to the vital questions of mankind.

In the encyclical *Pacem in terris* of Pope John XXIII of blessed memory, and our present Holy Father, Pope Paul VI, in *Populorum progressio* as well as in his World Peace Day, and yearly New Year's Day messages, offered guidance to the Catholic faithful helping them to work devotedly for the peaceful and just development of the world. The bench of bishops will not cease to instruct the clergy and laity committed to its care to cherish peace, that peace which is part of the service of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

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## WILLIAM JAY SMITH ON POETRY AND TRANSLATION

*William Jay Smith is an old friend of Hungarian poetry. He has made several visits to Budapest since 1970, and has translated poems of Gyula Illyés, István Vas, Sándor Weöres, Anna Hajnal, János Pilinszky, József Tornyai, Ottó Orbán, György Petri and Szabolcs Várady. A volume of his own poems was published in Budapest this year by Európa, under the title "Through the Needle's Eye," translated by Szabolcs Várady. He gave this interview in Budapest in the summer of 1975. His translations in this issue, together with the translations by the American poet Barbara Howes, are from "Modern Hungarian Poetry," an anthology edited by Miklós Vajda, to be published early next year by Columbia University Press in New York.—The Editor.*

*Q: As far as I know critics do not put you into any school or category; you are a "loner," is that right?*

*A: Yes, but I think that it is a mistaken idea that we have groups of poets in the United States. I know that there are certain groups like the Beats and the New York School, which are widely talked about, but actually if you look at the mainstream of American poetry, it is more often the individual who is important.*

*Q: What has been the most important development in American poetry since World War II?*

*A: One of the most important things that has happened is that much more poetry is being published than ever before. That may be just the result of government support of little magazines and small presses. Many, many people who in the past were unable to publish are actually publishing in little magazines. We have a far greater quantity of poetry, and—I don't know—somehow when you have quantity it does not always add up*

to quality. So it becomes more and more difficult to sift out the good from the bad.

*Q: The other day you spoke rather sceptically about American poetry.*

A: I was saying I think that Professor Ihab Hassan of Milwaukee was wrong the other day in wanting to make a distinction between recent experimental writing in prose and that in poetry. The same kind of thing has been going on in poetry, and the results have not been great. We have had a few good poets recently, but there have been many more who are merely playing with old ideas and trying to make them sound new. I think the use of surrealism on the part of the younger American poets is very tiresome. So much of this has been done before. And I should think that to the European reader this would be evident.

*Q: About a year ago there was a discussion on modern poetry in "Élet és Irodalom," a Budapest weekly. One of the points made was that the loosening up of form opened the way to dilettantism.*

A: Yes, that is true. Formerly you had to be able to *make* a poem, to *compose* a decent sonnet, for example. And I think that you should be able to do so today. I don't think that you should be allowed to break the rules until you know how to follow them. I am all for writing in all kinds of forms. Free verse is very important, but strict form is also; all the best poets have used all kinds of form. W. H. Auden said to the young poets that if they didn't respect form, they would end up all sounding alike. And that seems to be what has happened. But among the very youngest poets today there is evidence of a return to the use of rhyme and traditional metrical patterns.

*Q: As far as I know, rhyme has become almost ridiculous in certain languages. In Dutch, for instance, it is only used in poems for children.*

A: I realize that some people say the same thing of English, but I think that that is wholly wrong, because rhyme is perfectly natural in English. The first things that we learn in this world are nursery rhymes. And they are among the greatest

children's poetry in the world. People in other countries envy our nursery rhymes because so many other languages have nothing of the sort. And I think that the wonderful use of rhyme in nursery rhymes can be carried over into serious verse as well. Young people today are perfectly happy to make use of rhyme in their popular songs (and there is a great revival of interest in folk songs), and there is no reason that this use should not come over into serious poetry. . . . In Hungarian poetry Sándor Weöres makes marvelous use of childlike rhyme in very serious poems.

*Q: But isn't that because Hungarian poetry has traditions that are different from Western European traditions?*

A: Yes, but some of the greatest poetry in English down to the present has made use of rhyme. You cannot say that rhyme cannot be put to serious use. You must remember that rhyme does not necessarily mean a kind of straight-jacket. English is rich in slant rhyme and assonance. In this respect, English and Hungarian are similar, but of course, in Hungarian you a bit more easily use assonance because of all the agglutinative forms, which can just be added to the ends of words. But still we use a great deal of slant rhyme, and rhyme that does not have to come with the compulsive beat of nursery rhyme. But even in serious verse you can make use of that kind of heavy beat also. As to form in modern context, I think of a poet like Richard Wilbur, who writes in the most formal stanzas, and writes extraordinarily well and is in every way modern. People tend to say that he is a brilliant exception, but I think that there are many others too, not always mentioned. We tend to make the generalization that you can't use rhyme any more, but I think that is not true.

*Q: You also are numbered among the exceptions. Your critics usually praise you for your wealth of forms, for your mastery of form.*

A: I make use of a variety of forms. My most recent poems are not rhymed at all.

I have written a good deal of light verse, which, of course, has to make use of form, relies on it, and I have also written poetry for children. Because of a similar variety in his work, the Hungarian poet I feel a special affinity for is Sándor Weöres.

*Q: You have also translated poems by Illyés, have you not? Weöres and Illyés represent almost totally opposite trends of the Hungarian poetic tradition.*

A: I understand that. But it seems to me that they are both very fine poets. I am impressed by Illyés' *People of the Puszta*, which I just reread—very moving, brilliantly translated by G. F. Cushing. And some of his poems have the same quality as that book—the poem about work, about his grandfather, the wheelwright, for example, and his recent poem about the Hungarian language "A Wreath", which is marvelous.

*Q: How and when did you first come into contact with Hungarian poetry?*

A: It was a happy accident. I came here first in 1970 when I was on a visit to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. I had been interested in Russian poetry and had translated poems by Voznesensky and so after Poland and Rumania I came to Budapest and here Miklós Vajda asked me to translate poems for *The New Hungarian Quarterly*, and I have been doing so ever since.

*Q: The poet-translator is not so much a traditional figure in American poetry as he is in Hungarian poetry, is he?*

A: There is now a great vogue for translation in the United States. But, of course, there are still a number of important works from other languages that should be made available in America. I have been astonished to learn that there has been no American edition of *People of the Puszta*, which I am now trying to get a publisher interested in along with a volume of Illyés's poetry.

*Q: What kind of public is there for translated poetry?*

A: If you judge by the number of copies sold, it is perhaps not huge. You must remember that an edition of 3,000 copies is

a very good sale for a book of poems in the United States even by someone very well known.

*Q: That is exactly the number of copies that Európa has published of your poems in Hungarian translation.*

A: Which is a great number for a small country like this. But an edition of 3,000 copies in the United States represents many more thousands of readers—I don't know how many exactly—because at least half of the edition is bought by libraries, public libraries, college libraries, university libraries. And from these libraries the book will be taken out by scores of readers year after year. Poetry is still a national art in the United States, even though the poet does not have the venerated position that he has in Hungary or in Latin America, where leading poets are public figures, politicians, and diplomats. One of the reasons that the position of Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress was created was to give some cachet to poetry, and the consultancy has in this way been quite successful. The honor has passed from poet to poet, and during his term of one or two years, the Consultant does become recognized in Washington as a public figure of some importance, although, needless to say, no one listens to him about foreign policy.

*Q: What do you mean by saying that you feel an affinity for Weöres's poetry?*

A: What I love is the wonderful comical freedom in his work, his ability to do every sort of thing. I think that he said somewhere that a poet should do just that, and that is very important. I have said it myself—go out on a limb. I quote somewhere in an essay such different figures as Jean Cocteau and Rudyard Kipling to the effect that a writer should find out what he can do and then do something else. And I think that Weöres is a clear example of that, he is always doing something new, something astonishing, something magical.

*Q: Translating Weöres must be terribly difficult.*

A: Impossible. That is of course the challenge of translation. One must always attempt the impossible. I did one of Weöres's well known pieces, the "Variations on the Themes of Little Boys," and it was hellishly difficult, but I think that it does come through in my translation. I even managed to keep the form.

Q: *We always keep the original form in translation but there is a whole school in Western Europe which says that keeping the form is impossible as well as needless.*

A: Yes, I was somewhat disappointed by the French translation of some of my poems, which did not keep the form, but, of course, it is difficult to do so. There are some American poet-translators who say that one should not bother trying to keep any kind of rhyme. I think that is ridiculous. One should first of all get the meaning, because if one can't do that, one should give up right away, but the form is very often part of the meaning, a very important part of the meaning. It has been pointed out many times that Dante, because of the striking visual imagery in his work, can always be translated: there are hundreds of translations of the *Divine Comedy* into English. They are not all good, but still the poetry does come through; one can see it as the work of a master because the imagery is available in another language even though one loses the music. This is not true of all poets, many of whom have almost no visual imagery. We have no adequate translation of Pushkin into English; the wit, which is much a part of the form in the original, just does not come through.

Q: *Do you think that the projected anthology, based on the material first published in NHQ could become a real success in the United States?*

A: I think that it will receive a great deal of attention because there have been publications of individual poets but no really significant collection. Miklós Vajda deserves great credit for the remarkable quality of the translations. He has spent years getting the right poets to translate the right poets, and the results are fantastic.

Q: *Whose work did you translate for this anthology?*

A: Mainly Illyés and Weöres and Vas, some poems by Anna Hajnal, János Pilinszky, József Tornai, and Ottó Orbán, and a few younger poets like György Petri and Szabolcs Várady.

Q: *What exactly is it in Hungarian poetry that attracted your attention?*

A: I like its tremendous variety and vitality. And I am always struck by the role poetry plays in the country. You meet a Hungarian anywhere in the world and he starts quoting poetry to you. I found that to be true on several occasions. Your film makers make use of it, it is everywhere in your culture, and that is fine.

Q: *Have you ever thought of actually learning Hungarian?*

A: I am trying, but I haven't had time. I have been so busy translating the poems, but I can make my way through them now with a dictionary.

Q: *It is still a bit amazing that an important American poet like yourself should sacrifice so much of his energy to other poets' works.*

A: When one is not working on something of one's own, I find it rewarding to translate. The work of translating from another language is a way of keeping one's own language—and ability to use it—alive.

Q: *Would you regard your translations as part of your own work?*

A: I feel that I have added my own touch to them. I never translate work for which I feel no affinity. Younger poet-translators often think that they can translate anything. But if you choose the wrong poet to translate, the result will show it.

Q: *Any further plans?*

A: I am preparing a new collection of poems written since 1970. I am also working on a long prose book, but I'd rather not talk about that until I am further along with it. And a new collection of poems for children will be coming out this year, as well as my adaptation of Kornei Chukovsky's children's poem, "The Telephone."

# REVIEW OF PERIODICALS

## POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC POLICY 1945-1975

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the liberation of Hungary, the Hungarian demographic review *Demográfia* in No. 2-3 of 1975 published comprehensive studies on the most important demographic phenomena. The studies examine the changes and the trends of the past thirty years, the causes of change and the effects of the given demographic phenomena on the demographic situation. Hungarian demographic trends showed vast changes notably in the birth rate, which, though favourable often caused concern on a social scale. The liberation of the country and then the establishment of the people's democratic state created the framework for such demographic developments in Hungary as a decrease in mortality, urbanization, social restratification and an increase in marriages so that the problems are today already those characteristic of a developed country. There were and are, of course, unfavourable phenomena as well, in the first place, the particular and often unexpected negative trends in fertility. The decline in fertility, despite substantial economic growth in the same period, drew attention to the fact that the demographic trend can be influenced only by a policy based on socialist humanism.

Egon Szabady's study, "Reproduction of population: The trend in fertility over the past thirty years", states among other things that considerable changes have taken place in the ratios and relative weights of underlying

demographic trends. The result in essence is that the number of births, or fertility, has increasingly become the basic factor in determining population growth.

According to estimates the population of Hungary in 1945 was 9,082,000 and has increased in thirty years by 1,428,000 or nearly 16 per cent. The population in early 1975 was 10,510,000.

Fertility has shown a downward trend since the end of the last century. But while in the years between the two world wars the fall in fertility was almost continuous, in the post-1945 years the trend in natality has gone through several clearly distinguishable periods:

1. To compensate for a relatively small decline in births during the Second World War, the birth rate rose somewhat in relation to the long trend line and then became stabilized at a figure of 21 per thousand in the years 1947 to 1950.

2. After that there was a minor decrease: the rate of live births at that time was 20 per thousand.

3. As a result of the severe measures in 1952, which practically put a stop to birth control, the number of births in 1953 grew considerably and in 1954 reached the highest level in the post-liberation period (23 per thousand); the 1955 figure was only a little below this.

4. In 1957, partly because of the previous situation and partly because of legalized

abortion, the birth rate started to decline, first at a slower and then a faster rate, with a bottom level of 13 per thousand between 1962 and 1965.

5. As a result of the introduction of family-benefit measures the birth rate started to rise slowly, stagnating at around 15 per thousand between 1967 and 1973.

6. As a result of the speedy implementation of a complex demographic policy towards the end of 1973 (progressive increases in family allowances, two and a half years' child-care leave with a fixed monthly allowance for mothers, better housing policies, etc.), and also with a growth in the proportion of women of childbearing age, the natality rate had by 1974 risen considerably: 18 live births per 1,000 of the population.

Nevertheless, the recent increase has been almost certainly due to a rise in child-bearing in the youngest generation and notably among previously childless couples and those with only one child. A further increase would occur if more women had second and third children but this still remains to be seen.

In his paper entitled "Change in Hungary's population structure", András Klinger points out that the two-way variation in demographic trends—decline in fertility and the death rate—can best be seen from the change in the population structure. In the last thirty years this has resulted in an aging of the population with a decrease in the proportion of children and an increase in the proportion of old people. The former group has fallen from 26 per cent to 20 per cent of the population, while the latter has climbed from 11 to 18 per cent. The number of unmarried persons of both sexes has strongly declined, and, at the same time, there has been a marked increase in the proportion of divorcees of both sexes.

There has been a considerable improvement in the proportion of the population at all levels of schooling. Between 1949 and 1975, among the population of the appro-

priate age, the ratio of general-school certificate holders rose from 21 to 58 per cent; secondary-school certificate holders from 6 to 19 per cent, and university or college graduates from 2 to 5 per cent. At the same time there was a considerable decrease in the relative cultural handicap of women.

With the impact of socio-economic development, the number and percentage of gainfully employed persons in the population grew considerably. In 1975 the figure was already 5.1 million—25 per cent higher than in 1949. This increase was due entirely to women's influx into the ranks of productive labour.

The economic transformation is evident in the composition of gainfully active persons by sectors of the national economy: since 1949 there has been a marked drop in the number of those engaged in agriculture (to barely more than half) and in their proportion (from 54 to 23 per cent).

In his study "Marriage and divorce, family trend: Composition of families and households", József Tamási writes that for the past thirty years three characteristic changes can be observed in the trend of marriages: far more people marry younger than before; the average age at marriage continues to decline for both sexes: between 1948 and 1973 it decreased from 28.8 to 26.7 years for men and from 24.5 to 23.3 years for women. It should be noted that these figures comprise all persons entering marriage. The average age at first marriage has decreased to a greater extent for men than for women. Marriage mobility has grown: a greater number of persons belonging to different socio-occupational categories have married than before. The percentage of those who remarry has grown. In 25 per cent of all marriages, at least one of the parties was previously married, while in 1941 this figure was only 18 per cent. By international standards the divorce rate in Hungary is extremely high, and the trend has been rising. The number of divorcees per



1,000 of the population was 1.2 in 1948 and 2.4 in 1973. The number of divorces per 1,000 marriages similarly rose from 113 to 250.

Considering divorce not as a judgement against marriage, but rather as the final realization of an unhappy marriage, seems to be confirmed by the considerable number of remarriages among divorced people. It is a fact that one of every four marriages will end in divorce, but it is also true that two out of every three divorced men and three out of every five divorced women will also remarry—and 44 per cent of men and 34 per cent of women remarry within one year of divorce.

Mainly as a result of the decrease in fertility, the size of households (and so the size of families) shows a downward trend. In 1949 the number of persons per 100 families was 339, in 1973 this figure dropped to 298.

The second factor affecting population statistics, the mortality rate, is analysed by Zoltán Marton and Emil Pallós in a study entitled "Mortality trend: Causes of death". Speaking of the general trend in mortality, the authors say that the rise recorded during the Second World War was again followed by a fall in mortality to 11–12 per thousand in the immediate post-liberation period (1947–1949). In the subsequent period the downward trend in mortality continued until the mid-sixties when it reached a level of about 10 per thousand. Between 1948 and 1972, the expectation of life at birth rose from 58.8 to 66.9 years for men and from 63.2 to 72.6 years for women.

From the year 1965 a slow rise in mortality occurred because of the changes in the composition of the population as a whole. The decline in the death rate was mainly the result of a considerable drop in infant and child mortality; the death rate of middle-aged persons decreased to a lesser extent, that of old people not at all. Thirty years' investigation of the causes of death proves that, as a result of a rising life expectancy due

to the decrease in juvenile mortality, mortal diseases among older people have multiplied and are today a very important factor in aggregate mortality. Among the deaths in 1946, 15.5 per cent died of cardiac diseases, 9.9 per cent of influenza or pneumonia, 8.9 per cent of pulmonary tuberculosis. In 1973 the three leading causes of death were: cardiac diseases 31.5, ulcers 19.4 and cerebral artery troubles 14 per cent. It is unfortunate that, in addition to these chronic degenerative ailments, there was a considerable increase in unnatural deaths (accident, suicide) in the past period.

Infancy is of special importance in the analysis of mortality. Mrs. T. Pongrácz's article "The trend in infant mortality" discusses the reduction in the death rate of this age-group and points to the interrelations between birth weight and infant mortality. The number and percentage of babies born underweight (below 2.5 kg.) rose considerably in the past few decades (from 5.5 in 1950 to 11.6 per cent in 1973), and this slowed down the decline in infant mortality. The decrease was nevertheless great, the rate dropping from 94 per thousand in 1948 to 33.8 in 1973.

In his paper entitled "Three decades of internal migration", Lajos Bene investigates progressive trend and social composition of internal migration, their influences on the territorial distribution of the population and the great impact of socio-economic transformations on Hungary. It is characteristic of the intensity of the migratory movement that the annual number of those changing their permanent residence has, since 1960, ranged between 250 thousand and 340 thousand; still greater is the number of those who change residence temporarily: between 450 thousand and 630 thousand per annum. Though annual figures for a longer period cannot be supplied, since the same person—particularly in the case of temporary residence—may move more than once in a year, the above figures still show that in one or two decades a considerable propor-

tion of the country's population changes his residence.

It is also worth noting, however, that the smaller figures quoted above applies to recent years; this means that demographic movement is declining, obviously as the result of industrialization and country planning.

The first economic factor to stress concerning migration is the influx of agricultural workers to the towns. From the mid-sixties the policy of industrial decentralization has meant a diminution and levelling out of internal migration.

Changes in natural population growth and migratory balance have produced considerable changes in population distribution in terms of types of settlement and housing conditions. These questions are dealt with by György Vukovich in his study "The population and housing conditions of towns and villages". The author says that both natural increase and the balance of migrations, though in different and varying degrees, have contributed substantially to the growth of the number of urban inhabitants. In the period from 1949 to 1959, these two factors balanced each other out, though that of migratory had the greater significance. In the period from 1960 to 1969, however, natural population growth considerably diminished as a significant consideration; what is more, Budapest experienced some natural decline, while the migrations continued to grow. At present half the population lives in towns; the proportion of those living in provincial towns has particularly grown in the past thirty years—from 19 to 30 per cent.

Housing conditions can best be examined by analysing the number of inhabitants per 100 rooms. During the past thirty years this index has greatly improved, particularly in villages and provincial towns. At present the number of inhabitants per 100 rooms is around 160, as against 260 in 1949. Three-quarters of the aggregate number of dwelling units are personal property, and this percentage shows a slight increase.

The study "Social mobility" by Rudolf

Andorka characterizes the progressive trend of social mobility on the basis of different mobility samples. The author states that between 1938 and 1963 the main direction of mobility was determined by changes in the occupational structure, which in turn resulted from the country's economic development: the flow of mobile persons moved from rural occupations to non-agricultural physical labour, from unskilled to skilled labour and from the manual labour to the intellectual strata. The opposite tendency in mobility (from intellectual towards manual occupations, from industry towards agriculture) was comparatively less significant. While mobility in the opposite direction from the mainstream did not change substantially, mobility in the main direction increased one and a half times, which caused the great increase in total social mobility. The proportion of those moving in the mainstream within the total mobile population rose from 29 in 1938 to 45 per cent in 1962-64. At the same time the proportion of immobile population dropped from 56 to 41 per cent.

In his study entitled "Economic effects of demographic development" Emil Valkovics examines the degree to which purely demographic factors affected the number of economically active persons in the population and the trend of production and consumption. He concludes that the increase in life expectancy has positively influenced lifetime's productive output.

Károly Miltényi's paper "The trend of our demographic policy" traces the connection between legislation reflecting demographic policy, on the one hand, and the trend in marriages, divorces and births, on the other.

In the past thirty years the legislative regulations concerning marriage have aimed at encouraging and facilitating marriage, especially for young people. Reducing of the age of legal maturity has been of considerable importance in this.

Thirty years' statistics support the con-

clusion that the fundamental objective related to marriage—and the accompanying, necessary socio-economic conditions—have essentially materialized.

Growth in the marriage rate has been accompanied by an increase in the divorce rate, which in turn has added to the number and percentage of remarriages.

Measures aimed to increase births in the fifties could not counteract the rapid fall in fertility, under the influence of socio-economic conditions. Administrative measures had only a short-range effect, while a well-thought-out, long-range demographic policy, as pursued from the second half of the sixties, began to produce its intended results. The decline in fertility stopped and the number of childbirths rose along with policies of lightening the burdens of working mothers and young married couples, instituting child-care allowance in 1967 and complex demographic measures adopted in 1973. The increase, however, was also due to the most populous female sector of society reaching childbearing age.

Tamás Katona's paper "Demographic research" gives an overall picture of the state of demographic research in Hungary. Research launched in the Central Statistical Office in the second half of the fifties was given a strong stimulus by the publication of the review *Demográfia*, started in 1958, and the founding of the Demographic Research Institute in 1962. The importance of demographic studies was recognized early in the sixties and this led to the establishment of the Demographic Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, which provides

a forum for debating demographic problems among specialists. Central topics in Hungarian demographic research included fertility, mobility and other questions of social demography. At present research is becoming more and more extensive so that now it covers essentially all the theoretical and practical aspects of demography.

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Following the comprehensive essays is the column "Communications," in which Klára Serfőz's article "The demographic factors influencing the expense of educating children with special regard to mortality" looks, first of all, at the expense incurred by child mortality. The development of the personality among school children and among children in state care as well as general questions of child welfare are discussed by Antal Babics in his "Some social problems of the development of personality". Csaba Rátay's "Mentally deficient children in Budapest and a socio-demographic analysis of their family backgrounds" investigates the impact of personal factors and family and social background on various levels of mental deficiency.

The column "Observer" reports on a number of international and national conferences and events of demographic interest, along with comprehensive data on the new demographic forecasts of the United Nations.

This number of *Demográfia* also publishes copious bibliographical material.

A. B.

## THE CHURCH PRESS IN HUNGARY

Sixteen church newspapers are published in Hungary. Four of them are weeklies: *Új Ember* ("The New Man": Catholic), *Reformátusok Lapja* ("The Calvinist Paper"), *Evangélikus Élet* ("Evangelical Life": Lutheran) and *Békebírnök* ("Peace Herald": jointly published by small denominations which, before the liberation, were described as sects or "non-established" Churches). Other periodicals are the quarterly *Unitárius Élet* ("Unitarian Life": 2,000 circulation) and *Adventista Tájékoztató* ("Adventist Bulletin") published every other month.

The Catholic papers have the greatest circulation (more than 100,000 copies per issue all told), the Catholic Church having the greatest number of faithful. Among the smaller denominations the Adventists and the Orthodox have newspapers of their own: *Egyházi Krónika* ("Church Chronicle") has a circulation of 500, and the afore-mentioned *Adventista Tájékoztató* is printed in 100 copies every two months.

The sixteen church papers essentially differ: the majority have small circulations. They are inward-looking and largely of parish pump nature; the smaller the denomination the more likely they are to be that. They contain theological articles, and meditations addressed to the faithful, meditation with writings from the faithful and members of the clergy.

The highest standards amongst these publications are reached by *Vigilia*, a monthly published by Catholic Action. It has a circulation of 11,200 and acts as a forum of the dialogue between Catholic Christians and Marxists. The editor is György Rónay, an eminent poet, novelist, essayist and translator.

*Vigilia* is a typically intellectual periodical. It publishes articles on theoretical questions, fiction, reportage, and criticism, of art and music as well. The record reviews are particularly noteworthy since this is a feature

that is unusual in Hungarian papers. More recently reproductions were printed on the back cover—works by living Hungarian artists linked to a particular contribution.

The first two articles of the February 1976 issue are devoted to the dialogue between believers and Marxists. Msg. József Cserháti, Bishop of Pécs, entitles his contribution "Those Committed to Dialogue". Béla Hegyi, who writes regularly for the paper, deals with the subject in a review of a recently published collection of articles and speeches by János Kádár. Béla Hegyi writes: "Christians are ready for a dialogue and this means also that they are committed to socialism. Accepting dialogue in our country means accepting social progress. This reflects the political attitude of the participants. The expected and actual outcome of the dialogue therefore depend in part on the position the partners take up concerning the policy of alliance. . . . To us the alternative of dialogue is not an alternative of faith or unbelief, what it offers one or the other side is not the apologetics of conversion, but service of all those values which society has thus far created for the benefit of all and which it holds dear for the future as well. . . . A narrow attitude in this field also necessarily entails all the harmful aspects of human, institutional and intellectual isolation which would slow down the steady and planned attainment of a more developed stage of society. 'We have to continue discussing so that the alliance should strengthen', writes János Kádár." Béla Hegyi raises the question: What can Christianity represent in the dialogue? "Exclusively its original objectives: its cultural and social functions. It has a role to play in the humanization of human relations, in the development of the sense of solidarity, in order that human relations should lead to superior human qualities in the individual; it may assist in efforts at making the life of communities.

—families, jobs, generations—more harmonious and more honest; helping to elucidate the moral questions of our age and our society. It may contribute to educating people for peace and patriotism, to developing respect for humanity making it an everyday notion and a manifest universality.”

*Vigilia* helps to make accessible modern Christian theological and philosophical literature. The March 1976 issue, for example, publishes the concluding part of a long essay by Teilhard de Chardin, “My Universe”, on the exploration of the internal structure of the world, and the same number includes an article by Father Yves Congar, “Some True Laws of the Pastoral Attitude”, obviously because this question is one that agitates the Hungarian Catholic press as a whole. The paper contains an extended review of Professor Tamás Nyíri’s new history of philosophy, lately issued by the Catholic publishers, Saint Stephen’s Society. The reviewer judges it to be a major contribution to the life of the intellect in Hungary.

*Vigilia* is eager to join its voice in discussions going on in the Hungarian press; the March issue, for instance, publishes a commentary under the title “Why Is Mathematics Difficult?” by József Pogány, a Piarist father and mathematician, to a discussion of educational reform that has been going on for some years. Father Ferenc Szabó S. J., head of the Hungarian section of Vatican Radio, comments on a Hungarian television programme—an interview with Valéria Dienes, the philosopher who is over ninety-five.

Permanent contributors include leading Hungarian intellectuals known beyond the country’s borders, such as János Pilinszky the poet, and Gábor Thurzó the writer of fiction. The February 1976 issue includes a memorial of the Catholic woman writer, Gizella Dénes, by Thurzó, written in a poetic vein. A recent minor sensation were serialized notes *Bagó: Ramblings with a Puli*, by Zoltán Latinovits the actor, who has often provoked passionate controversy.

Looking over back numbers one comes across articles, poems and interviews by a good number of writers and poets known also to readers of the NHQ. They include Dezső Keresztury and István Vas, who are also members of the editorial board of this paper.

The Christian-Marxist dialogue is, of course, carried on in every Church paper. The essence is how religious denominations should adapt themselves to the social structure of socialist Hungary. This exchange of views is particularly important from the angle of the Catholic Church in Hungary which has managed to make a break with the past though this was not easy. With the translation of Msg. László Lékai to the See of Esztergom and the Primacy of the Catholic Church in Hungary, an era has come to an end. The hierarchy of the Church is complete once again. *Vigilia*, like the rest of the press, publishes the archbishop’s statement which one could read as a programme declaration. \* *Katolikus Szó* (“Catholic Voice”: the fortnightly of the Catholic Committee of the National Peace Council) in its March 14–21, 1976 issue publishes in full the sermons delivered at the investiture. It may not be without interest to quote Msg. Lékai himself: “At the side of the faithful of many denominations large numbers of non-believers live in Hungary enjoying the impetus provided by leadership. Faithful and non-believers all put their shoulder to the wheel to further the welfare of our country. Ideologically, however, we basically differ. For a non-believer as well, what he thinks of the world is part of the dynamism making this Earth more beautiful. To us faithful Catholics, as well as to our brethren of different denominations, our own religious view of things is our most sacred treasure. It gives us fortitude for the conscientious performance of our daily work through which our love of God and man unfolds. We hope that our brief span of life will not

\* See the interview with Msg. Lékai on p. 129 of this issue.

fall into extinction but we will find rest in the loving arms of our Provident Father and Everlasting God. We faithful Catholics respect the ideology of our unbelieving Hungarian brethren. But we expect them likewise to respect our religious beliefs, the free exercise of which is guaranteed to us by the Constitution of the Hungarian People's Republic."

This event will obviously occupy the attention of the Catholic press for a long time. The very same number of *Katolikus Szó* reports a conference of young priests of Zala County: "These young men listen to the radio, watch television and read the newspapers with interest. Their souls are not exclusive worlds, they form their own opinion on everything. They obviously breathed the same air and ate the same bread as other Hungarians. This is why they spoke of the objectives of the entire country as of their own affairs. . . . There was talk also of the esteem enjoyed in our society by the Church and its representatives, the priesthood. The agreements and the recent appointment of the archbishop signify in practice that today, in spite of ideological differences, we also are valued precisely for the common work of construction."

This debate will never be closed. Under the title "The Damage and Purity of Debate" Béla Hegyi wrote in the March 14, 1976 issue of *Új Ember*: "There exists only one trust-inspiring alternative for us: if non-believers throw off their vulgar, dogmatic anti-religiousness, and the faithful shed their militant apologetics, and this without either of them forcing their views on the other, but confront each other's views, arguing their truth on equal terms, thinking together about possibilities, making the most they can of the intellectual storehouse opened up by their meeting." Béla Hegyi replies to an article, "Unity and Dissimilarity", by József Lukács, a Marxist philosopher and historian of religion, which appeared in the December 1975 issue of *Világosság*, a materialist ideological review which he edits

and which formulated the essence of the position of today's criticism of religion in Hungary as follows: ". . . what corresponds ideologically to this revolutionary, practical endeavour is not the mere negation of God, the disproof of His existence by reasonable arguments, but first of all the evolution of a positive, dialectical and materialistic view of nature and society which requires active men building socialism. The discussion with religion from this positive angle is conducted rather against the social regulators inferred from God, for the demonstration of their true social role and meaning, and not against the existence of God. . . . A discussion which leaves out of account that the vast majority of the faithful in Hungary have a positive attitude towards peace and socialism. That which excludes the spirit of dialogue does harm to the fulfilment of our historical aims and to the propagation of the Marxist ideology. A discussion which is conducted against religious people and not for their sake, nor for the satisfaction of their needs and for their human perfection, would only lead to sectarian isolation while violating the policy of alliance and our general political principles." This is the position of Marxists, this is the basis on which the present relationship of Church and State has been established and will evidently be capable of being developed further in the recently opened, undeniably new, era. Béla Hegyi answers: "Therefore our main task still consists in pulling down the walls of isolation erected by ideological tensions and resentments, in exemplifying as widely as possible the unity and dissimilarity of words and deeds, and collaboration in all essential fields of life. Awakening to intellectual consciousness is called for along the whole front of the dialogue."

The Catholic press is not, of course, filled with writings of this type. For example, the number of *Új Ember* referred to above, in addition to Béla Hegyi's article, publishes in detail the Vatican's statement on sexual morality, continues the series of religious

instruction for adults under the title "The World of Our Faith", comments on articles of the daily press in the column "Through Catholic Eyes", publishes letters to the editor and news in brief from the world of Catholicism. On March 14, 1976 *Katolikus Szó* published a report: Péter Domokos Tóth visited old priests in their homes.

Pastoral work is obviously of great concern for the Catholic Church: it depends on this whether the Church succeeds in adjusting itself to the life of modern, socialist Hungary. *Teológia* devotes the best part of its June 1974 number to this question. One of the articles, which might pass for a short sociological survey, relates conversations with Budapest clergymen. Dr. Miklós Magass, the parish priest of Óbuda who now works in the new housing development established in the place of the recently demolished town centre of Óbuda, says: "The past has suddenly been replaced by the future without transition. Here a radical change is needed also in pastoral work as well. So far the flock had been expected to follow the pastor. Now the pastor has to look for the faithful. The people who live here have become alienated even from themselves. They got rid of the old furniture and the holy pictures with them, they made an entrance into modern life with new possessions and new attitudes. But they will fall ill here as well, they will need a priest, sick calls will be required and funerals, but there will be christening as well and weddings. . . I've been on good terms with the local council right from the start, I am active in the People's Front, I know all the official bodies well, for Óbuda is like a small town. Thanks to this I have obtained permission to go and see the new residents and ask them if they wish to join our parish. . . This is an existential quest for our pastoral work. The reconstruction of this housing estate would have otherwise broken links with our flock."

Béla Fülöp, priest-in-charge of the Sacred Heart Church at Kispeszt, a working-class and lower-middle-class district where there

are still many small cottages, says: "Old people are of great value to us. There are many of them and they like to go to church. They provide most of the money and help in kind as well. Elderly women do much. They do the sacristan's work and are willing to help in every way. I try to strike the right note, solve problems that arise, and make the church and its surroundings a home from home. At times we have coffee together, on Saturdays they decorate the church. Then they open their hearts to me, and talk about their complaints. That is when I work out what to put in my sermons. I can see in advance how they will react. . . I celebrate everyone's name-day with them, and so they can feel they are really colleagues, working for the Church on the inside. I should like in this way to make the spirit of Saint Paul's Churches come true."

The new Hungarian Protestant Bible translation is the subject that currently occupies the Calvinist press. The monthly *Református Egyház*, in its December 1975 number, gives an account of the history of Hungarian Bible translations. The first Hungarian Protestant Bible translation, which was the first complete Hungarian Bible, appeared in 1590. The beauty of its language and its influence over the centuries gave it great importance in the history of culture and literature. Many look on it as a major source of the Hungarian literary language and of Hungarian prose. Its style still reverberates in much that is written today. The Károli Bible is thus comparable in importance to the Authorized Version. The first revision was made as far back as 1608, the next taking place in 1685. The Protestant Churches now use the revision of 1908. The revision of 1908 only postponed a new Hungarian Bible translation. In the early 1930s the British and Foreign Bible Society again decided to revise the Károli text. The new version was published in 1938; it tried to preserve treasured expressions while eliminating archaisms. The text was not based on uniform principles, but it

could not be refined until after the war. Then the British and Foreign Bible Society asked the Calvinist Church of Hungary to prepare a new text. The Calvinists wished to do this in an ecumenical spirit, and created the Hungarian Bible Council for the purpose. By 1951 the expert committee on the New Testament had finished the revision of the relevant part of the Károli Bible, but precisely during revision it became evident that the revision of the Károli Bible could not be continued without abandoning the characteristics of the Károli text. The first experimental sections of the new translation were issued by the New Testament committee in 1966 and by the Old Testament committee in 1967. "Acceptance of the new Bible translation by the congregations is not a matter of course. A great deal of tact is required especially in its introduction for liturgical use. Therefore the Hungarian Bible Council has decided to leave it to the member Churches of the Hungarian Ecumenical Council when and how they will authorize the new translation for use in their own churches. The Synod of the Calvinist Church of Hungary holds that it should be up to congregations to decide on the liturgical use of the new translation. Therefore the 1908 revision of the Károli Bible will remain in official use even after the publication of the new translation as long as this is the wish of a congregation," writes Elemér Kocsis in the official organ of the Calvinist Church of Hungary. Getting the new Bible accepted must obviously be of concern to the Church, since its weekly, *Reformátusok Lapja*, has started a column "What is your opinion?" publishing replies from ministers and lay members alike who, without exception, speak of it in terms of enthusiastic praise.

*Református Egyház* in its December 1975 number covered an important event: the consecration of the new Calvinist church in Debrecen. It was an important event because, as Bishop Bartha said in his sermon, "This church is a token and proof of the good

relationship that exist between the Calvinist Church of Hungary and the socialist Hungarian State." The church had suffered war damage in 1944. As the congregation was not in a position to renovate the fairly large building, too large for its purposes, the church ought to have been demolished, and the congregation would have been left without a place of worship. In this awkward predicament the congregation, in agreement with the Church authorities, appealed to the government: they offered the church building to the university and requested instead the erection of a new house of worship at the government's expense. "In this church we see a symbol of the aspirations of the Hungarian Calvinists affected by the new Reformation: the congregation and the Church authorities agreed to use the new church to remind us of a great Christian martyr of modern times, Martin Luther King, Jr., the Baptist minister who fought against racial discrimination. . . This church, standing in memory of Martin Luther King, is a sign showing that our Church is on the side of the forces fighting for mankind. With the help of the Holy Ghost, Hungarian Calvinism has heard and accepted with open heart a voice calling to renewal, for a new Reformation: 'Suffer conversion'. This is why the Church does not cease to ask the Lord for renewal for itself and wishes to be an instrument of the new Reformation for the benefit of others."

*Lelkipásztor* ("Pastor") is a Lutheran monthly for parsons which has a circulation of 850. It has been published for more than fifty years. Here are the contents of an earlier number, dated July 1973; "Diaconal Theology", "A Salute to Petőfi", "The Lutheran Church in Hungary", "The Age of the Reformation", "Anticommunism in Theology and in Ecumenism", "Book Review", "The Departed", "The Evangelizer's Workshop—the 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th Sundays following Trinity Sunday".

Articles on Jehovah's Witnesses often appear in the Lutheran press. The obvious



reason is that Lutherans who leave the flock tend to come under the influence of the Witnesses. "The other day a neurotic woman, who had for years avoided our congregational functions and had not paid the church tax either, showed up in the vestry in company with the local leader of Jehovah's Witnesses and a young man. She announced gesticulating ecstatically: 'I have found the truth!'," writes pastor János Milán in his article "Jehovah's Witnesses" published in *Lelkipásztor* of July 1974, and continues by describing the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses and advancing arguments against them: "...let us be prepared and inform the members of our congregation properly, warning them against the unexpected visit of the false preacher. Experience shows that the best way is for our brethren to reject the first attempt promptly and categorically by saying that we have no need for any new teaching. We are satisfied with Christ and his grace and love..."

*Új Élet* ("The New Life"), the paper of the Hungarian Jews, appears twice a month in 7,000 copies. The February 15, 1976 issue begins with an editorial by Chief Rabbi Miklós Máté, "On Harmony". Let us quote: "Long ago the Jewish prophets told with firm conviction that in time, men will turn their swords into ploughshares and their spears into vine-pruning knives, they will not draw sword against others, nor will they make war. This teaching originates in the eight century B.C. How much time has passed since, and how many people have worked towards this end! And what of it has come true? Practically nothing. It is still a current, difficult problem of our days to make the good come out on top, helping it triumph. Many are fighting for this. Idealists, materialists, politicians, statesmen, believers, non-believers, writers, artists, scholars. Our weapons in this struggle are the weapons of faith and love, and the training of man for love. These are strong and reliable weapons that may enable man to work wonders."

*Új Élet* devotes more space and interest than other Hungarian newspapers to the still continuing trials of Nazi war criminals. The afore-cited issue reports in detail on a trial in Hanover and the sentence pronounced. The past is present in every page: the paper commemorates the dead, known or nameless. This number prints a memorial of Béla Révész, a writer who perished in Auschwitz. László Palásti interviews the Public Prosecutor of the Szálasi trial, on the occasion of the publication of László Frank's memoirs, *Zöld ár* ("Green Flood"), which deals with the trial and execution of Ferenc Szálasi, the Hungarian Arrow-cross leader.

The Jewish paper also writes on the relationship of Church and State. The occasion was presented by János Kádár's visit in District VII of Budapest, of which the wartime Jewish ghetto had formed part. *Új Élet* writes: "János Kádár has rightly pointed out that every possibility exists for the sound carrying out of local and national, immediate and more distant tasks and for unbroken progress. He did not add in particular, but this follows logically from his words and from all that is implied in his words, that to attain this development we have to do our work with still more attention, strengthening our attitude and keenness. The unity of believers and non-believers, of the various strata of Hungarian society, their more profound solidarity and common action are needed in order for us to achieve, rapidly, and well, what in the scientific and political idiom is called the building of developed socialism."

*Békebírnök* ("Messenger of Peace"), the organ of the Baptist Church of Hungary as well as of the other Free Churches, appears weekly with a circulation of 5,500 copies. It includes a relatively large proportion of devotional writing, religious meditations and sermons that seek to guide the faithful in everyday life.

# BOOKS AND AUTHORS

## ILLYÉS'S COLLECTED AND ABANDONED VERSE

*Összegyűjtött versek* (Collected Poems). Volume I, 1920-1945; Volume II, 1946-1968. Szépirodalmi, Budapest, 1972-73, 914 pp and 775 pp. *Abbahagyott versek* (Abandoned Poems). Szépirodalmi, Budapest, 1971, 109 pp. (both in Hungarian).

Cornille or Racine? French men of letters, who are particularly fond of "either-or" reasoning, still worry over this question after more than three centuries. The English think far less exclusively, but the appearance of T. S. Eliot, for instance, caused them to reflect upon the tradition of Shelley and Swinburne.

This century especially, Hungarian literary life echoes with "either-or's". After the First World War and more specifically from the beginning of the thirties, groups continually formed on ideological, political, sociological, generational and stylistic grounds, making claims for their own progenitors.

Primarily thanks to Illyés, we no longer feel obliged to contrast great Hungarian poets and writers of the twentieth century or stress their (real or supposed) divergences, though, of course, we do not try to hide their essential differences. Illyés is the man who was in Paris in 1924 to witness the drafting of the pamphlet *A Degenerate* against Anatole France (while making lifelong friends of Tzara, Breton and Éluard). Illyés is the man who, when it was fashionable throughout Europe to speak about the "dull" nineteenth century, professed himself to be a disciple of that age. Although he participated in the revival of the eighteenth century, he did so without denigrating the nineteenth, as many writers in Hungary and abroad did in the 'twenties and 'thirties.

Illyés, however, is deeply imbued with the eighteenth century; time and again we come across eighteenth-century reminiscences in those texts considered most characteristic of him. One of them, paying homage to the memory of Béla Bartók, is among his most significant poems in recent decades. Two further points: in 1934 Illyés wrote a book on Petőfi, the great nineteenth-century Hungarian poet, minstrel of freedom at home and abroad. Since then, in keeping alive the memory of Petőfi in verse and prose, Illyés truly continues in the tradition of his great predecessor. Also Illyés in 1946 referred to Erasmus as his mentor.

Erasmus, the French eighteenth century, surrealism, revolutionary Petőfi and a whole series of twentieth-century Hungarian poets mark Illyés's poetic and philosophical "fertile springs". I mention only three of the latter: Mihály Babits, the liberal Catholic poet, novelist and critic who contended that a European literature preceded the development of national literatures; the communist Attila József who sympathized with Freudianism; and Lőrinc Szabó, the greatest Hungarian representative of individualism, a ruthlessly self-scrutinizing poet.

Son of a mechanic, Gyula Illyés was born in 1902 in a servant's hut on a large estate. As a teenager, he was a soldier in the Red Army and had to flee the country after the fall of the Hungarian Republic of Councils in 1919. He went to Paris, wrote poems

in French, one of which was dedicated to Paul Éluard (for whom he eventually became an authoritative interpreter). In 1926 he returned to Hungary, and in 1928 his first book of poems, *Nebéz föld* (Tough land) was published; since then he has had an immeasurable influence on contemporaries, young and old.

His critics rightly emphasize that the determining factors of his work are the *Puszta* where he was born and Paris. The most trustworthy spokesman of the Hungarian peasantry, he also always thinks in Continental perspectives. During the German occupation of France he published and partly translated the Hungarian anthology *Treasury of French Literature* as a symbolic act of defiance against the Germans and their Hungarian allies. Throughout these years—indeed, from earlier and even today—his most enduring trait is an unconditional respect for values, and his efforts to protect them.

In dozens of poems since the mid-thirties, Illyés has written angrily, indignantly, despairingly and objectively about death. This constant and relentless awareness of death underscores a constant and relentless love of life. For Illyés, there is only one essential virtue to be valued above all others: life. Illyés shares this value structure, combining and unrestrained love of life with a cognizance of death, with the likes of Montaigne, Voltaire and Tolstoy.

Traditions in art are never a question of style, but of artistic approach. Illyés continues in a European tradition that—following Montaigne—is frightened by transcendent dreams, while facts, specific remedies and possibilities are essentially in the realm of ethics. It is in the spirit of this tradition that he says in one of his poems, "the greatest courage is hope".

In the first poem of his first volume, Illyés recalls the fate of agricultural labourers with the words: "human beings are living here", ones who "forget even themselves". These five words—"human beings are living here"—could be the

motto for the whole of Illyés's œuvre, which is one immense and unbroken protest against the loss of memory and creative will, a protest against all types of self-destruction—social, moral, or psychological.

One of the key words of his poetry is "observable", that is, verifiable. Illyés, who could be a great visionary, means by virtuosity the evocative, vision-creating potential of words, images and metaphors. But then, when the subject would seem to require a vision, he confines it, and even takes it back. I read this in one of his poems (I quote in prose):

an apple warmed the autumn.

It is a brilliant image, a complete vision. But, his need for accuracy comes out in the next line, and he adds:

while it can, with a patient-  
enamelled-smile.

That is, vehemently he refuses to have the poem—be it the most perfect image—provide a paltry acquiescence. Besides a poetry of visions, he insists on the poetry of facts, documents on man, society, and nature. There is not only the genre of the essay-novel but essay-verse as well; Illyés's lyrical poetry is proof of it.

"I carry no complaints, I go to a man's country"—writes Illyés in one of the poems in his second collection, published in 1930. Nearly half a century has passed since then, and indeed, Illyés still hardly ever complains. A call for pity and self-pity are completely missing from his poetry—even from the poems that recall the destitution and the hopelessness of the poor bewildered peasants in the thirties living in subhuman conditions, or the poems about his persecution and fear of death. This negative characteristic has, in a dialectical and ethical sense, an extremely important positive side: you cannot, as you can with many great Hungarian and foreign poets, drink of his poems to forget yourself or become oblivious to your own joys and

sorrows. In this, and only in this, respect does he resemble Auden.

Few have written such intimate and beautiful love poems as Illyés. Few have recognized the extent to which love is not only a right, but also a responsibility. Few have recognized to the extent that Illyés does that love is only one of the virtues, and if we confuse it for others, or let others replace it, we are victims of a dangerous self-deception. Illyés's writing is a passionate demand that we construct an adequate system of values based on life and work.

Here, I would like to draw attention to another eighteenth-century (more precisely, Voltaire's) similarity to Illyés: his aloofness, superiority. Illyés is ultimately an intimate poet—"all indignation is mine," he writes—and yet (or precisely for this reason) he always handles his themes from a distance, even in autobiographically-inspired poems. This does not reflect a lack of identification, an effort at ambiguity or irony, but rather the assurance and knowledge that an appropriate distance does not decrease the importance of things; in fact, their proportions are all the more visible.

Bold and unbiased, Illyés is a supremely consistent poet. In spite of appearances, the dogmas of twentieth-century poetics are at least as rigid as those of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the course of his career, there have been various times, when poetry has excluded, and even considered anti-poetic, such forms as rhyme-bound verse, rhymeless free verse, travel diaries in verse, sonnets, a matter-of-fact reportage, series of pictures based on free association.

Illyés's poetry is the manual of liberation from aesthetic constraints—the ones not taken on voluntarily. And this, again, is a question of ethics.

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This is not the first time I have written about Illyés; I had the opportunity, first of all, in 1965 for a Belgian periodical, the *Cahiers du Midi*, and since then, on several occasions, for Hungarian periodicals. In the course of writing this article I constantly thought of Auden, one of our century's most distinctive and finest poets. And Auden, as so many times before, has helped me out here also. If an English reader, who is not familiar with Illyés's English volume of poems, published in 1971, were to ask me exactly what kind of poet Illyés is, I would give him the following advice: Read Auden's Voltaire poem, but remember Illyés is from Central Europe, where, until 1945, some essential features of feudalism survived; where for centuries the Hungarian poets have dreaded with good reason the death of the nation (Illyés has lived through two world wars, and under the threat of a third); and where the building of socialism began in the spirit of dogmatism.

The present issue of NHQ contains seven of Illyés's poems. Two of these are especially characteristic. "While the Record Plays", about the "misère de l'homme", and the "Tilting Sail", about the "grandeur de l'homme". They both speak in the spirit of Voltaire reinterpreting Pascal.

LÁSZLÓ FERENCZI

## NO HAPPY ENDINGS

József Balázs, *Magyarok* (Hungarians), Magvető, 1975, 204 pp.

György Moldova, *A Szent Imre-induló* (Saint Imre's March),

Magvető, 1975, 214 pp.

Gergely Rákosy, *Hepiend*, (Happy Ending) Magvető, 1974, 245 pp.

The first published novel of József Balázs *Hungarians* (*Magyarok*) was a significant event when it appeared in 1975.

Born in 1944 the author is today a journalist on the house journal of the Csepel Ironworks and wrote one earlier piece, dealing with the provincial life of Hungarian Gypsies.

The new novel, *Magyarok*, takes place not in contemporary Hungary, but during the last years of the Second World War on a large farm in Hitler's Nazi Germany. Close to the North Sea and a day's drive from Paris, the farm is the setting for three couples and two single destitute peasants doing a year's hired farm work.

All of them are recruits from a small Hungarian village and the novel relates their experiences and adventures starting with preparations for the journey to their return to Hungary.

At the beginning the peasants work from day to night quite oblivious to the state of the world. They might know that there is a war on and that the Hungarians are fighting on the side of the Germans in cold, distant Russia, but not every one of them knows the name Hitler, and those who do merely think of him as "a soldier". Their main concern is their work—just as at home, and through their work they hope to better their conditions when they return to Hungary. With their earnings, most of them hope to buy a little house, land and a few animals. Their wants are as limited as their knowledge of the world.

On the huge German farm history finally catches up with them. The farm grows mainly potatoes and sugar beets while not far away French prisoners of war are con-

finied in a makeshift camp. They meet a group of Polish women whose male family were all executed by the Germans. They also witness the Nazis' treatment of their own compatriots who do not execute all orders in complete obedience.

In compliance with historical reality József Balázs nowhere states that the ignorant characters actually learn anything from their shocking experiences, nor that these experiences change them or influence their view of the world. He keeps himself strictly to the law of observation in the mode of objective, realistic fiction. He never lets the reader evaluate his characters for more than they are: he is content to present these field-workers almost predestined, shut off and exploitable to the limit, now brought to a new, completely natural, but unfamiliar setting.

From the objective description and taciturn conversation, it is clear that they act in the only way that accords with their modest but self-conscious manners, untainted sense of justice, and traditional, subjugated social standing.

They are sympathetic to one another and to victims of even greater trouble and more cruel oppression.

They do everything they can for them, but they know at the same time that their fatal defenselessness cannot essentially ameliorate their own condition, let alone that of others equally or more humiliated and tortured. Powerless, they are unable to do anything of consequence. They cannot deviate from, dramatically change, or reverse the direction in which their lives are set.

The work's conclusion provides the fatalism that runs throughout the novel. Even

the slightly non-detailed but factual style does not weaken its horrifying effect. When after a year their contracts expire, the mysterious German landlord (whose frame of mind slightly resembles that of Theodor Storm) asks the three surviving couples and the one single man to stay on with him. He argues that when they arrive home, the men will immediately be conscripted anyway. This offer, though well worth considering, is nothing compared to their homesickness. They find the strangeness of the German surroundings more tormenting than the mortal danger awaiting them at home and threatening them with liquidation. They leave.

By the end of the war only one survives, supposedly one of the novelist's relatives, who "brings to his son" a chocolate bar he received as an American prisoner of war.

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In József Balázs's novel, adult characters remain confined to the shackles of their fate. The eleven-year-old hero of György Moldova's novel *Saint Imre's March* belongs to the next generation and is able to free himself, though only through his fantasies. For the novel takes place in those same Second World War years in Horthy's Hungary, and more precisely in Budapest, where the city's ghetto brought terror to those subject to anti-Jewish laws.

György Moldova is a very productive and unusual personality in Hungarian literary life today. Now 42 years old, he is one of the best reporters of his generation, having written excellent descriptive sociological works, such as *Az Őrség panasza* ("Őrség's laments") (1974), *A hajósok éneke* ("The Song of the Boatmen") (1971), *Rongy és arany* ("Rags and Riches") (1967, 1969), and *Tisztelet Komlónak* ("Homage to Komló") (1971, 1973), the latter two each published in two editions.

"Homage to Komló", for example, describes a cross section of a Hungarian socialist

town. Moldova's popularity is primarily the result of his grotesquely and sometimes coarsely humorous satires, such as the novellas and short stories published in the following volumes: *Titkos záradék* ("Confidential Clause") and *Hitler Magyarországon* ("Hitler in Hungary") (1973), *A Lakinger Béla zsebcsirkáló* ("The Lakinger Béla Pocket Cruiser") (1968), and *Az elátkozott hivatal* ("The Darned Office") (1967).

His collection of short stories, *Az idegen bajnok* ("The Foreign Champion") first published in 1963 and *Gázlámpák alatt* ("Under the Street Lights" 1966) were both published in several editions. Even his first novel, *Sötét angyal* ("Dark Angel") (1964), dealing with the events of 1956, shows his characteristic willingness to tackle delicate social and political themes, as later handled in *Az elbocsátott légió* ("The Disbanded Legion" 1969) adding plenty of action and rich emotions and manly but lonely heroic figures. Such lonely heroes are also found in the *Sötét angyal*, the central figures in *Malom a pokolban* ("A Mill in Hell" 1968) and *A változások őrei* ("The Watchmen of Change"), or the twentieth century Pimpernel, a hyper-active individual who always goes against the current in the *Magányos Pavilon* ("Lonely Pavilion" 1966).

His 1973 historical novel, *Negyven Prédikátor* ("Forty Preachers"), is now followed by his latest work, *A Szent Imre-induló* ("Saint Imre's March"), published in 1975. It has more realistic scenes given in more detail than József Balázs's ballad-paced work. The first section of the book provides much more than ghetto and prison camp stories. The events begin in the summer of 1943. Miklós Kőhidai is the ten-year-old son of a Hungarian Jewish carpenter living in Budapest. The boy cannot for the time being be accepted into the Budapest Benedictine Gymnasium because of an ever stricter application of the anti-Jewish laws. (He is not allowed to sing the famous academy's marching song about the son of the first Hungarian Christian king, Prince Saint Imre, who died

young and who, between the two world wars, was the main official model for Hungarian Catholic youth.)

The boy's father is again called up for forced-labour service, and the boy has to wear a yellow star from April 5, 1944. His grandfather, a decorated frontline soldier from the First World War, futilely proclaims, "as long as we keep to the orders word-for-word, no harm will come to us"; one by one the Jewish families are removed from their flats. The Kőhidai family is relocated in the Augusztai settlement on the outskirts of the city.

Frightened fantasies occupy the boy during a summer steeped in worried conversations, air raids, unexpected deaths, and threatening omens. Horthy's October fifteenth proclamation declaring Hungarian withdrawal from war finds them still in the settlement, and then on December second, armed Arrow-Cross men escort them all to the Budapest ghetto. Despite the writer's evident haste, the novel up to this point is full of authentic detail, apt sketches done in few lines, and a good portrayal of the atmosphere of the time. Moldova is at his best in recounting the tales of a sympathetically eccentric old engraver, who counsels cautious resignation.

After the move to the ghetto the narrative loses some of its intimacy. The very observant sympathetic little boy-hero gradually moves into the background, for though he participates in all the succeeding, wildly romantic adventures, the author also introduces a lonely, withdrawn, and manly Jean Valjean-type hero in his depiction of the commonplace terror of ghetto life. Well-known from Moldova's earlier works, such a hero this time takes the person of Ján Koterba, a Warsaw doctor, who dresses up in a soldier's uniform and carries out mysterious assignments in Budapest's danger-filled nights. A similar veiled and lonely figure is the industrialist Freund, and no matter how true to life his deeds, Moldova makes him more comical than satirical, as

intended. Much more successful is the short glimpse of a monumental figure, Rabbi Teitelbaum, who maintains his faith in vast learning and, even under the most horrible conditions, studiously prepares for the reckoning with, if necessary, the revenge of the just after the war.

The experienced Moldova, like the young József Balázs, does not devote much attention to the conclusion of the novel—unfortunately a rather familiar phenomenon among contemporary Hungarian novels and films. "Saint Imre's March" requires a much shorter, tighter conclusion, for though Moldova satisfies readers who want a light, entertaining ending, he disappoints the more demanding audience by merely listing what happened to everybody after their great and sad "adventures".

Throughout the book, rich in detail and meditative passages as it is, Moldova is readable and enjoyable.

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Gergely Rákossy, satirist and novelist with a style all his own, is ten years older than György Moldova, but began his career approximately at the same time. His best satirical novel to date, *Óriástök* ("The Giant Pumpkin" 1969), employs devastating irony to mock the futility of agricultural competitions of the 50s. In 1969 he repeated the same theme in *A kolorádóbogár* ("The Colorado Beetle"). Here he not only pilloried economic abuse, but, in the best sections of the book, also drew a ghastly comical, almost Kafka-esque picture of the self-perpetuating state bureaucracy. *Tigrisugrás* ("Tiger's Leap"), published in two editions, gives a happy ending to the story of a young 30-year-old woman's two marriages. A collection of Rákossy's published humorous writings *Így, ahogy vagytok* ("Take It as You Are, 1972), results from his expertise in horse racing.

His fifth volume of short stories, *Hepiend* ("Happy Ending"), appeared in 1975. The

title is pure irony, for Rákósy again shows himself to be a self-tortured writer jesting his way past the possibility of any "happy ending".

He begins realistically often with a minor, somewhat unusual, incident. It then proceeds with unfathomable logic beyond the bounds of reasonableness, leading to indignation which threatens the spiritual and sometimes physical well-being of the rather sensitive narrator whom we take to be the author himself. He lifts and slides these phenomena from the natural to the supernatural world, and sometimes tries to reestablish order in the logical universe with some unexpected move.

The people, things, and events that arouse the writer's indignation thus usually get their share of strange and curt punishments. But the maddeningly cheerful, bitterly anecdotal style of the short stories clearly indicates that the nerves of the main character, who remains unbelievably attuned to and defenceless against the affrontery to everyday life, is gradually worn down in the struggle.

Gergely Rákósy has an unmistakably grotesque mentality but the inclination to fantasy is underpinned by a sense of social discontent. Precise and frighteningly funny descriptions show that the narrator is usually offended—sometimes to the point of losing his mind—in his sense of real or possible truth. He is the indisputable master of taking a firm stance that drives painfully silly pranks to their ultimate possibilities.

His impetuosity affects his style sometimes more advantageously than others. When, for example, he feels in a definite situation that his hero is undoubtedly right, he is able to proclaim an important truth through straightforward, dynamic short stories spared of superfluous details.

Such is the *Lángoljatok, tuskók* ("Burn You Logs, Burn") showing the moral superiority of a young boiler-man over his boss, who is

not interested in the least whether there will be enough water for the employees doing tough, dirty physical work.

Such also is *Kalózkod* ("Pirates") in which he recounts with shuddering objective dryness an accident on 30 July 1975, of which he was the victim. He was swimming peacefully in Lake Balaton, when a 15-year-old boy ran into him with a sailboat while showing off his steering skill to his girl friend. The event did not in the least shake up the boy, but the absurdly logical and philosophical reflections of the victim reveal a model of frightening and obvious aggressiveness, contrary to everything human and socially acceptable.

*Hepiend* ("Happy Ending") the title story, shows a more lighty, though almost tartly, joking Gergely Rákósy. Here, in his agitation, an honorable, unmanipulatable script writer bites off the ear of an ungifted but conceited director who tries to make changes in the script.

*Messze vagy, Montak* ("Distant Montak") is an achingly funny story of a writer unable to work because of his co-tenants' harassment, who turns into a cat for some relaxation in the world of more human four-legged creatures.

The least successful stories are the Aesop-like fables, rudimentary in both idea and elaboration. The same can be said—with sincere regret—about one of the latest horse-racing short stories. They are not rude enough and try to duplicate, unsuccessfully, the suggestive style of Iván Mándy, a novelist with a consummate skill in creating moods.

The less successful stories, devoid of indignation, vexation and the search for truth, make the reader hope that perversities of life will harass Gergely Rákósy into more of his provokingly good short stories.

ZOLTÁN ISZLAI



## PETŐFI—BEYOND HIS NATION, BEYOND HIS TIME

"Poets can communicate by secret channels over world-wide distances." Yes, the biographer might have added, even when the channels are prose. For two classic works in prose now happily appear in English by the most distinguished living Hungarian poet, Gyula Illyés. *People of the Puszta*, first published in Hungarian in 1934, is a sombre account of peasant life in the remote hamlet settlements of western Hungary early in this century: sociography, life into literature. And now comes *Petőfi*,<sup>1</sup> biography of a genius, written in 1936, in which there is scarcely a line without its memorable image, its passionate relation of literature to life. We shall be concerned here with the second, which appeared at the same time as a most useful selection of the poet's verse and prose writings, edited by Béla Köpeczi.<sup>2</sup> The one-hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the poet's birth was celebrated in Hungary during the whole of last year. Every community there, from the tiniest village up to the city, has its Sándor Petőfi street. Even in China in 1957 the house of the writer Ting Ling, for 25 years a Party member, was nicknamed the Petőfi Club.<sup>3</sup> Distance is only apparent.

Has there ever been another like him: who combined in so short a lifetime such a manifest sense of responsibility to world literature, to poetic language, to the face of

his nation, to the redemption of the ordinary people? English readers especially will gain new insight into not only the career of Hungary's greatest poet, but also into the famous year of Revolutions, 1848, the role of art in public life, and the progressive force that nationalism still can be as a means of defining wider goals: to Metternich an "affectation," to Illyés "the first symptom of the disease called liberty."

The world does move after all—but when? At certain chosen times—through certain chosen men. Thus, at the beginning, Illyés: "How often has the fate of the Hungarian people depended upon one single prophet with the ability to lead them out of their dire straits, and that prophet has appeared! But how often has he not appeared!" Such a one was Sándor Petőfi, born early New Year's Day, 1823, in a peasant house in the middle of the Great Plain in the village of Kiskőrös; yet, who, slain in battle by the Russian Czar's forces at the age of 26, was popularly thought to live on in imprisonment, hiding, exile. As if he were some inextinguishable natural force, a river. It was such a force, the river Danube in flood, that ruined his family when he was 15, demoralized him, destroyed his prospects, and caused him to brood about first his own rights and then those of others. It was in search of these that, at 16, he set out on foot, at midnight and during a snowstorm, for Pest—upon a career forged upon the roads of Hungary.

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Poetry was to be his career, though his vocation was wider. His biographer provides fascinating details on the particular problems of literature—in the market place, and the need for a new voice speaking not in the acceptable tones of subjectivity but rather in those of the widest audience, for which

<sup>1</sup> Gyula Illyés: *Petőfi*, translated by G. F. Cushing. Budapest, Corvina Press, 1973, 590 pp.

<sup>2</sup> Béla Köpeczi (ed.): *Rebel or Revolutionary? Sándor Petőfi*, as revealed by his diary, letters, notes, pamphlets and poems. Selection, foreword and notes by Béla Köpeczi, poems translated by Edwin Morgan, prose writings translated by G. F. Cushing. Corvina Press, Budapest, 1974, 332 pp.

<sup>3</sup> New China News Agency, 6 July, 1957. But we also learn from Illyés (*Petőfi*, p. 13) that, in referring to the Hunnish ancestors of the Magyars, "the Chinese called them *Ting-Ling*, squirrel-furred."

Petőfi was criticized the more. From his present eminence in Hungarian letters, who better than Gyula Illyés to comment: "he attempted something which no Hungarian poet either before or since has ever succeeded in accomplishing: he wanted to live by his poetry without selling his talent or giving up one iota of his convictions"—and, of Petőfi's organizing a writers' strike, that such an event should occur "at least every year." Prior to 1848, as Illyés puts it, lying was required of artists. Publishers' business channels were closed to most poets. All honour to that Master tailor, in March 1844, who opened the fund to publish Petőfi's first book; and to that journal, *The Athenaeum*, with its 300 subscribers, "quite sufficient to direct the intellectual progress of a nation," which published his first poem.

Following the appearance in 1842 of his first published poem ("The Wine-Bibber") when he was 19, he was to write each day, Illyés says, a poem "which had the most serious poetic claims." Precocious, certainly, this youthful translator of Shakespeare, admirer of Byron, Heine, and Béranger, this actor, playwright, soldier, editor, journalist, revolutionary.—And poet. Petőfi was convinced that his "instinct" and "free sense" were destined to play a part in shaping Hungarian poetics (Preface to his *Collected Poems*). In this, "simplicity is the first and the supreme rule," he wrote; it is the precondition of the sublime (Letter, 1847). From this it follows that his verse has a limpidity, a deceptive ease which in English translation may seem over-obvious (though Köpeczi is unduly pessimistic on this point, Cushing's renderings in the Illyés-biography are admirable and impressive.) Though young, like so many other European poets, Petőfi nevertheless shunned bohemian extravagance: though allusions to it flowed from his pen, he had little stomach for drinking; madly in love, he wanted nothing better than a thoroughly respectable marriage; he had no ear for singing, yet he knew every

one of his verses by heart. Even regarding Nature, a key factor in conventional romantic attitudes, he diverged: preferring the Great Plain to the Carpathians; preferring, anyway, people to landscape (Notes, 1845); about Nature, he said, he learned from poetry (Letter); for him, the world's arteries were man-made, railways! (Letters, and Poem). In temperament, Petőfi appears before us in the round, in all his sorely tried, timely, principled "appropriate churlishness" (Letter, 1847)—in his hatred of money, as in his outburst, at the beginning of his review of a performance of *Richard III*, that for the English the pocket is the axis of the universe—in his looking out, from poetry in the narrow sense, for a mission, "let me do / something for mankind's sake!" (Poem, 1846), in his desire "to be loved, to be loved!" (Letter, 1847).

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His art led him to the people; then they and their cause led him to politics. But language remained his medium; and within it he wrought the first, the lasting, revolution. He transplanted, as Illyés puts it, the language of the people into literature. This was to occasion critical attacks, for he went far beyond the sort of popularism then in fashion. He went to the peasantry. It was a tender yet unsentimental congress. Their ignorance was the condition of their abasement: ignorance of the elements of husbandry, of what the arms of their nation looked like, even of the nation itself. As Petőfi was to write, to Kossuth in 1849: "my songs were the first lesson in liberty for the ordinary people." Keenly aware as he was of his own personal injuries, the poet yet took up the cause of the ordinary people, exchanging peace for war—as Illyés expresses it, "the only moral way of freedom." Well, they did him the worst injury they could, out of ignorance, those electors of Szabadszállás, the region where he was born. In 1848. He forgave them for being so

influenced as to elect another in his stead—for the people, “my religion, my God!” were “all the more holy, since they are as weak as women and children.” And the people did reward him, in the way dearest to poets, for “he was to go to sleep every night to the sound of his songs being sung in the streets.”

“The most brilliant year in the history of the Hungarian genius” was 1847, Illyés affirms, a year which still can shed light today. In that year Petőfi wrote a Preface to his *Collected Poems*—not, however, included—in which, suggesting a parallel between himself as poet and his country, he speaks of shame and constriction as oppressing them both. But as far as this volume goes, it would take a far more detailed treatment fully to bear out the biographer’s claim that “the leadership of the country slipped out of the hands of the politicians into those of the writers.” Still, what is outlined is impressive enough. We are enabled to grasp that, not only through his well-known patriotic verse that included his National Song, but in his personal commitment too, Petőfi personified literature in the form of the memory and consciousness of the nation. For the poets “in modern times”, he wrote, “are the fiery pillars of God’s messengers” who “must lead the people forth / Along the road to Canaan’s land.” He saw himself as just such a one. Thus, in his Diary, for 17 March 1848, he relates how he stood erect and silent, “but ablaze like a pillar of fire,” on hearing the news of the outbreak of Revolution in Paris. Later, on 18 September, he was to see himself as a fire by whose light the nation might read.

This took him to politics—or rather, to the more profound level of public affairs. Here the objective could be nothing less than freedom, freedom for its own absolute sake, she who wins recruits “with nothing but a smile” (Poem, 1847). And this he sought with an urgency—not waiting for rust, as he put it, to eat away the chains—heightened by idealism, and also perhaps by his premonitions of impending doom. Thus,

for a start, he took the initiative in regard to freedom of publication (“is there anyone so foolish as to imagine that any nation can obtain its freedom without a free press?” Diary, 15 March, 1848). More important, essential, was his wider definition of freedom:

*False prophets are these, who proclaim  
With base intent, on every hand,  
That we may halt, for here and now  
We have attained the promised land.*

“Happiness and freedom,” Petőfi said in his election address, “are the aim of every nation.” At that time of upheaval, freedom of a sort was to become the sound business practice of the shrewd. He went further. Everything turned upon the distribution of the land. This perhaps is what lies behind his second letter to the poet János Arany, with its “To heaven with the people, to hell with the aristocracy!” Thus, Illyés comments to the effect that he was the only deliberate and determined revolutionary, fifty years ahead of his time. Indeed, Petőfi looked even then beyond the nation to “all the race of humankind.”

Thus the road for him was from a utopian socialism towards more specifically communistic concepts, as Köpeczi puts it (p. 12). He had been reading Cabet’s *Popular History of the French Revolution*, and his idolization of that upheaval was apparent even in his room’s furnishings. But there was his own harsh background of poverty, too, and now too the rapidly evolving logic of events and possibilities. When there’ll be no money anymore, then there’ll be happiness, he said in a Letter in 1847. He looked to the time when “all men lift the horn of plenty / in one happy equality.” And, of course, such distributive justice involved collision with the conventional justice of the authorities. For freedom is a radical politics, or it is nothing: freedom, not of dogs to bark, but of wolves (as he expresses it, in his two contrasting *Songs* of 1847). His famous line “The gallows—To the gallows with the

kings!" helped to earn him the status at Vienna of Wanted Man as proclaimed on a poster of the time. Events, though, seem to have pushed him from centre-stage; he wrote and commented from the wings. But then, perhaps no-one occupied centre-stage. Consistent enough in commitment, Petöfi seems to have been somewhat ambiguous, possibly for tactical reasons, even as late as June 1848 as to whether a republic should be established; on this question, neither of the books surveyed here cares to judge. But his bravery, his ready scorn, his refusal to yield to hopelessness, his conviction that no narrow group of men is indispensable, his urging that it is the critics who are to be trusted rather than the conformists—all this amounted, of course, to a will to revolution. To an extraordinary state of affairs. For, as Illyés justly remarks, of these there have been very few in the history of the world. And here he gives the Hungarian word for revolution, *forradalom*, a derivative of the verb "to boil." Society was the vessel, and the poet was the fire. "I am but a small fire in the country's night, but I am Fire, and by my light the nation can learn but one word from the book of destiny, and that one word is: hope!" (17 September, 1848.)

One word. One everything. Unity was for him the principle of life, and of love too. From within the most personal, still he could look out towards the most public. It was division engendered by others which he abhorred. He was threatened even in love: his wife-to-be, the seventeen-year old Júlia Szendrey, lived in a castle. Though the young man's fame won her hand, her father remained unmoved. His courtship, brief married life, the tragic existence of his young widow, all are well-told here. His poetry, remaining central, held all together in a unity. From the time of his earliest romantic attachments, his love poetry had al-

ways been an excuse to talk about himself. So even with the Júlia poems, in terms perhaps best-expressed by one of the most translated opening verses in world literature:

*The bush quivers, because  
A bird on it did land.  
My spirit quivers, because  
You came into my mind.*

He approached his marriage in the most conventionally responsible way possible. Illyés suggests that the poet seems to have regarded it as the settling of his private account preparatory to engaging in the greater cause. Thus, among the poems written during the honeymoon, the key verse:

*And in one hand the gently-rippling breast  
Of my sweet dreaming wife I clasp to me,  
While in the other is my book of prayers:  
The history of the wars of liberty!*

When for him the end came, there too was unity. It fulfilled two earlier previsionings. The first, in a poem of December 1846, was of his death in the field and burial in a mass grave: fulfilled, on 31 July, 1849. In the second, the last line of verse to come from his pen, he saw himself as enmeshed in a monstrous scenario devised by "minds deranged and blurred." The culmination, Illyés' masterly description of the battle of Segesvár at which the Russian army, summoned by the Habsburgs, with a six to one advantage, took no prisoners. Dead, at 26. Artúr Görgey, the general who earlier had surrendered, lived to be 98. Dead—but his spirit, at least *that* triumphed? Illyés's answer in 1936: "Let us not deceive ourselves: it did not."

KENNETH McROBBIE

## AN ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF TRANSYLVANIAN HUNGARIAN

Over the last decade and a half Hungarian linguistics has been enriched by several basic syntheses that lay foundations for further research. The seven-volume *Explanatory Dictionary of the Hungarian Language* (1959-1962) elaborates on the most important layer of the contemporary Hungarian wordstock. It provides the exact meanings and variations on almost 60,000 words with stylistic peculiarities of their usage. Besides this, the dictionary defines more than 21,000 compounds and gives approximately 125,000 derivatives.

The two-volume Hungarian descriptive grammar entitled *The System of Today's Hungarian Language* (1961-1962) sums up the field to the end of the 1950s. An abridged version of the work appeared in German under the title of *Ungarische Grammatik* (1968). In three volumes with approximately 12,000 entries, *The Historical-Etymological Dictionary of the Hungarian Language* (1967-) examines the origin of the body of the Hungarian wordstock. In many instances individual entries provide the whole family of a word along with a series of derivatives; so the real number of etymologies is a multiple of the entries. (Volume 3 of this work is expected to be published by the end of 1976.)

The three-volume dictionary, *The Finno-Ugric Elements of the Hungarian Wordstock* (1967-), provides a detailed etymology of the most significant element of the Hungarian wordstock, the words of Finno-Ugric origin. (Volume 3 is expected to appear in the first half of 1977.) With nearly 1,200 linguistic maps based on about three-quarters of a million pieces of newly collected information, the *Atlas of Hungarian Dialects* (1968-) presents the more distinct phonetic-phonological, morphological and wordstock characteristics of today's dialects in Hungarian-speaking areas. (Four of the

planned six volumes have already appeared, and volumes 5 and 6 are at the printer.) In 1972 *The Hungarian Language*, a lengthy synthesis dealing with the past and present of the Hungarian language, was published in English.

Another very important work began being published in the summer of 1975. The Kriterion Publishing House of Bucharest issued the first volume of the work *Etymological Collection of Transylvanian Hungarian* by Attila T. Szabó, a retired university professor. Its length alone makes this dictionary imposing but its method of preparation is even more impressive. In approximately 1,200 pages the first volume incorporates words starting with A, B and C and will presumably be followed by eight or nine similar volumes. It is not a collective undertaking, as were the other works of Hungarian linguistics mentioned before—and as is usual of works of the same character and length everywhere today. But here Attila T. Szabó himself collected and copied by hand the different sources, mainly old documents, amounting to approximately one million pieces of information that serve as the basis of his compilation; the individual entries and the editing are also his work.

A retired professor of the Babeş-Bolyai University, Szabó lives and works in Kolozsvár, Transylvania, where he turned 70 last January. He has devoted a considerable part of his life—about a half century—to the solitude of archives to collect the material for this dictionary.

He inspected tens of thousands of manuscripts and documents from the period between the middle of the fifteenth century to the end of the last century: land registrations, wills, dowry lists, purchase and sales records, reports of canonical visitations, personal letters and memoirs of serfs, burghers, the lower and middling nobility, lords—the list

of possible sources could be easily continued, but this demonstrates well enough the colourful and varied sources from which the material for the *Etymological Collection of Transylvanian Hungarian* is taken.

First taking this work in hand and leafing through it, as the alphabetical entries fall into place, one immediately realizes this is more than a dictionary: it is the beginning of a new kind of history. Even after a short reading, one senses how much different from an everyday dictionary it is—in every sense of the word. Undoubtedly, Szabó's work is an inexhaustible goldmine, not only for research in the history of the Hungarian language—lexicography, grammar, phonetics—but also—with its thousands of pieces of new information—for work in folklore, cultural history and the science of history. Since it primarily concerns Transylvania, it also promises to be a very rich source for research into the Rumanians and Germans of Transylvania. Understandably, it provides many opportunities to examine the linguistic, cultural and economic relations of Hungarians, Rumanians and Germans throughout the history of the area. Furthermore, the folklore material will even help researchers of other nationalities in the Danube Basin.

Attila T. Szabó does not reflect merely the viewpoint of a linguist—either in the gathering of the material, nor later in the editing of it into a dictionary. It is made clear in his statement about the dictionary, that "Beyond linguistics, its purpose is to provide and convey historical material from all branches of science, while examining, in a historical context, subjects within their own sphere of interest." Accordingly, in the course of editing, he not only defined the exact and slight nuances of meaning for the individual entries, nor did he merely endeavour to include every word, derivative and compound that he came across, but he also amply documents every bit of information with selected details, whole sentences, and even paragraphs from documentary texts.

And, primarily as a result of this, the whole work goes far beyond any limited definition of linguistics.

Attila T. Szabó is not the first to compile a historical dictionary of Hungarian linguistics. The three-volume *Historical Dictionary of the Hungarian Language* (edited by Gábor Szarvas and Zsigmond Simonyi, 1890–1893), as well as the much more modest, one-volume *Hungarian Documentary Dictionary* (edited by Gyula Zolnai from the collection of István Szamota, 1902–1906) provided especially useful research on the history of the Hungarian language.

For the Transylvanian Hungarian language, though, Attila T. Szabó's is a qualitatively different work. Perhaps the greatest and, from the linguistic point of view, the most significant difference between them is that the *Historical Dictionary* mentioned above is confined almost exclusively to ecclesiastical, historical and literary printed sources. Thus, its linguistic material is basically restricted to the written language of the day. Attila T. Szabó's dictionary, however, takes its material mainly from documents. And, as mentioned above, these documents are often very colourful, and reflected a very wide social setting. For example, the personal letters, which appear in great number, represent almost the entire society of their time. Thus the linguistic material encompasses the contemporary living and spoken language in the word entries, but even more so in the quotations presented with them.

This diversity of language unfolds a captivatingly rich picture. Its richness is manifested in two ways. On one hand, the elaboration of individual entries is very detailed. To give only one example, the earlier *Historical Dictionary* presents the verb *ad* (give) of Finno-Ugric origin in hardly three-quarters of a column; Attila T. Szabó's dictionary deals with it in nearly ten columns. But even more important than this is that the former dictionary presents only four meanings of the word; while the latter pre-

sents 19. On top of all this, compounds incorporating the verb *ad* in Szabó's dictionary are plentiful and amply supplied with examples. In this way, then, the entire life of the word, its changes both in content and form, comes alive in every entry.

At the same time, the actual number of words included is very substantial. Partly because the elaborated material is very rich and partly because the editor of the work has been so conscientious, there are numerous words in this dictionary with independent entries that, as the editor mentions with appropriate pride, "have not so far been acknowledged as qualified or independent entries by any other historical or descriptive-explanatory dictionary". And, certainly, this work is the first to collect many Hungarian words, especially certain derivatives and compounds. Thus, 15 derivatives are given for a word unused in everyday Hungarian, such as *berbécs*, meaning ram or sheep. Among its derivatives, *berbécskirlán*, meaning young ram, and *berbécsmóra*, meaning two-year-old ram or sheep, are known to only a few.

Perhaps this one example suggests the countless possibilities the dictionary offers to, among others, the folklore researcher. An expert studying in detail the entries for *bárány*, *birka* and *berbécs*—all three meaning lamb, sheep—would gain from this alone a full and overall picture of a very important branch of animal husbandry in Transylvania. Similar research could also be done, for instance, in the entries for the kinds of clothing itemized in the first volume.

The dictionary provides a wealth of information, not only in folklore, but also in the history of industry; for example, the words beginning with the element *bőr* (leather) shows just how much leather was used for making things in Transylvania. (The number of the objects listed is close to 30.) The entries beginning with the element *acél* (steel) are no less instructive.

Also exciting and instructive are the dictionary's account of what could have been

*anglus* (English) or *bécsi* (Viennese) in the lives of the old Transylvanian Hungarians. Even a simple quantitative comparison tells much: the overall proportion is ten to one in favor of Viennese objects. To note that the Viennese influence on industrial, economical and cultural relations was truly stronger than the English does not, in itself, say anything new; that is common knowledge. Definitely new, however, is the clear and unambiguous influence as outlined in linguistic material. Also very interesting is the history of the objects as disclosed by linguistic information. Among others, the following objects and materials were given the adjective "anglus": *bicsak* (pocketknife), *butella* (canteen), *flinta* (sporting gun), *gyapot* (cotton), *gyolcs* (linen), *kalap* (hat), *kefe* (brush), *köntös* (garment), *mordály* (blunderbuss), *nadrág* (pants), *nyereg* (saddle), *olló* (scissors), *pisztoly* (pistol), *porcellánibrik* (porcelain mug), *posztó* (felt), *sál* (scarf), *tükör* (mirror), and so on. From among these, the dictionary gives the adjective *bécsi* before only the words *flinta*, *olló* and *porcellánibrik*, pointing to relations with England that were quite different from those with Vienna. Information of this sort is presumably of considerable interest to many experts, even if comparisons like those just made cannot be considered conclusive or the fullest history of the objects mentioned, but the dictionary still usefully and conveniently aids any historical researcher in his own field of study.

With just these few examples, the number of which could be greatly expanded, it is obvious that Attila T. Szabó's *Etymological Collection of Transylvanian Hungarian* is much more than linguistic publication: it is an encyclopedia of Transylvania, essential not only for linguists, but also for all those interested in the lives and customs of Transylvanian Hungarians. It even makes interesting reading for non-professionals, something that cannot be said of the dry compilations of most dictionaries.

SAMU IMRE

## A NEW HUNGARIAN BIBLE

A new Catholic Bible translation into Hungarian appeared some months ago, followed by the publication of another, jointly arranged by the Protestant denominations.

Three hundred and fifty years ago in 1626 the first complete Hungarian Catholic Bible translation, the work of György Káldi, a Jesuit priest of Nagyszombat, came off the presses. Káldi worked "from the old Latin characters accepted by all Christendom", i.e. he used the Vulgate, relying also on a translation by a fellow Jesuit, István Szántó, who died in 1612. It is in part due to this latter fact that he was able to bring his work to completion in a surprisingly short time, in less than two years (from October 1605 to March 1607), but it appeared only almost twenty years later. It was officially accepted, yet more than one hundred years passed before a new edition was printed in 1732. The priesthood preferred the Latin text. It only came into general use when, after one reprinting (1782) and three revised editions, it was again revised by Béla Tárkányi in 1865.

All the greater popularity was achieved by the first complete Protestant Bible in Hungarian, Gáspár Károlyi's *Holy Bible*, which was first published in 1590 and ran to a great many reprints or barely revised editions. Károlyi also translated from the Latin, comparing his versions with the Hebrew and Greek originals. When the translation was complete, Chief Justice István Báthory had a separate printing office set up at Vizsoly near Gönc to print the Bible. The publishing of the "Vizsoly Bible" was supported also by the Captain of Eger, who later became Prince Zsigmond Rákóczi of Transylvania. Patrons were not lacking later either. After the tide of history swept away the wealthy nobility, the Bible Society, relying on the pennies of little men, took over as patron. Thanks to them the faithful today can handle the Gönc dominion's translation bound in imitation leather.

Károlyi's translation was done about a hundred and fifty years after the first Hungarian Bible translation included in the Vienna (cca 1450), the Munich (1466) and the Apor Codices (end of the fifteenth century). The Vienna Codex acquired by the National Széchényi Library of Budapest in 1932 (it had been in the possession of Vienna libraries since 1723, hence its name) contains Old Testament books (Ruth, Esther, Judith, Maccabees, etc.). The Munich Codex (still in Munich) contains the Gospels. The Apor Codex, signed Péter Apor in his own handwriting on the inside cover, includes the Psalms as well as hymns, odes and canticles. All three are copies. What was the "primary source", who is responsible for the translations? One cannot tell, even now. It is most likely that the translation is the work of two priests from Syrmium, Tamás Pécsi and Bálint Újlaki, who studied at the University of Prague around 1410. There they became followers of John Huss. They had to flee the Franciscans who persecuted the Hussites. The Franciscans followed them into Moldavia and confiscated their recently translated Bible. Luckily they failed to commit it to the flames; what is more, they made use of it. Improved and revised, the work of the priests Tamás and Bálint found its way into several sixteenth-century codices: the Döbrentei Codex (1508), the Keszthely Codex (1522) and the Székelyudvarhely Codex (1526-28), which is still in the Székelyudvarhely secondary-school library. It can be presumed about a much earlier codex as well—in spite of differences—that it was based on the same translation of the psalms as the source of the Apor Codex. This, the Festetics Codex which is beautifully illuminated and bound, was the Book of Hours of the wife of Pál Kinizsi, who fought and beat the Turks. It was made around 1493 at the Paulite monastery founded by Kinizsi in Nagyvázsony. The Jordánszky Codex, the greater part of which is in the



Esztergom Cathedral Library and the rest in the National Széchenyi Library (1516, 1519), contains a translation that is independent of the first extant, the Hussite, Bible translation.

Erasmus taught that everyone should know his Bible. This, however, was possible only if there were translations into the idiom spoken by the people. Erasmus himself helped: he translated the Bible from Greek into Latin, and this translation served as the foundation for others into the vernacular. Gutenberg's invention helped to speed up dissemination. The first book printed wholly in Hungarian, Benedek Komjáti's translation published at Cracow in 1533, *Az Zenib Paal leveley magyar nyelven* (St. Paul's epistles in Hungarian), was based on Erasmus though it shows the influence of the "Hussite Bible". The Gospels, translated by Gábor Pesti and published in Vienna in 1536, relied on Erasmus's translation only. Soon afterwards, János Sylvester translated the whole of the New Testament "afresh from the Greek and Latin tongues... for the edification of the Hungarian people in the Christian faith". He paid proper regard to Erasmus's glosses. His translation was first printed at Újsziget and Sárvár in 1541, and a subsequent edition appeared at Vienna in 1574, sixteen years before Károlyi's Bible translation.

Since Károlyi's and Káldi's Bibles appeared in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the Hungarian language has changed a great deal, the vocabulary most of all. Thousands if not tens of thousand of new words have come into existence, and others became obsolete. The structure of language changed as well. A number of verbal and other paradigmatic forms have gone out of use. The welding together of dialects has given birth to a homogeneous literary language free of obvious dialectal idiosyncrasies. Consequently parts of the old translation ring strangely in the ears of today's readers. Archaisms and foreign words in Káldi's translation were gradually elimi-

nated in the course of successive revisions. But archaic, clumsy phrases are not infrequently met even in the latest revised edition published in 1930.

Language has changed not only in Hungary but elsewhere as well. Biblical archaeology, hermeneutics, linguistics, etc. also progressed in the course of the centuries. Textual fragments came to light during excavations or by chance. These made necessary the collation of texts, the supervision of translations. On the Catholic side this textual criticism was performed by a team of the Biblical Institute of Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Bible, published in 1955, was the result. Soon it became a guide for new Catholic Bible translations. Other denominations prepared new translations of their own into various languages.

Modern Catholic Bible translations are no longer based on the Latin Vulgate, but on the Hebrew and Greek originals. And they comply with the current practices in translation. The starting-point is that Hebrew and Greek are not superior languages of some kind, but each is one of the many and, in addition to having its virtues, betrays weaknesses and drawbacks as well, just as the others do. One must not therefore strive to force their peculiarities on other languages, as this does not make translations more authentic. On the contrary: one must break with the principle of literal translation inherited from the centuries, since it is impossible to prepare intelligible and faithful translations in that way. Instead one must translate freely the Bible for man today, so the message should sound to him as the original did to those who lived at the time.

The Hungarian Churches were early in the field, working from the Greek or Hebrew original. The pioneer work in the Catholic Church was done by Gellért Békés and Patrik Dalos. Their New Testament, published at Rome in 1951, rightly gained recognition. In 1967 the New Testament was published in today's language in Hungary

as well. A revised version has now been included in the recently published complete Bible, a collective work by members of the Holy Scriptures Committee of the St. Stephen Society (Ferenc Gál, József Gál, László Gyürki, István Kosztolányi, Ferenc Rosta, Sándor Szénási, Béla Tarjányi). This Bible "in new clothes", following the modern principles of translation, preaches the Word of God in easy-to-understand and easy-to-read fluent Hungarian.

The psalms contained in the Apocrypha are in prose. The first Hungarian complete metrical psalm translation was made by Albert Szenczi Molnár (*Psalterium Ungaricum*, 1607). This tradition was followed by the priest-poet Sándor Sík with his Book of Psalms in archaic Hungarian, published in 1955.

In the new edition of the Catholic Bible,

Ferenc Gál translated the psalms in prose, using a modern easy-to-understand Hungarian.

A concluding remark: the new Bible translations constitute an important event also from the point of view of linguistics. This was the first time that Hungarian philologists—Éva B. Lőrinczy on behalf of the Calvinist Church, the present writer on the Catholic side—took part in eliminating alien forms preserved by various Bible translations through the centuries, in working out a modern-sounding language for the Bible, in applying to Hungarian the principles expounded in the international literature on translation theory, and shaping the linguistic and stylistic aspects of the new Bible translations.

ÉVA RUZSICZKY

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# ARTS

## THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE CASTLE OF SIMONTORNYA

County Tolna, the area in which Béla Bartók collected his first folk-tunes and Gyula Illyés started off as a poet, was recently the site of a new cultural event. Sigismund of Luxembourg (1368–1437), king of Hungary and Holy Roman Emperor had a Florentine-born general named Filippo Scolari, who employed Italian artists in Ozora at the end of the fourteenth century, making it a centre of the Hungarian proto-Renaissance; yet only in the past decade has Simontornya revealed the secret of its baronial residence containing court art of the Jagiello era, the early Cinquecento under the influence of the Palace of Urbino.

It took three years for the archeologist Erzsébet Lócsy's spade to turn a shapeless hill into the outer walls of the castle and the remains of the building's northern flank. Meanwhile more than a hundred ashlar were found, corroborating the written sources that had been collected and published in book form way back in 1938 by the village doctor, István Kiss.

Research into the architectural development of the castle soon produced results: a lean-to roof annexe, all but completely concealing the eastern frontispiece, was dismantled, revealing the spandrel of the palace-wing that was defaced, but recognizable. It had the recurrent stumps of Renaissance window placements and the contours of walled-up coupled windows. This was the earliest part of the castle, the court built by

sub-senechal Simon at the end of the thirteenth century. It enclosed the eastern side of the wall-quadrangle surrounding what is today the cortile. Its two coupled windows, framed with primitive boltels, came to light right at the beginning of the excavations. Not so the "tower of Simon", which belongs to it, because for a long time we could not unravel the proper configurations. Finally a two-metre high wall-piece discovered in the vault at the north-eastern corner gave us the clue, that here an approximately 9×12 metres, thick-walled structure had joined the northern end of the palace, which was in all probability the tower we were looking for.

Highly eroded outer surrounding walls emerged on all sides from under the thick modern alluvium, in accordance with documentary data, and proved to be an extension made in the second half of the fifteenth century. From the position of the walls it was evident that this fifteenth-century girdle of walls, built round the early quadrangular castle for secondary protection, was later broken through for a new eastern wing. This was later converted to the staircase block of the gatehouse or donjon which exists even today.

As the excavations advanced it became evident that the 1508 reconstruction covered the whole castle and was done on a large scale to convert a medieval fortress into the residence of a rich and educated noble hu-

manist. We already knew from other historical data that this Maecenas had been Mózes Gergelaky Buzlay, and as such, the holder of several high offices in the royal household under Wladislas II (among them as a widely travelled diplomat). It was a memorable moment when the facts known from documents became the fragment of a balustrade with the coat of arms of the Buzlays (found in the fosse) or somewhat later, the escutcheon surrounded by the badge of the Order of the Dragon on the frieze of the gatehouse fireplace (found under one of the groundsels of the palace wing).

Yet, apart from such evidence, a whole range of architectural fragments proved the significance and high artistic standard of Mózes Buzlay's constructions. The castle, left in a relatively good state of repair from the Turkish occupation, was fortified by the Imperialists prior to the Kuruc wars in the early decades of the eighteenth century, when it became a kind of fortress. It was then that the door-cases, window-frames, fireplaces, the columns and balusters of its courtyard were all broken up and part of the carved work was used by masons during the reversion.

We were especially lucky to find some corner, knob, curve or curl for each and every detail as a basis for a theoretical reconstruction; thus we discovered the interconnections and architectural meaning of the major part of the fragments. All this, however, was only half of the work; the other half was to place the stones we found and interpreted in their original place in the building. It kept us busy for years, collating and comparing the scenes and circumstances in which the stones had been found; looking at the colours, carvings, fractures, mortises and properties of the individual stones; placing them with one another and on the walls of the building; and by degrees, we managed to place "in position" new fragments as we found them.

The enormous Renaissance window-re-

cesses had been left intact, but they were bricked up and converted into embrasures and subsequently into granary windows. Although the greater part of the stone-frames had been dismantled, we still found a few whole windows which—although somewhat broken—remained in their original place with a dozen pieces of sill broken off but unremoved in the course of the demolition, making a basis for completion. Where such authentic remains were found we could complete the frames with artificial stones, fitting in each little fragment that could be identified on the basis of the structure. Where niche openings survived without any stone-frames we could not be quite sure of the form and so indicated this uncertainty by walling up our presumed frame in a simplified way. Since all preceding architectural periods also used brick for building the castle, we made the difference obvious with a special kind of 4 cm. thick brick, which we also used in completing the architectonic walls.

One of our greatest anxieties—and perhaps our greatest achievement—was the reconstruction of the loggia overlooking the courtyard. The first time we walked through the building our attention was attracted to an opening on the donjon façade overlooking the courtyard, not far from the quadrangle, comprised of two tie-beams, one above the other. Among the first finds in our excavations were the fragments of a column-cap and a banister; the Baroque fortification of the northern outer wall yielded a piece of tambour.

From all this it was clear that this must have been a Renaissance colonnaded portico.

The first trial trench was dug in the courtyard in the axis of the tie-beam-ends, where we found the foundations of the ground-floor archway pillars. From the radii of the starting-points of the arches we calculated that the arcades on the ground-floor had had five openings and on the first storey, seven, all extending the length of the palace-wing façade. Later on—with the help

of a whole new range of fragments—we established the module of the two-storied arcade, giving us the structure of the entire wing.

From the first moment, we knew we had something unique in Hungarian architectural history which we wanted the public to be able to see. We originally thought of reconstructing one of the arcades, and then, instead of one, we reconstructed two, which proved to be better from all points of view.

Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to attach some importance to this arcade reconstruction since it stands in Hungarian architectural history at the centre of fairly far-flung and divergent developments. It is the first arcaded palace facade from that era open to detailed analysis and comparison to other buildings, its antecedents and influences.

First, it points back to Buda, the source of the Hungarian Renaissance, and the royal palace courtyard of which it is reminiscent; then, to its Italian origins in Urbino, hitherto little discussed in this country, with which it shows such a striking similarity. But it also clarifies the threads leading from Buda to Cracow, where Prince Sigismund Jagiello took both the masters and the plans from Buda.

Finally, this is the discovery of one of the first uses of this motif, which has become so popular in Hungarian architecture over four centuries, as it spread from the royal court to noblemen's castles and manor-houses, then to bourgeois dwellings and hence to the porticos of country seats and the verandahs of village houses.

We decided to erect on the remains of the ground-floor of the ruined northern wing an up-to-date protective building, which we could also use as a museum of stonework we cannot put back in its original place. We converted the interior (originally three rooms) into one room, though the original layout is obvious from the floor levels. With the knights' hall we tried to give some idea of the original effect of the place. We re-erected the door-case and the central pillar,

which was broken into several pieces. We put the bases of the abutments in their proper place and then above them suspended the ribs of the vaulting in position for the groined-vault system. On the ceiling, we outlined the system of the four-field groined vault in larch-wood panels the thickness of the ribs. The existing material was not sufficient to reconstruct the whole place; all we could do was present what we had as in a museum of stonework finds, but in such a way as to give a clue to the relation of the elements.

Along the wall we exhibited a few door-case stones and window-frame stones in their original position; the rest we put on shelves for a research repository. Our purpose was to make visitors participate in the search and the process of reconstruction, while we also opened a photo exhibition in the eastern wing to illustrate the most important phases in reconstruction.

Our reconstructed castle had to have a function which was easier to decide upon than to realize. Luckily, the leaders of Tolna County were understanding and constant partners who did their utmost to assure the building a worthy function, for the long-term survival of a monument is guaranteed only as long as it has a living function (while leaving the unique Renaissance interior spaces intact without alteration). The final result might be said to be ideal. The ground-floor and first floor of the eastern wing constitute a branch of the museum of Szekszárd exhibiting the history of the castle and the township. And the museum of stonework remains in the northern wing.

Apart from the exhibition of local history, we reserved the first floor of the eastern wing for various interiors, furnishing the first-floor Renaissance room of the gatehouse, complete with fireplace, with a few pieces of Renaissance furniture and objects of art while exhibiting in the donjon room beside it a couple of pieces from the eighteenth century.

Thus the finest and most characteristic

areas were open to visitors, without disturbing their other functions. At the same time it was also important to satisfy not only curious tourists but also local residents, who now have, in the remaining storeys, their village library. The free-shelf reading-delivery room is on the first floor of the palace wing, while the periodicals reading room is on the second storey of the donjon, in a Gothic room with a fireplace; its Renaissance stone-framed door communicates with a small buffet or coffee-shop in the garret-space of the gate-house. Organically connected to the library is a room on the third storey of the donjon which, furnished as a clubroom, can accommodate small gatherings.

The largely Renaissance vaulted spaces of the castle cellars well suit their function as wineshop and restaurant of a high standard and warm atmosphere, capable of serving equally villagers and visitors.

In reconstructing the uppermost part of the staircase, we did not replace the missing cross vaults of the top landing but only indicated the original with a crude steel-concrete sheet. Similarly, after the last surviving stone step, we used wood to indicate our uncertainty as to the upper end of the staircase while the present solution was chosen for present needs. We furnished the original Renaissance doorways with simple, somewhat rustic, door-leaves made of perpendicular oak boards, while the few doorways

which were broken only in the Baroque period we equipped with nut-wood doors of a different shape, to set them apart from the rest.

Furnishings in the museum and wine-shop are the work of István Németh, who shaped the pieces with an unsophisticated simplicity in accordance with the interior spaces. The library was furnished by Péter Csikszentmihályi in a similar spirit, providing a warm atmosphere—even with library equipment made of sheet-metal. Lighting in the gate guard-room and staircase were made by gold- and silversmith József Pölöskei. We also tried to adapt the environment to the original castle, though the fact that the village has grown very near the building made it impossible to unearth all its outworks and trenches. Still, as far as possible we sank the ground around it and connected it with a large area narrowing out towards the north (which had been separate up to that time) to make an unbroken green belt.

It was about seven hundred years ago—we do not know the exact date—that Salamon's son, sub-senechal Simon, laid the foundations of the castle which preserves his name to this day—while symbolizing the history of these seven hundred years, from the Arpadian era to our own times.

MIKLÓS HORLER

## THE WORKS OF THE PAINTER IMRE NAGY

*Exhibition at the Budapest National Gallery*

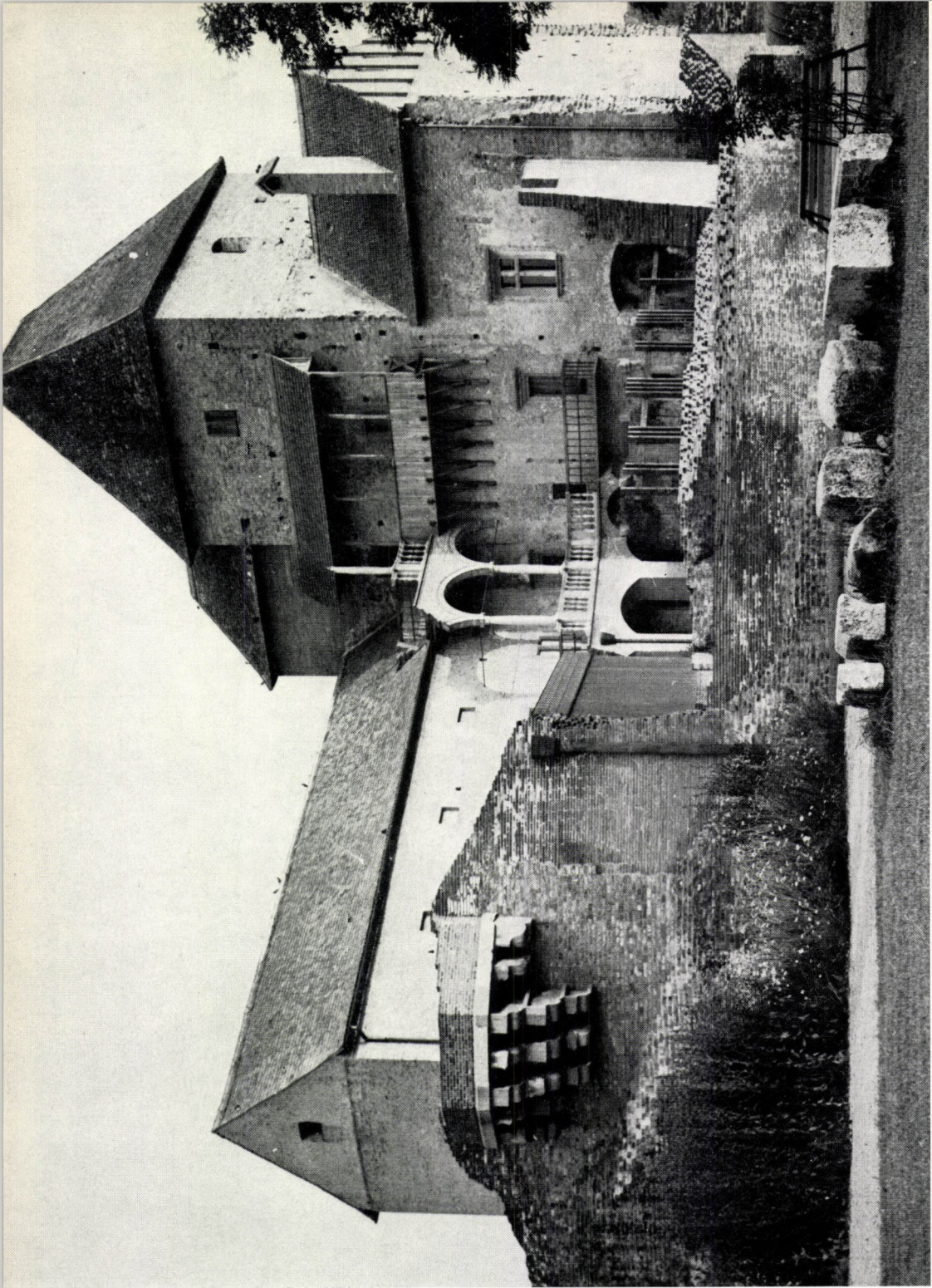
Imre Nagy is a Transylvanian painter, a member of the Hungarian minority in Rumania. He usually spends the winter in Kolozsvár and returns to his village Csík-zsögöd in summer. His one-man exhibition, shown in Budapest as part of the Hungarian-Rumanian cultural agreement, was on dis-

play in the National Gallery, the home of native Hungarian art.

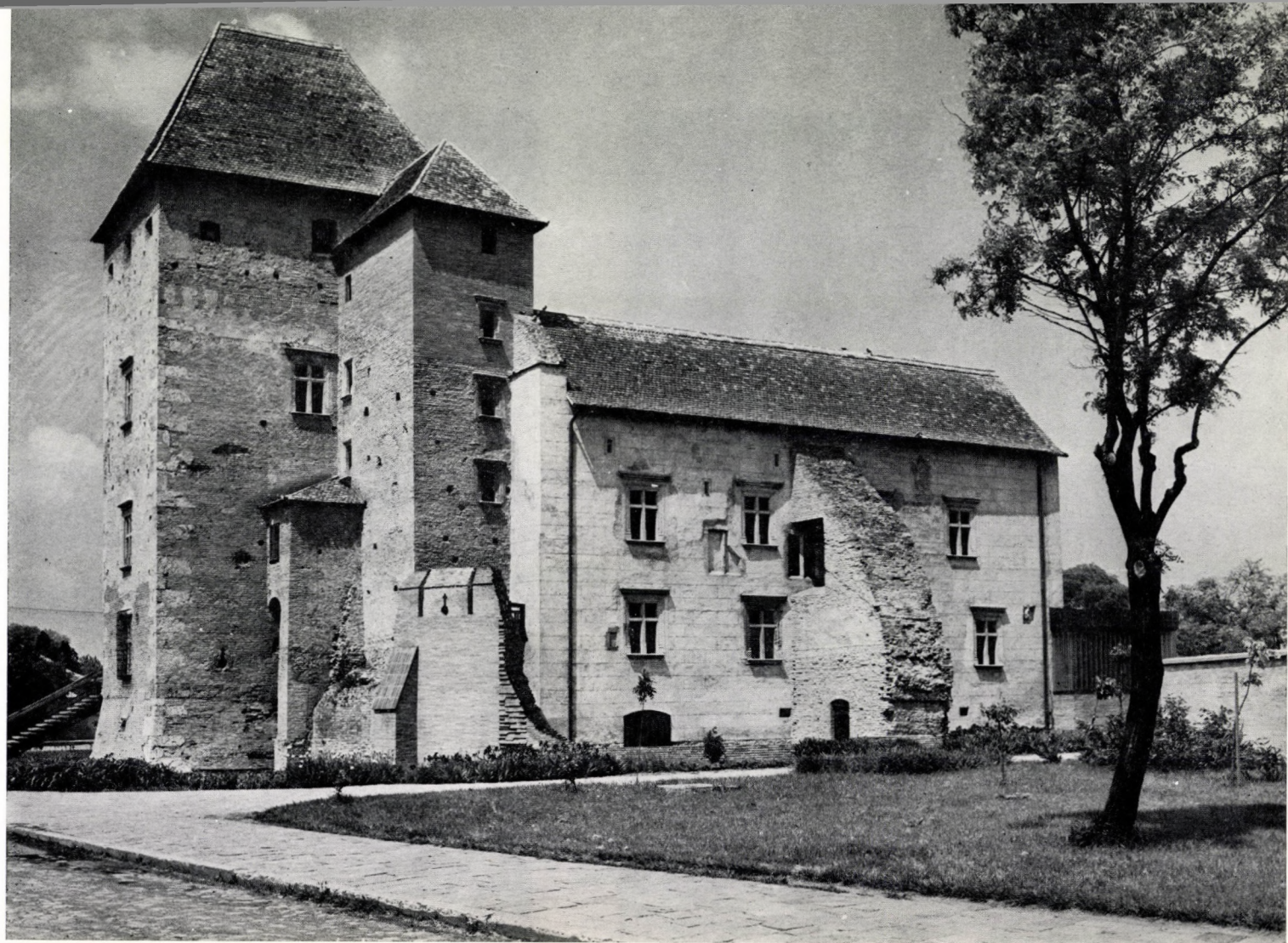
The cultures of peoples have become so interwoven in this part of the world that, in most periods of history, it is more than impossible to unravel the threads. This is especially true in this century, in which



SIMONTORNYA CASTLE: PART OF THE RESTORED RENAISSANCE LOGGIA







THE EASTERN VIEW OF SIMONTORNYA CASTLE



THE MAIN ENTRANCE



SIMONTORNYA CASTLE

PART OF COPPER WORK BY JÓZSEF PÉRI



IMRE NAGY: WINTER

*Tibor Inkey*

(OIL, 65 × 61 CM, 1973; IN THE POSSESSION OF THE ARTIST)



*Zsuzsa Bokor*

IMRE NAGY: REST (OIL, WOOD, 67 X 58 CM, 1935)  
IN THE POSSESSION OF THE HUNGARIAN MUSEUM IN CSÍKSZEREDA



IMRE NAGY: CELLIST (OIL, CARDBOARD, 66 X 54 CM, 1973)

IN THE POSSESSION OF THE ARTIST

*Zsuzsa Bokor*



*Tibor Inkey*

IMRE NAGY: STORM (TEMPERA, 147 X 123 CM, 1959)  
IN THE POSSESSION OF THE MAROSVÁSÁRHELY HUNGARIAN MUSEUM

the intermingling of nations was added to by emigrations, dispersions and the spiritual aspirations of national minorities. This is true not only in those fields in which their appearance—as a result of linguistic differences—was, from the very outset, conspicuous, that is, in literature and music, but also in those arts in which the marks of unity and of dissimilitude are not so clear, their means of expression: the pictorial image being international.

True, the linguistic internationalism of the visual arts is far from being limitless. Indeed, pictures, statues and drawings are everywhere intelligible. Yet they cannot be interpreted in the same way everywhere—and it is by no means indifferent where they were born, what kind of cultural medium and what kind of individual or communal world of experience formed them and determined their message.

The medium in which Imre Nagy started was the revolutionary Hungarian art of the second decade of the century.

Revolutionary . . . in both senses of the word. Or rather in both interpretations of the word: for in the young Hungarian art the aspiration to completely change the forms and the means of expression did not appear as distinct from a firm intention to change society. Indeed, the two became more and more associated: from the seekers after new modes of expression (here a Hungarian art historian thinks chiefly of the "Eight", whose members worked in Paris and in Hungary, initiating a radical reform in the idiom of painting, at the time of the great Cézanne exhibitions, the appearance of the Fauves and the birth of Cubism) the first generation of progressive art grew up. They (the organizational core was supplied later, during the war, by the publications of Lajos Kassák) called themselves activists, indicating that they wished to be active in every field—both in art and politics; first protesting against the war and subsequently, as workers of the revolution. It was that group of artists that designed the recruiting

posters of the Hungarian Republic of Councils, and its members played an active role in reorganizing art life.

It is small wonder that first their active example and subsequently the general response to their work exerted a strong influence on the painting of Imre Nagy, much stronger than that of his "official" school and teacher. (At the Art School Imre Nagy, who had just returned from the firing line, was taught by Viktor Olgyay; then he left to spend a short time in Nagybánya and subsequently became a scholarship-holder and later a member of the colony of artists of Kecskemét, remaining there until 1924. Then, having had two exhibitions, one in Zurich and one in Budapest, Nagy returned to Transylvania to live in his native village.)

Yet, looking at the influences that he was subjected to, it would not be true to say that Imre Nagy became a direct continuer of the work of these Hungarian artists. He is their disciple rather, in the way he arranged forms, framed the structure of objects, and the bodies of the beings represented in his drawings and especially his paintings, he seems to have adopted much of their technique—observing, in the first place, the lessons that he learnt from Cubism but not independently of Expressionism, either.

The paintings in the one-man show of the works of Imre Nagy in the National Gallery were lent by Rumanian museums and arranged by Iuliu Buzdugan and István Solyvár. The exhibition starts at this point in the life of the 83-year-old artist. The first stratum of the pictures and engravings displayed dates from the mid-twenties.

These early works reflect a peculiar, double vision and mode of expression. According to their evidence Imre Nagy was at that period in the analysing stage of his formative years: he had not made a choice yet. His engravings exploited the devices of Expressionism, in his paintings on the other hand Cubism stood out with the greatest emphasis. His talent, however, was even then much more than a promise: he applied

the rules without putting a foot wrong and was conversant with the laws of communication. In his woodcuts the clear black and white spots formed a forceful contrast. Light and shade were equally adaptable for the portraits. The consciously expressionistic "Blind Man", a Heinrich Horváth portrait characterizing with the structure of the head, a carefully shaped portrait of Sándor Ziffer, "Self-Portrait II" and the double likeness of "My Parents" merit attention.—Of the landscapes "Zsögöd I, II" and a "Street of Zsögöd" are the most noteworthy. The genre-pieces were given emphasis when he returned to his village. They include the simple idyll of the "Shepherdess", grave and factual representation in "Workers" and "On the Train", and the expressive rhythm forms of "Turnip Diggers". Moving forward in time, one has to correct to some slight extent what was said about Imre Nagy's style and the duality of his pictorial language. The expressionistically conceived woodcuts and the pictures derived from Cubism are connected by an increasing number of features. So much so, that some paintings—"Turnip Diggers" and, with reservations, the double portrait of "My Parents"—are related not only iconographically but in their pictorial solutions as well: the woodcut and the picture are built on the same structure—their dissimilitude is increasingly the result not of different styles but of different tools of representation.

The convergent phase of the art of Imre Nagy lasted roughly until the early thirties, and as its result his painting entered a new period. It is hard to classify this order, which, with lesser or greater side-steps, has been his practice to the present, preserving in fact the main direction of his progress. It cannot be measured by the criteria of "clearly conceived" Expressionism, and, similarly, even the features of Cubism can only be detected in it in a certain kind of

transcription. A careful analysis, however, of the structures also indicates that the painting of Imre Nagy has not been divested of any of its former features and earlier aspirations. His structures preserve the heritage of Expressionism and that of Cubism: the one opens his attention to spacious landscapes, while the other provides him with a tool to grasp extensive panoramas.

His best pictures are always compositions by which he sought to grasp and formulate the features of the mountains surrounding his village. That is, he seeks to do the same even today. . . for it seems, he never tires of gazing at the land which forms the framework and the meaning of his life. He is ever on the lookout for new features, sometimes with the majestically quiet Mount Hargita and sometimes the bustling life of the foothills ("Behind the Hayloft", "Hay-Waggon" "Carrying Wood", "Spring"); and sometimes featuring the earthy world of myth born in his meditations by confronting the narrow community he has chosen with his memories ("The Young Ladies of Avignon in Zsögöd", "Folk-Dance").

Picturesque ways thus naturally absorbed his graphic manner as well. Yet it did not turn him into a "pure" painter. So it was not chance but a necessary choice that suggested to Imre Nagy the painter that he use water-colours. This genre—not very much appreciated in our days—was revitalized at the hands of Imre Nagy, assuming an independent role and an ever increasing significance. The range of his work grew. His water-colours ceased to be mere sketches—such as "A Csík Landscape I" or the sheet entitled "Cabbage-Patch"—and soon turned into self-contained and characteristic compositions—as exemplified by the "Landscape of Zsögödfürdő", the "Trout" or "Brummadza", that refers to a poem by Attila József.

GYÖRGY HORVÁTH



## THREE GRAPHIC ARTISTS—GYŐZŐ SOMOGYI, TAMÁS KOVÁCS AND ÁRPÁD SZABADOS

*Exhibitions at the Csepel, Helikon and Józsefváros Galleries*

Thanks to the taste—or whimsy—of the organizers of the Csepel Gallery in Budapest, two graphic artists of entirely different character—Győző Somogyi and Tamás Kovács—were shown side by side in the autumn of 1975. Although both belong to the younger generation, the only feature they share is a consummate craftsmanship that allows them to express themselves in a rich variety of graphic devices.

Győző Somogyi gives the impression of cultivating a certain photographic style, adhering strictly to a closed system of shades of black and white while excluding all blendings and half-tones—that is, everything that would merge the well-delineated contours into each other.

The devices are simple, the arrangement is all but banal, sometimes suggesting classical proportions. Here, Somogyi aligns the figures within the composition, there he arranges the details to bring home his “message” or just puts the figures in a line, snapshot-style. As a rule, he has two basic subjects: faces and natural panoramas. He sets his figures against extensive backgrounds, like dug-up building sites, medieval townmarkets, towering mountain ranges or vast trackless forests.

Somogyi is attracted to things that may be far from us in time but still have some social, national or racial tie—perhaps just personal nostalgia. Yet he is also interested in his immediate environment in the present, hence his characteristic contemporary figures—the workers of the city and youth in its subculture—which are as much a part of his oeuvre as the figures from Christian sources, the provincial folk of the turn of the century, and the peasants of a more wild, distant world.

From whatever sphere he chooses his

motifs, they all portray one drama: the crucifixion of man, the mockery of human dignity, fortitude against suffering and fate.

The tragedy latent in mankind appears in his work as naïve, sometimes grotesque, but always devout and philanthropic. The distortions do not render his figures ludicrous; they rather emphasize what is frail and pitiful—sorrowful glances, the fears and anguish of destitution.

These drawings do not glamorize or adopt sunny or factitious attitudes. Like the northern masters, they come over as sincere, however malformed and startling.

\*

The drawings of Tamás Kovács might well illustrate a Jules Verne novel or some other adventure story for the young; for adventure and wistful romance are inherent in his work. His figures wear nineteenth-century costumes, and—if not in grassy and bushy parks—are surrounded by an exotic environment or historical scene. Yet they look at home in their unusual setting—or at least as willing to make an adjustment as a Robinson Crusoe safely landed.

Adventure and fantasy have no hidden motives—no intention to edify or present a cautionary tale. No covert social criticism nourishes his art, unless a temporary withdrawal from the mundane present can be considered a tendency to moralize. It simply wants to be what it is: pleasurable, relaxing and entertaining.

\*

Árpád Szabados, one of the most prolific Hungarian graphic artists, has recently had two exhibitions. The one at the Helikon Gallery contained all the works separately exhibited since his last one-man show two

years ago. The gallery in Józsefváros, however, presented new material, and it is this exhibitions shall try to describe.

In contrast to the distinct, sharp lines of his work shown at the Studio Gallery in 1964, the present exhibition is dominated by a certain childlike style—scrawling, searching, experimental lines, hearts pierced by arrows, geometric figures and elements of games and fables, all of which are no more than mimicry.

The naïveté and sincerity in the way infants portray the world is just a pretext for the artist to deal sincerely with the most elementary things of everyday life: life and death, love and sexuality—elementary forces expressed in elementary symbols. The artist, wrapped in the blanket of infantile drawings, can risk such visual formulations that we have come to accept in surrealist work.

Szabados's drawings fall within the province of representational art, yet the artist does not, by any means, content himself with the customary conventions about fidelity to reality; he frequently resorts to paraphrasing, analysing or synthesizing motifs. Sometimes he denudes his figures, shifts multi-layer forms one above another, and sometimes logically arranges into one plane elements otherwise separated in space and time. Still the fortuitous nature of the combinations is emphasized by the fragments of ideas placed side by side. In most instances, however, a few sharp pencilmarks suffice for a composition. Since he is working in the most mundane of materials and subjects, it is perforce not what is represented but the whole association of colours and lines that comprise the artistic effect.

In accordance with the spirit of children's drawings, the artist's decorative talent reveals itself in his crayon work. He arranges the points, lines and patches almost as an embroidery, making an ornamental garland out of them. The randomness evolves into maturity, the ugly lines into beauty and a crystal-clear evocation of the few motifs represented.

Szabados assumes his born role of artist only with compunction, as exemplified by an excerpt from the tale he wrote and illustrated, which describes the artist's *Angst*: "Nor did the artistic talent give him respite after all, as thousands of people were massacred in the world. The scale-paper on his desk reminded him of grids, the grids of bars, bars, iron-bars; and the iron-bars, of all kinds of bars. . . he drew bars, man, man, man and beast, imagined machines and trees behind them, then more bars, thoughts imagined behind them, bars and imagined clouds behind them, bars and imagined boundlessness behind them. He noticed that the bars were not close enough, things can get through them, a bird just then flew through the bars. He again drew bars, then put down the pencil and went to fetch his daughter from kindergarten."

Grappling with artistic talent is destined not only to prevent the pursuit of a false idyll but also the fossilization of the artist. And against these the constantly changing and reviving Szabados—as exemplified by his "scrawled walls"—pursues a successful struggle. How far the gradually multiplying changes can be contained within the bounds of traditional forms remains to be seen.

ZOLTÁN NAGY

## DESIDERIUS ORBÁN

### A HUNGARIAN-AUSTRALIAN PAINTER

Desiderius (Dezső) Orbán, one of the outstanding figures of twentieth-century Hungarian painting, who has been living in Australia for nearly four decades, was born in Győr on November 26, 1884. He completed his secondary-school studies in Budapest at the secondary school for modern languages, sciences and Latin where he was a classmate of Lajos Gulácsy\*, the great Hungarian Art Nouveau painter. The day is still vivid in Orbán's memory when the story went around among the boys of the school that a canvas of the sixteen-year-old, fifth-form Gulácsy had been accepted for exhibition by the prestigious Art Gallery of Budapest.

It was only a few years later that, when Orbán saw a new picture of a friend, its surface still wet, he too bought a couple of tubes of paint and—without any previous training—set to work. He showed one of his earliest paintings—a still-life of a human skull—to Lajos Gulácsy, who praised the canvas with the words: "Had it been painted by Vereshchagin, it could not be as good as this. . . ." It was in that period that the Russian painter Vasily Vasilevich Vereshchagin stirred Budapest with an exhibition of his eerie works, breathing with decay.

After his secondary-school examinations in 1902, Orbán went to the arts faculty of Budapest University to study mathematics and physics. With the encouragement of Gulácsy, he presented one of his pictures to the Art Gallery in his first year at university. A few days later he received a letter addressed to "Painter-artist Dezső Orbán" from the directors of the Gallery; the nineteen-year-old young man was so excited that he could scarcely open the envelope. The letter informed him that his canvas had been accepted for the forthcoming exhibition. Henceforth, though he

continued to attend lectures on the natural sciences, his real interest was in painting.

After graduating in 1906 he left for Paris and enrolled at the Julian Academy, which was known because of Jean Paul Laurens, the celebrated painter of "The Anathematization of Pious Robert", "Napoleon and Pius VII" and other academic historical pictures. The young Hungarian, however, went to the Julian for less than a fortnight; he was more attracted by Cézanne and the swirling intellectual ferment of the early part of the century, when Paris was intoxicated with the wine of "isms". With his friends—Róbert Berény, Bertalan Pór and others—he frequented the galleries and exhibitions, and also paid a visit to the famous home of the American-born Steins—Gertrude and Leo—which was a meeting-place of avant-garde artists and intellectuals interested in the new directions. Matisse and Picasso were often seen there, and Orbán came to know them; hanging on the walls were pictures of the most prominent Impressionists, post-Impressionists, "Fauvists" and Cubists: Seurat, Manet, Renoir, Gauguin, Cézanne, Henri Rousseau, Picasso, Matisse, Derain, Braque, Felix Vallotton and Toulouse-Lautrec.

On his return from Paris, Orbán took part in the second, 1909 exhibition of the MIÉNK (Society of Hungarian Impressionists and Naturalists), whose president was Pál Szinyei Merse; Orbán later became one of the founders of the "Eight", for as he wrote in a letter, "In my studio I first talked to art critic Pál Relle about the necessity of rallying the few painters who have been to Paris and can work in the spirit of the age". And thus arose the "Eight" consisting of Róbert Berény, Dezső Czigány, Béla Czóbel, Károly Kernstok, Ödön Márffy, Dezső Orbán, Bertalan Pór and Lajos Tihanyi. They

\*See Judit Szabady: "The Iconography of Hungarian Art Nouveau," NHQ No. 49.

mounted three exhibitions—in 1909, 1911 and 1912—which, along with their other activities, marked a new epoch in Hungarian painting. Orbán took part in all three exhibitions, and his work was displayed even at the association called the "Artists' House", an outpost of post-Impressionism. A book published in 1914 entitled "Hungarian Impressionist Painting" by the eminent art critic of the period, Miklós Rózsa, mentions Orbán as "an extremely talented soldier of the new camp", who "is the author of not inconsiderable achievement".

At the first, 1909 exhibition of the "Eight" in the Kálmán Könyves Gallery, Orbán was represented by a large-scale landscape and two still-lives; and at the 1911 exhibition he again took part, chiefly with still-lives. György Bölöni, one of the first critics to stand up for the avant-garde in Hungarian visual art, noted, "Orbán is not a man who exaggerates; he carries on with quiet, logical constructive work... His colours break out forcefully." At the third—and last—exhibition of the "Eight" (1912) the artist was again represented by landscapes and still-lives. Even at this time critics were impressed by the intensity of his focus and the strictness and compactness of his composition.

Around 1910 Orbán was also working as a music critic; his concert reports were published regularly in the opposition paper, *Egyetértés*. Through his articles on music the artist became friendly with the most prominent contemporary musicians, like Leó Weiner, Bartók and the members of the Waldbauer-Kerpely string-quartet.

Orbán participated in the First World War as an artillery lieutenant and was demobilized only after the collapse of the Monarchy. His first one-man show was presented at the Kálmán Könyves Gallery during his military service, though previously pictures of his had been displayed at the "Secessionist" exhibitions in Berlin and the Künstlerhaus in Vienna. His 1917 exhibi-

tion in Budapest—consisting mainly of female nudes, landscapes, still-lives and interiors—was, again, best characterized by Bölöni, who wrote, "After a silence of several years Dezső Orbán comes forward with a lively, varied and in all respects notable exhibition... His landscapes have been enriched with a warm and genuine view of nature... The exhibition has a retrospective character: although it does not embrace the whole of the artist's past, we have a few characteristic pictures from each important phase of his development. A series of drawings complete the collection, showing Orbán as an excellent observer and recorder of the forms, proportions and movements of the human body."

Orbán did not keep aloof from the teeming artistic life of the Hungarian Republic of Councils of 1919, either: he was in charge of furnishing artists with paint. His activities in the months of the Commune were given both moral and material appreciation; for his still-life entitled "Plates and Books" was bought by the Artistic Directorate. (As a result, this work, together with his "Still-life with Pears", the landscape "Autumn on Margaret Island", the townscape "Street Section" and five other compositions are now in the collection of the Hungarian National Gallery.)

In the twenties Orbán made several study tours abroad. Exhibitions of his work done in Spain, Italy, Germany, Dalmatia and Rumania were organized—the "Helikon" Gallery in 1923, the Ernst Museum in 1925 and 1927; in the Hungarian towns of Gyöngyös és Békéscsaba and in numerous towns in Czechoslovakia and Rumania including Lo-sonc, Komárom, Kassa, Eperjes and Nagyvárad. The leading art critics of the period wrote about Orbán—Aurél Kárpáti, Artur Elek, Ödön Gerő and Béla Lázár—who noted in particular such works as "Church in Venice", "Decaying Montmartre" and "The Seine at Meudon" and the landscapes and townscapes of Spain and Nagybánya. For these works, the artist was awarded one of the gold

medals of the Barcelona international fine arts exhibition in 1929.

In 1931 Orbán founded a free school of fine arts and handicrafts in Budapest. The institution, called "Atelier", was one of the best Hungarian private schools of its kind in the inter-war period. The teaching staff included the typographer Albert Kner; the graphic artists Gusztáv Vég and Tibor Gergely; the architect Lajos Kozma; the poet, illustrator and textile artist Anna Lesznai, and the potters István Gádor and Géza Gorka—while Orbán himself taught figure drawing and the theory of art.

The Nazi invasion of Austria and Czechoslovakia as well as the spread of fascism to Hungary forced Orbán and his family into exile. The "Atelier" ended in 1939 when the artist emigrated to Australia. In the Second World War he served in the Australian army, and after his discharge he opened his painting school, the "Orban Studio" in 1942 (still operating today) and organized his first one-man show in Sydney in the Notanda Gallery (1943).

Using the name Desiderius Orbán, he became one of the leading figures in Australian art life: from 1946 to 1948 he was president of the Contemporary Art Society; in 1953 elected director of the Australian fine arts council of UNESCO; in 1954 he represented Australia at the international art symposium of Venice. He is also a teacher at New England University and author and broadcaster. He has had exhibitions in Sydney at the Bissetta Gallery in 1955; the Macquerie Galleries in 1959; the Rudy Komon Gallery, in 1963, among others. The City Museum of Sydney has in its collection some twenty paintings of the artist from different periods of his career.

In 1957, Edwards and Shaw put out a book by Orbán titled *A Layman's Guide to Creative Art*. Its aim was to provide an educated public with an appreciation of recent trends in art, especially artistic tendencies following Cézanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh. In its simple and enjoyable style, the book

was a great success: 1968 brought a second impression under a new title, *Understanding Art*, and in 1975 there was a third edition.

In 1964 Orbán visited Europe, including Hungary, where he was glad to meet old friends and "fellow-soldiers" like Lajos Kassák, Armand Schönberger, Frigyes Frank, Professor Gyula Germanus... He brought along colour photographs of his recent work ("Homage to Cézanne", "Searchlight", "Birds", "Madonna with the Saints", "Vaultings", "An Italian Town", "Hong Kong", etc.), which can be described as partly naturalistic, partly figurative, and partly non-representational. (Some of these works—"In Memoriam Kassák", "Moonlight on Lake Balaton", "A Gate with No Entrance" and "Sunset"—were subsequently shown at the Art Gallery in Budapest in 1970, a part of the "Exhibition of Twentieth Century Hungarian Artists Living Abroad".)

Desiderius Orbán's 90th birthday was marked in Australia with a retrospective exhibition at the Sculpture Centre in Sydney in November and December 1974.

At the banquet honouring the master's embarkation on the tenth decade of life he was congratulated by the Nobel Prize Laureate writer Patrick White.

Past his ninetieth year, Orbán is still an indefatigable worker, whose oeuvre was recently enriched by several new paintings and drawings.

With earlier and more recent works, he had another one-man show in November 1975 (this time in the Art Gallery of New South Wales); while in Budapest, Corvina Press will be publishing a new monograph by Krisztina Passuth on Desiderius Orbán, one of the prominent Hungarian avant-garde painters in the early decades of the century, who—in the course of seven decades of activity—enriched the fine arts of both his native country, Hungary, and his adopted country, Australia.

IVÁN DÉVÉNYI

## MINIATURE TEXTILES

### *Exhibition at the Savaria Museum at Szombathely*

Art critics are rarely in the position I am in right now: I have seen an exhibition at which only good works were on display. Sixty-seven objects of art, all of them good. The exhibition of Hungarian miniature textiles was organized by the Savaria Museum of Szombathely; the idea of the new genre—the *mini*—being suggested by the artists themselves, who also took upon themselves the task of critically selecting the material.

What are miniature textiles and what is essential about them? The size must not exceed 15×15 cm. Should anyone think that miniature textiles are the equivalent of small rugs, they are mistaken. It is evident that the majority of the exhibitors have grown to “envy” the guild of sculptors the third dimension and most of them have even “encroached” upon its territory. Why not? Have sculptors taken space on lease for the next five thousand years? No violation of genre-frontiers has occurred, there is only one frontier: that between good and bad works. It was refreshing in connection with this exhibition that one could discover new and unusual techniques and unexpected, daring forms ranging from the two-dimensional to the plastic, from the figural, the geometric, the static to the dynamic but, most important, there are new ideas as well. The vital element of this collection is irony, indeed, self-irony: there was no room here for the self-importance of the artist laureate. A number of the exhibitors took on a new lease of life, considering their earlier styles, indeed, everyone surpassed himself; even those whom I know to be possessed of moderate abilities scored a bull’s-eye.

I note with satisfaction that the “selected team” of Hungarian artist-craftsmen, which appeared on the scene a decade ago, has been joined by the next lot: it seems—and it is by

no means self-evident—that even the young have the courage to be young.

Miniature art has a number of important artistic and psychological advantages. The new game, the unusual thing is always more exciting; and the miniature scale is somehow like a friendly game. The artist can say to himself: if I make a hash of it, so what? The stake is not so high, and the artist is freed of his inhibitions; of course, it is that relaxed state of mind that yields the best results.

\*

It is not only the frontier between plane and space that these textile designers step across time and again; neither do they seem to heed the boundary between the applied arts and pure art. The exhibitors are never for a moment divorced from their function as decorators, they like their material: spun thread, they are conversant with and observe the laws of textiles for that is one of their most important sources of energy, yet anyone wanting to find his bearings in the diversity of this exhibition has to search for categories pertaining to the plastic arts. And he will find them, among the forms of expression of the styles of past decades, which are thoroughly removed from the veneration of oil-paint, bronze and marble.

It is as though one discovered in a significant group of the works displayed an umpteenth life of surrealism and, nostalgia for the associative abstract. Anna Szilasi derived her intensive world of colours from Hungarian folklore; her loudly redcloth contains no happening; it is only by means of a minute, triangular patch of contrasting colour that she renders her picture lively and almost dramatic. An object by Gizella Solti, entitled *Wing*, gives expression to



TAMÁS KOVÁCS: ANCESTORS II. (1975)

ÁRPÁD SZABADOS: THE JOY OF AN UNHAPPY CREATION ►

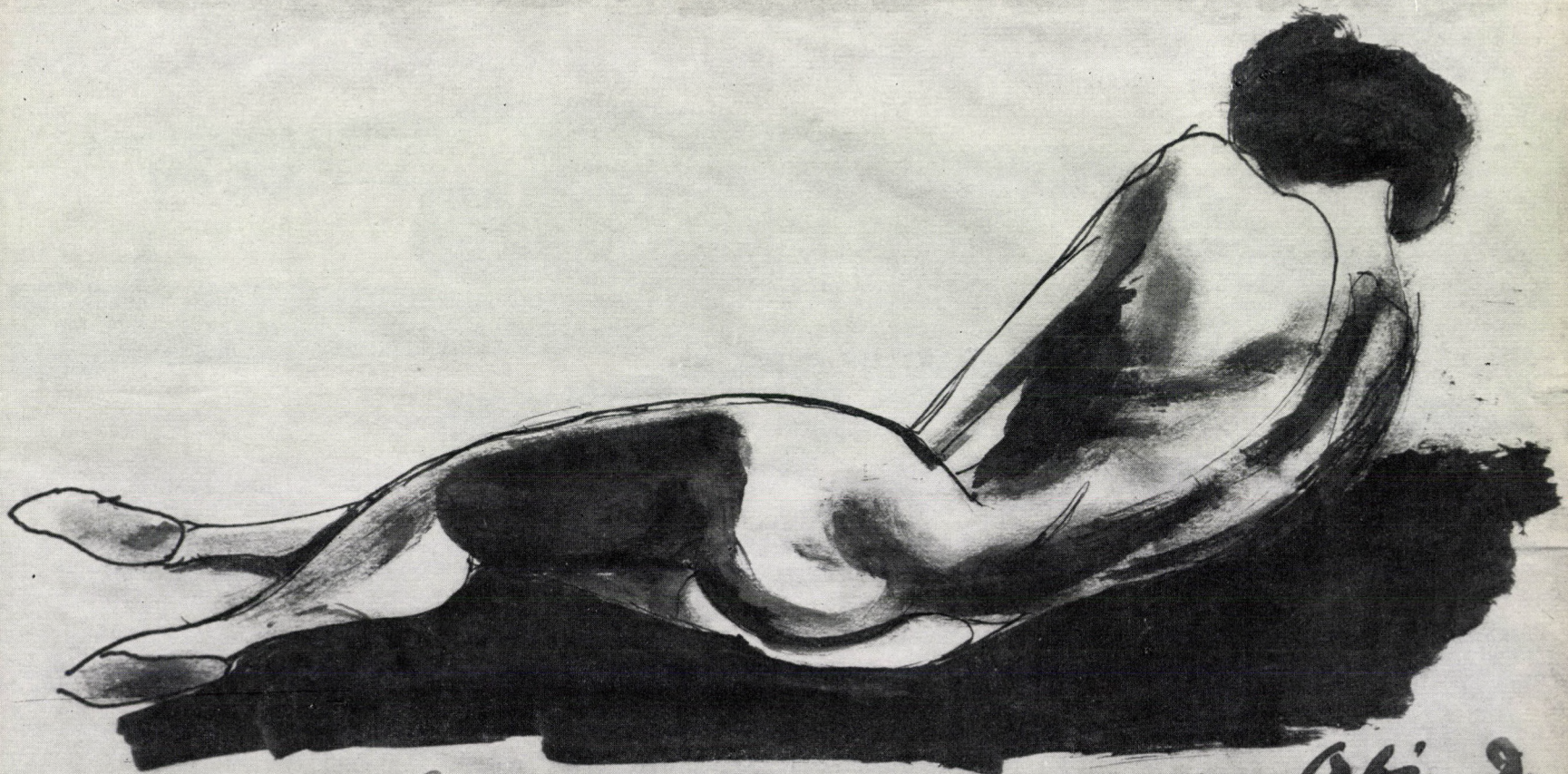
GYŐZŐ SOMOGYI: PEASANT REBEL ►►

*Photos Ferenc Kovács*









Lesznai Annának, igaz baráti megbecsüléssel Orbán Desz. 1910 febr. 3.

DESIDERIUS (DEZSŐ) ORBÁN: LYING NUDE (INK, WITH AN INSCRIPTION TO THE POET AND ARTIST ANNA LESZNAI, 1910)





ZSUZSA PÉRELI: IN MEMORIAM (TAPESTRY, 15 × 15 CM, 1975)



Anikó Székely

GÁBOR ATTALAI: STRIP-ROLL (FELT, 15 × 16 × 5 CM, 1974)



MARIANNE SZABÓ: JACKET (APPLIQUÉ, 12 × 12 × 10 CM, 1975)

Károly Székényi



LENKE SZÉCHENYI: APPLE (TAPESTRY, WOOD, 15 × 15 × 8 CM, 1975)



*Anikó Székely*

ZSUZSA SZENES: UTENSILS INTO ART (WOOL EMBROIDERY, 18×15×15 CM, 1975)

something new by means of conventional harmonies. A knitted, octopus-shaped textile sculpture by Árpád Buzás, which is rendered glossy by the use of lurex yarn, has an explicitly biological motive. What is remarkable about it is strict composition and profoundness of execution. The terracotta works and jute cloth objects, dyed blue and pink, by Margit Szilvitzky are expressly surrealistic; their emphatic content is manifest in their open-work and easy surfaces. The starched, snow-white tulle forms by Júlia Szilágyi, which give a paraphrase of some trashy artificial flower, are more than easy, they are subtle. The title of the series is *To Be Scrapped after Use*.

Marianne Szabó tailored a diminutive braided pelisse and furnished it with knitted buttons embroidered as ordinary kind of trimming. One of the unexpected features of this figureless—empty—jacket is that it has the wings of an angel attached to it. The colours are elegant and pastel-like, yet this exquisiteness, far from being the dominant feature of the work, serves to emphasize its ironic tendency. It is a sweetness seasoned with pepper. The representational works, indeed, textile portraits of Irén Balázs, that she has produced so far, could be labelled textile sculptures. These were no smiling works, either, and the one displayed, *Ruin*—the defaced head of a girl—is another proof of the fact that textile is not easy music.

The representatives of the most characteristic section of the exhibition have developed their form of expression on the basis of the lessons of Pop Art and this is the idiom that best fits their attitude of mind.

The brownish tone of half-a-century-old photographs has been travestied by Zsuzsa Péreli—in gobelin. Here is the portrait of a Hungarian peasant or petty bourgeois, with pointed moustachios and cropped hair; the stiffness of the picture makes one aware of the head-rest behind the neck of the sitter usual at the time. The artist could not refrain from tempering her monochromy by

Art Nouveau colours and Art Nouveau flowers. The proof of an idea is in the execution, as exemplified by Lenke Széchenyi's *Apple*. Although it is so simple: the skin of the apple cut in two is made of wood, symbolizing the weaving-frame; the angular figures and colours of the gobelin—Adam and Eve—are redolent of the naive vision of the Romanesque. Only the figures are woven and a third of the field; the warp has been left naked in the picture as a profession of faith of the craft of weaving.

Aranka Hübner is perhaps the only one of the artists who remained faithful to the dyed and printed textile. Now she made a new impression with her composition *Stripes Move in Space*. The black-and-white-striped, framed silk, which is given plasticity by the waves and troughs of the drapery, provides concept and *Hard Edge* associations. The principal merit of the picture is its directness, unexpected in the case of dyed silk.

The organizers of the miniature textile exhibition are far from ungenerous and they welcome with open arms representatives of related crafts such as the interior designer György Fekete. His work is a concrete and sharply outlined body in rotation: a mooring-post. The artist has placed a spiral string around the solid core. Both the idea and the execution are bull's-eyes. Csaba Polgár has modelled the glasses of his printed textile *Broken Spectacles* from cloth; this is a strictly Pop and simple-sentence work of art. At the same time the felt-and-plexiglass *Closed Mouth* of Kati Gulyás is really an orthodox Pop Art object. It is precise and suggestive. A knitted brick-case by Zsuzsa Szenes contains a real brick. Another work by her is a gas-mask from the Second World War that she has completed with bright and colourful wollen trimmings; she has even embroidered one of the straps with tiny flowers. This is more than irony.

Some of the artists have attempted to render hard geometry by means of soft felt—and they have succeeded. The X-shaped

figure by Judit Droppa is definitely hard, even though its technique happens to be knitwork and its design is reminiscent of the pattern on winter sports socks. Sándor Tóth considers the twisting of red copper wire to be textile; his Flaming Ring refers to a radio spare part, yet it is a genuine textile sculpture. Tamás Tóth, an architect, participates in the exhibition of miniature textiles as a sort of day of. His work Ocular is made up of thick, perpendicular sheets of felt and similarly perpendicular glass-plates of the same thickness pasted together. He combined the two radically different materials: the yielding felt and the brittle glass, thus offering a logical order. Gábor Attalai has been concerned for years with the nature of felt, the falling, indeed, the modelling, of that indifferent yet stubborn material. A piece of his Strip-Roll series was displayed. He juxtaposes different, sometimes complementary, sometimes contrasting, strata; then he cuts the coil with a sharp stamper in order to reveal the trans-

verse section. His work is at the same time random and cool, aesthetic and characteristic.

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The miniature textile exhibition of Szombathely was a trial one; it was organized in winter and not in the high season—in a holiday resort it would normally take place in summer—nobody has counted on such a success. The Savaria Museum and the artists are now considering the possibilities of extending this exhibition, making it international. The artists reckoned up those colleagues from abroad who are good friends and whom they know personally—they alone would fill several rooms. Even the preparations would obviously take up less time and the danger of damage in the case of such small packets would be smaller. The cost of postage would hardly exceed that of a letter.

Organization work has started. International mini-textiles will already be accorded a special section at the 4th National Textile Biennale at Szombathely this year.

JÁNOS FRANK

## LO SPETTATORE INTERNAZIONALE

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# THEATRE AND FILM

## THE SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS

*Three hits of the 1975-76 theatre season*

István Örkény became a playwright almost by accident but his real success in the theatre is itself, of course, no accident. Originally novellas, Örkény's plays *The Tót Family*\* and *Catsplay*\*\* were so successful that theatre directors persuaded him to adapt them for the stage. Adaptation required little effort for, despite initial appearances to the contrary, he could almost leave the original material untouched as both *The Tót Family* and *Catsplay* were in some respects already suitable for the stage.

Although at first glance these "long short-stories" do not betray any dramatic structure as such, the author's vision had much theatrical force. *The Tót Family* has a carefully outlined basic situation as well as an absurd moment turning this situation upside down, which contains much theatrical tension. In *Catsplay* the conflict between reality in the form of splendidly realized characters and their own role-playing produces a disharmony perfect for the theatre.

In addition, Örkény has a quality which is very rarely found today: he knows how to tell a story. I know that such conservatism is highly suspect, but I still insist that a play should have a plot—be it torn to pieces and broken to bits to make it modern. Both of Örkény's plays are excellent stories, *The Tót Family* openly, *Catsplay* in a more

sophisticated way, but both have a recognizable beginning, end and point to them.

Both plays owe their success primarily to their originality, for no other modern Hungarian playwright has managed with Örkény's ability to make a bizarre reversal of reality and yet retain the reality in the process of making it bizarre. In other words: Örkény's were not bloodless parables, didactic revelations, but grotesque dramas following their own inner logic: his figures live real and at the same time absurd lives according to laws that do not in the least fade into allegory. They have as many "explanations" and meanings as they induce unconsciously in the audience and as much bizarre poetry as is possible in a surrealist idea that assaults its realistic premise.

They are at times amusingly blood-curdling or bitterly funny but always entertaining as Örkény pursues his growing ambition to reflect on stage the self-consciousness of the Hungarian people as we perceive it. Foreign readers or spectators do not notice this aspect of the work, but Örkény's best plays give them the generalizing force that extends the import of his plays beyond Central Europe. To us in Hungary this is a very important aspiration, for in the past thirty years very few Hungarian writers have had the courage to analyse our major and minor failures so frivolously, without any romantic frills and highbrow explanations.

\* See excerpts in No. 28.

\*\* Full text in No. 44.

Indeed, there have been times when it would have cost the writer his livelihood.

In his rational way Örkény is visibly annoyed with our traditional practices which, for the sake of our self-respect, automatically lets us blame our failures on some external force, bad luck or historical misfortune and thus transform sorrow into a kind of Hungarian saturnalia, a ritual which produces lifesaving illusions by drowning the facts in lies and wine.

His newest play, *Kulcskeresők* (Looking for the Key), presented in autumn 1975 by the Szigligeti Theatre in Szolnok, is a striking example of the Örkény method. At first the play follows the pattern of contemporary realistic comedy. A middle-aged couple (the wife first) moves into a flat in a new housing estate after years of co-habitation with the mother-in-law. With everything turned upside down in the new place, the husband—an airline pilot—is on duty. The wife has to worry not only about the flat's badly functioning fittings, but also about a husband whose glaring blunders in the past have dragged plane and passengers into absurd situations. Once he was even demoted to relief pilot but now, captain again, he has his wife fed up with her multitude of anxieties. Meanwhile several figures enter the scene: a fitter who conceals total incompetence behind his boorish slang; a mysterious rambler who visits all the apartments in the housing estate with the gentle aggressiveness of a voyeur invading other people's lives; a woman anxious about her love, a Nobel Prize laureate who is coming in on the husband's plane, and finally the husband's daughter. Thanks to a key which is supposed to lock either the door from the inside or from the outside, but does not lock it at all, they are stuck there together when the husband arrives ruffled and covered with dust. In the end, according to its own absurd logic, the key just won't unlock the door.

This unnatural situation seems the reverse of a well-written dramatic plot, and

yet it expresses the play's essential message. Clapped involuntarily in the same room they force the captain to tell the story of his newest failure. It is very simple: he descended badly, ran over a football field, then through a bumpy meadow and finally came to rest at the entrance to a cemetery. The simple truth is that the captain does his job badly but, directed by the rambler, the others transform patent failure into a glorious stunt and display of inventive bravura even after hearing a tape-recording of wailing, nervous, shocked passengers. There is the laureate's decision to leave the country rather than stay with such people; and even that does not bring them to their senses, as the triumphant lie feasts on the corpse of bitter truth.

Such an outline reveals little more than the intellectual background. Örkény is an excellent observer and makes the first part of the play irresistibly amusing with a reversal of supposedly realistic gestures, attitudes and reflexes. The jokes make their point naturally and help to create the irony of the characters' artificial confinement. The second act is equally convincing at manipulating failure into success, and building a skein of self-deceit.

Unfortunately the play is not content with this. Something which already haunted Örkény's earlier plays, like *Pisti a vérzivatarban* (Pisti in the Sea of Blood) and *Blood Relations*\* (the one written after *Catsplay*), is now manifest in *Looking for the Key*. Not trusting the story and its developments to illustrate his thesis, Örkény introduces artificial elements and extraneous illustrative emphasis.

The rational and temperamental outsider appears too late with his tape-recorder to confront the developing lie with the truth of the passengers' shocking experience. Moreover, Örkény lapses into unnecessary didacticism, alien to his best dramatic efforts.

\* Full text in No. 59.

Everything that I said about Örkény's hypothetical intentions comes over as a bit aggressive, inorganic and transparent in this play. He is much more creative a writer than one who would—or should—give up his artistic independence for an opinion—even if the opinion happens to be right.

Looking for the Key is interesting and stageworthy for all that. Örkény's humour and his ability to present the absurd as something natural are in full evidence. The play is well-knit and the characters more lifelike than in *Blood Relations*.

It was the Szigligeti Theatre of Szolnok that encouraged Örkény to adapt *Catsplay* for the stage. At the time Gábor Székely was stage manager and now, as the theatre's director, he put on the new play. It is a good production most of the time, though the idea to have Örkény himself read the Nobel Prize winner's monologue on the tape-recorder seems both bad and irrelevant. This gag only emphasizes the play's weakest point.

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One of the season's sensations is *Csillag a máglyán* (Star at the Stake) at the Madách, written by András Sütő, a Transylvanian Hungarian. The play's monumental intellectual concept is combined with exceptional men and scenes, and memorable moments of real poetry. During the curtain call at the première, amid shouts and applause, I thought such a work comes along perhaps once a decade. The play compels a community to think long and hard about the purpose of its own existence. This forceful intellectual exercise is expressed at the same time in a sensual poetry that gives the audience a satisfying catharsis.

Sütő's first great success was an essay-novel *Anyám könnyű álmot ígér* (My Mother Promises a Light Dream). Its picture of the Székely village where the author was born is also an assessment of the

bonds tying people to a broad social environment, and, with a gentler force, to their original community. My Mother Promises a Light Dream is a fascinating lyrical book of a man accepting his fate. Lyrical expression is Sütő's forte, and here every line is imbued with the peculiar poetry of the delectable Hungarian language and way of thinking in Transylvania: whatever his subject, poetry is his natural element.

His previous play, *Egy lócsiszár virágvasárnapja* (Palm-Sunday of a Horse-Dealer), written after Kleist's *Michael Koblbaas*, already revealed his playwrighting talent. Kleist's classic masterpiece has been the victim of many metamorphoses in genre; Sütő's remains true to its spirit in the tragic parable of rightful revolt fallen into arbitrary anarchy.

Star at the Stake tells the story of Calvin and Servet, whose fate reveals the tragic process of revolution consolidating into dictatorship. He shows how the promise of a new type of freedom stiffens under the impact of external and internal pressures, and how the convulsion of self-defence creates the "fear of free speculation." This new attitude abandons the laws of dialectics and becomes a petrified, sclerotic system which suppresses all change and development because all thought relative to the future is regarded as dangerous and subversive. The emergence of the ascetic power which gives no room to individual opinions turns revolution into inquisition. These are the subject-matter of Star at the Stake, which goes on to show how the opposition—instead of the enemy—becomes the threat that has to be eliminated.

Fortunately, the play is more than ideological, for Sütő's real talent is his presentation of the friendship and fate of Calvin and Servet. They start out together with some noticeable differences in character. These slight differences do not trouble them; in fact they assume they complement each other, each with something in his personality that the other lacks. And so they are united,

the fighter and the organizer, the cunning intellectual and the dreamer, a poet walking in the clouds. The other figures around them are dwarfs compared to their complex double individuality, though the different roles inherent in their different make-up separates them from each other.

Sütő presents the tragic process of separation with exemplary impartiality. Calvin's strength and self-consuming logic are balanced by a haunting inclination towards Servet's unrestrained freedom. In Servet Sütő shows an unconscious attachment to Calvin the father-figure who is able to make decisions and act. He shows the personal tragedy in Calvin's assuming historical responsibility while there is rhetorical beauty in Servet's death at the stake.

The writer's sympathy for one or the other hero changes according to the situation: the secret of the deep and lasting impact of the play is just in this capacity for not choosing between Calvin and Servet. Sütő justifies and understands both but this vision, the unity of the double perspective as represented in these two human fates, is fascinating and hits the awed spectator with cathartic impact. It is a dream about the human dialectic of the revolutionary process merging peacefully into the solution of preserving order and enriching freedom.

Sütő projects this vision with great force, while his excellent characters at the same time create the climate of dictatorial and inquisitorial hysteria in a perceptive exposure of fanatics and chameleons.

The language of the play merits the greatest praise. Now, at a time when dry and ironic historical parables are fashionable, the rhetorical language here is flexible and so rich in metaphors it is a sensual delight. Its supple prose does not trespass on the psychological logic of the situations: with the force of poetry it elevates the given situation to the sphere of general truth. And the language is never artificial, rather, it seems to be the only natural way to speak of these things. Romantically appealing, the

play is also a fine combination of psychological drama and historical parable.

And it is visually fascinating: Sütő's strong effects are never cheap. History appears in all its luxurious extravagance and richness while the writer manages to organize it close to contemporary concerns. Otto Ádám's staging is faithful to the author's intentions, especially in outlining the course of the two heroes. He directed his actors excellently; the two outstanding leading men, István Sztankay as Calvin and Péter Huszti as Servet, give thoroughly studied and moving performances.

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István Csurka\* is refreshingly non-literary. At times he is so deceptive that people believe he is not a serious writer at all. Knowing how talented he is, many people take this frivolousness amiss and some call him a cynic. They are mistaken.

Csurka seems to lack seriousness not only because he assiduously goes to the race track. He co-authored a passionate and amusing pseudo-technical book defending the sport and the betting that was once considered a bourgeois affectation. The book, of course, goes beyond its subject-matter, and in the Anglo-American world it would perhaps be enough to awaken interest in Csurka and his plays. If one of his plays were performed in England—and it would be deserved—he would probably either lose all of his royalties betting at the races or, with any luck, would end up a rich man. So his lack of seriousness is something everybody can see also stems from something else as well: his characters are not what anybody would consider representative types. His casts consist of journalists, writers, filmmakers, actors, impostors, that kind of thing—people who drink, play poker, and do not shy back from swapping wives in bad moments. Doing this with great gusto, such

\* See his story "Bottles and Women" in No. 62.

people do not reflect favourably on a society struggling with its good intentions, but neither can they be considered symbols of social criticism.

So he is sometimes considered a writer of marginal phenomena, a sports fan, the on-looker watching the others in their own particular horse race.

But Csurka is a serious writer with a serious intention. To start with, he knows the difference between fair and unfair. Both as a writer and a man he gambles for high stakes: right from the beginning he looked with his generation at the new world, sharing new hopes after the war and staking their faith in fair play in this new game with its new rules. This faith, its possibilities, tragic failures and the tragicomedy of its distortions are present in all his plays. And he does not simply shift responsibility onto circumstances. He mercilessly calls his generation to account for having looked passively or with illusions at the unfavourable developments.

In contrast to the dramatic preachers, Csurka does not drown faith in moralizing. He just plays the game. He bets before the play starts and we learn from the play that the horse he backed or would have liked to see win gave up or failed, or never got to the starting gate—escaping from reality and responsibility into a world of *ersatz* reality and illusion.

In all his plays Csurka loses the bet but his loss results in a determination to win back what was wasted on a bad horse and the unfair manipulation or the dishonest situation. His faith is so dear to him that he stakes everything on winning it back.

Those who do not know his plays (and unfortunately I do not think they are known abroad) will probably not think they can be very amusing. In fact, Csurka is the most entertaining playwright in Hungary today. Of course, entertainment in this case must be understood as the union of wit and malice, lyricism and spitefulness, high moral sense and natural elegance, refinement

and shrillness. His plays sometimes balance on the edge of coarse vaudeville or melodrama, but in most cases a sure instinct protects him from becoming cheap or dead serious.

Csurka is not squeamish: he will use any means provided it has an effect. He detests the false art of highbrow intellectuals and the masturbatory self-pity of the fortunate few. He is a plebeian and a democrat. He speaks to everybody in the best sense of the word: he creates real theatre.

He has two splendid plays. In *Ki lesz a bálanya* (Fall Guy for Tonight)\* the characters play poker all through the night, while a whole generation's systematic illusions fall to pieces. The other play is *Deficit*, in which again on one night come spectacular revelations of lies permeating four lives. Here they are accompanied by wife-swapping, and the pervasive disgust that looms in the background of it all. It is rare that contemporary plays mix the tragic and the grotesque with such imagination.

After a longer interval the Pesti Theatre in January presented his new play, a well-merited success that made it the hit of the season.

*Eredeti helyszín* (Taken on Location) is the story of shooting a film, which the director decides to do in a lower middle-class Budapest flat. For such is the genuine setting of the extremely stupid films called "socialist popular trash." The film team is headed by an untalented director whose only real concern is that when the time comes, he will have a worthy burial. Though they call him "captain", the director has never made a film: they were all done by a now absent assistant. The whole project is jeopardized by actors' inability to play their lifeless, artificial roles and the director's failure either to organize the work himself or give any reasonable instructions for anybody else. By the end of the first act, the actors' revolt has brought the work to a standstill. In the second act the assistant

\* Excerpts in No. 39.

comes back because his own enterprise, a bold, new and thorny script, has been rejected. His return reduces the tension for a while but then the Boss arrives, the director of the film studio, who intends to arrange matters and smooth everything out. In this arranging, nobody is sacked, while the assistant is promoted to the rank of co-director. In other words, the iniquity is preserved as the talentless and worthless is maintained just to avert trouble. More than that: nothing must happen to avert progress from its desirable and prescribed course. Finally the film is made, the trash is ready and will certainly arrive in time for the Golden Tundra Festival in Siberia where it was entered even before the shooting started.

As the play develops, the old director realizes that his reliable lack of talent or, perhaps more charitably, his dispassionate mediocrity, were the basis of his manipulated success. At the same time, the young co-director is led to a trap whereby those who will build his career expect him to renounce every ambition and risk.

This world of constructed careers and moulded leaders is contrasted with the frail and weak world of the actors. Csurka sees the actors as underdogs humiliated by the tyranny and foolishness of directors. In Csurka's interpretation actors are sincere, showing their true selves, expecting answers but always brought to heel with commands or

lies. Though they wish to give themselves fully, sacrifice themselves and expend themselves in an effort of self-realization, petty ambitious climbers degrade them into simple executors of orders.

The play is immersed in its small and peculiar world with its own techniques and shop-talk, but a fascinating, clever and imperceptible process raises the play's exoticism to the level of social symbolism. Without any *tour de force* or artifice Csurka manages to enlarge the small world of *Taken on Location*.

All the play's characters are true to life. The two directors and the great aging film actress are marvellous proof of Csurka's skill at characterization. His plotting is almost faultless; verbal humour and farcical situations multiply the play's impact. It is a splendid comedy touching on both satire and tragedy, and the almost imperceptible connection between the two gives it lasting impact.

Still, the play would not have had the same success without the excellent production—in my opinion the best in years, done without resort to tricks and arbitrary gags. This is its greatest merit: the director, István Horvai, remains faithful to the play, and his marvellous actors, led by Mária Sulyok as the actress and György Bárdi as the incompetent director, do great credit to actors on stage. It should be a good example to the whole profession.

LEVENTE OSZTOVITS

O. W. RIEGEL

## WHAT IS HUNGARIAN IN THE HUNGARIAN CINEMA I.

### *A Search for a Nation*

These notes on the Hungarian motion picture are part of a larger search for Hungary. The phrase, "search for Hungary", is chosen with care, as the search for a mystical "soul" or "genius" of any country is presumptuous and an invitation to fantasy. The human condition is similar among all peoples. There are differences, of course, but these differences are mainly, or so it seems to me, the product of the special stresses and preoccupations of a people at a particular moment in their history. These special conditions, although transitory in the long view of history, are essentially poetic, in the sense that they are based on an emotional way of looking at things, of comprehending and interpreting reality. These poetic differences may be the only remaining justification for "nationalism" in an age when nations have become the weapons-carriers of a world of organized violence. The purpose of these notes, then, is to try to penetrate the mysteries of "nationalism" in the case of Hungary; and, more specifically, to examine the motion picture to see what it reveals (or seems to reveal to me) about the nation. The subject is the complicated and often contradictory inter-relationship, real and imaginary, between art and reality.

I think this preface is important because anyone who dares to comment on a whole nation and on one of the arts of that nation should state, if not his credentials, at least his point of view. The military aircraft that deposited me on the Mátyásföld airfield in Budapest in July of 1945 confronted me suddenly not only with the rubble and desolation but also with the *grand chambardement* of a traumatized society floundering in weakness and disarray on a watershed

of its history. It required no special clairvoyance to foresee that new conditions, stresses and preoccupations would evolve a new national style, and that this change would be reflected in all the arts and especially in the popular art of the motion picture. Not so easy to foresee was the evolution of the motion picture on a scale of high drama.

"Drama" is also chosen with care, as there is no better word to describe the revolutionary progression in Hungary of the motion picture, the most visible of all the arts. How revolutionary this change has been, in subject matter, intent and style, may be seen by comparing the films of the pre-World War II period with the "serious" films that began to attract world attention beginning with the 1960's, films that introspectively searched for "truth," with a passion for "honesty" that sometimes brought the films close to, if not into, the pit of despair.

To illustrate this transformation, the great popular successes of the Horthy period in the 1930's were *Rákóczi March*, a patriotic, romantic, musical cream-puff about an aristocratic hussar and a beautiful girl at the turn of the century, and *The Dream Car*, a Hollywood-type Cinderella story in which an affluent businessman and penniless typist, after some adventures, find true love and live happily ever after.

If I needed a symbol for this transformation, I would choose the Hungarian horse; that is, the horse of *Rákóczi March* films, decked in the trappings of arrogant pride and romantic make-believe, bearing a brilliantly uniformed hussar, as contrasted to the horse in *Elegy*, a short film made in the

1960's by Zoltán Huszárík, in which a leading theme of the modern Hungarian film, man's inhumanity to man, becomes man's inhumanity to horse, and in which the pathetic beast, the victim of the inevitable forces of social and industrial change, ends up as a carcass, a horror of lifeless horse-meat, on the hook of an abattoir.

This transformation raises difficult questions. It is true that *Rákóczi March* was propaganda of the most blatant kind, much more seductively contrived than any Hungarian film since the late 1950's. But its immense popularity suggests that it reflected Hungarian values in the 1930's. Have the values changed, or was there a suppressed darker outlook present all the time, only waiting to emerge in a different social and political environment? In the latter case, if we were deceived by the films of the Horthy era, how can we be sure that contemporary Hungarian films are any more reliable as reflections of the national character?

One of the purposes of these notes is to test the revelatory reliability of the Hungarian films by examining the content of the films for what it tells us, or doesn't tell us, or tells us deceptively, about Hungary. First, both the films and the observer must be put in perspective.

Obviously I am not looking at the films with Hungarian eyes, but as a foreigner and as through a window. Moreover, these notes deal almost exclusively with the so-called "serious" film, a small segment of total film production. For a relatively small country, Hungary is extraordinarily productive in all the fine and popular arts. In the cinema this means that in Hungary, as in other countries, the great bulk of film production (with the largest film audiences) serves customary mass functions: Comedies and musicals for entertainment in theaters and on television; educational and technical films, both animated and with live acting, for schools and factories; and many excellent documentaries for theater and television that probe critically into the problems of the day. The

largest audiences are attracted not by cinema at all, but by football and popular music, live or on television.

The point is that while the makers of "serious" films want to interest as large an audience as possible, and want their films to be profitable like film makers everywhere, they play a minority role on the cultural scene. At the same time, however, the serious films employ the best film-making talent, cost the most money, are offered to domestic and foreign audiences as the highest forms of cinematic art, and therefore must be taken with special seriousness as showcases of national values and perception of reality. As the film makers for the most part can be described as intellectuals, appealing especially to a segment of "serious" Hungarians and to a segment of young people who are "with it" in terms of social and political consciousness, how representative are they of a whole people? Are their films, favored by cultural policy and state subsidy, unrepresentative, just as it has been said that the French New Wave, similarly favored, was in advance of, or out of touch with, the French public?

Answers to these questions should emerge after an examination of some characteristics of the "serious" films. A few years ago, the director Károly Makk said that Hungarian films were characterized by (1) Peasant subjects and problems; (2) intellectualism; (3) rapport with the Hungarian people. I find myself with doubts and reservations on all points. I think the peasant theme is more traditional and romantic than real. While the films are produced by "intellectuals," and employ such intellectual stylistic devices as irony, abstraction and ambiguity, they are, under their stiff-lipped surface appearance, highly emotional. As for rapport with the people, this may be true, but I have already raised the question of what segment of the Hungarian people Mr. Makk has in mind.

For a foreigner to disagree with a Hungarian director on the character of Hungarian



films is, of course, absurd, if not outrageous. All it may mean, however, is that, regardless of who is right, a foreigner and a Hungarian may not see the same things in the films, or interpret differently what they see.

About some of the characteristics of the serious Hungarian film there can be little disagreement. Taken as a whole, as examples of film art Hungarian films are excellent by international standards. While few, if any, Hungarian films so far seem destined to become "Pantheon" films of lasting, worldwide popularity because of the universality of their appeal, the quality of production is first-rate in script, editing and substance. The photography is uniformly so good that virtually any Hungarian film is a guarantee of a visual experience of the highest order. Plot in its old sense is no longer dominant; most of the serious films resemble slices from the continuum of life, achieving an end with a crucial event or experience. This characteristic is one of the factors, along with the photography and editing, that give Hungarian films their contemporary look.

The Hungarian film renaissance was a late starter. It was influenced, like film nearly everywhere, by post-war film movements in the West, by Italian neo-realism, the French New Wave, American editing, Antonioni, Truffaut, Bergman, and others, which stimulated an interest in new kinds of subject matter, new ways of photographing different types of actors, and new ways of putting film together, including surreal and elliptical cutting. This doesn't mean, however, that Hungarian films are any more derivative or imitative than the films of any other country. On the contrary, the preservation of distinctive Hungarian characteristics (conversely, the resistance to "international" fashions in subject matter and style) is one of the main reasons, in my opinion, for the failure of Hungarian films to win a broader acceptance in both the West and the East.

The diversity of subject matter is great, as may be seen in the following list of some

of the major subject categories, with examples of films made during the last decade:

Historical (biographical narrative)—Ferenc Kósa's *Judgement* (Ítélet, 1970), on the 16th century peasant rebel, György Dózsa.

Responsibility—András Kovács' *Blindfold* (Bekötött szemmel, 1974), on a priest torn between pressure to miracle-monger and his knowledge of the truth in World War II.

Injustice—Kósa's *Ten Thousand Suns* (Tíz-ezer nap, 1965), on the mistreatment of peasants by successive oppressors.

Social and institutional criticism—András Kovács' *Difficult People* (Nehéz emberek, 1964), on stupid, backward bureaucrats.

Annals of national pain—István Szabó's *25 Fireman's Street* (Tűzoltó utca 25, 1973), on the sufferings of life during World War II.

Factory life and industrial problems—Péter Bacsó's *Present Indicative* (Jelenidő, 1971), on inter-personal conflicts in a factory.

Mythic fables—The films of Miklós Jancsó.

Documentary realism—Pál Zolnay's *Photography* (Fotográfia, 1972), on blighted lives in a country village.

Costume drama—Zoltán Fábri's *Ants' Nest* (Hangyaboly, 1971), on love and politics in a religious school for girls at the turn of the century.

Contemporary inter-personal drama—Károly Makk's *Catsplay* (Macskajáték, 1974), on the bitter-sweet loves and memories of the no-longer-young.

Poeticized romance—Zoltán Huszárík's *Sinbad* (Szindbád, 1971), lyrical images from the life of a jaded womanizer.

This list should show, in short, that so far as subject matter is concerned there is no Hungarian "school" of film, an idea that Hungary's individualistic film makers vehemently and understandably reject. Nevertheless many observers, including myself, feel that similarities give unity to the whole body of Hungarian film and that the films

are unmistakably identifiable as Hungarian. This is the variation within unity that gives an extra dimension of interest and meaning to a generation of film makers just as it does to the whole corpus of any individual artist. The questions are, what do the films have in common, and what do they reveal in their disparate ways of what is "Hungarian" in the latter half of the twentieth century?

Some international critics find the key to the Hungarian film in "demystification", or an effort to show Hungarians to themselves as they really are, without tinting or distorting, and with no concessions to popular or traditional "fictional truth", as in artificially contrived "plots" and stereotyped characters and action. István Gaál has a character say in *Baptism*, "The artist stays close to reality and feels its vibrations." As so expressed, the goal is not unlike that of Italian neo-Realism and the French New Wave, to break with the illusions of sentimentality and the pandering to popular tastes and traditions of the "old" cinema. But the Hungarian search for "truth" has a special moral intensity, like the Ascent of Mount Fuji of the Japanese legend in which everyone must eventually climb Mount Fujiyama, and face to face with God, must tell the truth about himself. In the case of Hungary he must face if not God, then his own conscience.

According to this view, the purposes of Hungarian films are both revelatory and provocative. The films try to move and disturb the spectator, raising questions of responsibility to others, of duty to society and the state, and, indeed, questions on the basic meaning of life itself. Solutions are seldom offered. When they are, they usually seem tacked-on and irrelevant. In *25 Fireman's Street* an old Budapest apartment house about to be razed reveals its bitter memories of the war years. There is no plot, no moralizing, and no end except the predictable destruction of the building. In Gaál's *Current*, a band of care-free youths lose a

companion by accidental drowning. The survivors are moved and disturbed, and they reflect, nothing more.

"Demystification" has political implications that will be discussed later, but I note in passing that neutral objectivity is the opposite of ideological propaganda and, in a sense, ideologically subversive.

The validity of the demystification theory when applied to the generality of Hungarian films is another matter. Jancsó is a prodigious creator of myths. The frequency of miraculous resurrections, dream fantasies, folklore mysticism, and other supernatural and surreal elements in the films of Jancsó, Fábri, Gyöngyössi, and others suggests a yearning to escape from the cold restraints of objectivity for both esthetic and philosophical reasons. The continuing homage to the peasant and country life as eternal wellsprings of simplicity, virtue and stability, at a time when rural life is changing, agriculture is becoming agri-business, city and rural incomes are approaching equality, and easier transportation and communication are breaking down the old gulf between city and country, may already be more romantic than real. The rustics of Zolnay's *Photography* are definitely not sources for spiritual refreshment. Finally, in addition to these meanderings from objective truth, there is the question of whether the "objectivity" of the demystifiers is not itself based upon an emotion, an idiosyncratic way of looking at things that distorts "reality" in its own special way.

Other critics find a key to Hungarian film in the theme of the alienation of youth. It is true that this in the theme of a number of Hungarian films (*Green Years*, *The Age of Daydreaming*, etc.) but the theme is universal, appearing in the films of Poland, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia as well as in the countries of the West, so that I am reluctant to agree that there is anything peculiarly Hungarian about the subject itself.

Graham Petrie, in an excellent article in *The New Hungarian Quarterly* (No. 53, 1974)

finds the greatest strength of the Hungarian cinema in its determination to come to terms with the facts of the nation's history over the past hundred years, and he quotes the hero of Sándor Sára's *The Uptbrown Stone*: "History must be made to answer to man." I agree that this is a central theme, and I agree when Petrie says that this preoccupation with history is an obstacle to the reception of Hungarian films abroad, as other peoples do not know enough Hungarian history to understand the meaning and poignancy of the films.

Other reasons for a common identity of Hungarian films may be mentioned. One is a common background, especially of the younger directors, in the training of the Academy of Theater and Cinematic Arts and the experimental Béla Balázs Studio for young directors. Another is the custom of film directors to work on each other's films, as script writers and cinemaphotographers.

But I think there is a deeper level of meaning in the Hungarian film than any I have mentioned so far, one that is characteristically Hungarian and gives the serious films their unity. While this meaning derives from Hungary's historical experience, it is increasingly crucial (mortal might be a better word) to the peoples of all the world. I refer to the drama of the individual's confrontation with power; that in power of all kinds, of the state, of society, of the military, of the police, of bureaucracies, of authority of any kind, and also the coercive power of memory, tradition, and conscience. The problem of power is at the same time both personal and political. While it is not unique to Hungary, what is striking is the special quality of the Hungarian response to the problem of power, and the manner in which an obsessive preoccupation with the problem surfaces in nearly every Hungarian film, whatever the subject matter may be.

One response to power of the film makers is gloom. I realize that I am now offering a cliché, summoning up a stereotyped image of the gloomy Hungarian staring moodily

into his glass of Tokay, indifferent to the glissandos of Gypsy cimbalom and violin until, while the spangled girls dance a gay *csárdás*, overcome by an intolerable sadness, he pulls out a pistol and shoots himself. Cliché or not, the gloom of the films cannot be denied. The gloom didn't begin, however, with the present generation of film directors. To put the matter in historical perspective, Hungarian literature has always been notable for its morose view of the *bête humaine*, an unsavory creature organized into a society distinguished for its selfishness, double-crossing, and seamy licentiousness. Even the famous comedies and operettas portrayed man with more than a trace of unfriendly satire and mockery. The gloom of the modern films may be more intellectualized and politically sophisticated than the antecedent literature, but it is based upon a similar raw emotion. That emotion is almost (but not quite) total defeatism. The mood is darkly pessimistic and sometimes despairing in its passive, fatalistic acceptance of the bludgeonings of irresistible forces. The corollary of this is an absence of affirmation, defiance, joy, exuberance, and hope. The films brood introspectively on the tragedies, injustices, frustrations, degradations and humiliations of the national experience and personal experience, adorning and enriching these visions with the intellectual's sharp sense of irony, compassion, and an exceptionally expressive, realistic camera style.

The view that emerges is of basically good and innocent people ground down by forces that are stronger than they, that they cannot control, and for which they are not responsible. People are victims of history, of Habsburg and Horthy police, of Fascist tyranny, of military cruelty, of stupid and unfeeling bureaucrats, of false values imposed upon them by tradition or the bigotry and arrogance of others. The questions of responsibility that are raised in the films are not answered in such a way as to imply that the victims really could or should have behaved any differently to avoid their fate.

Time and again the question is asked, "What did we do that we have had to suffer so much anguish, frustration and humiliation?" The victims are exactly that—victims—powerless against power and helpless and long-suffering under the hammer-blows of fate. The unanimous attitude that emerges—and here my Hungarian friends will shake their heads sadly over me—is a syndrome of self-pity.

Death, failure, frustration, or opportunistic accommodation to power are almost always predictable, whether the film deals with real historical events or is fictional. In *Judgement*, after scenes of horrendous torture and murder, the rebel peasant leader is literally fried to death on a red-hot throne. In Makk's depressing *House Under the Rocks*, well-intentioned people remain passive as they are victimized by violence and dehumanization. In the climactic scene, a former soldier who has been mentally wounded on the Eastern front, and hence not responsible for his actions, pushed a loving and defenseless crippled girl over a precipice to her death. Kósa's *Ten Thousand Suns* is a catalog of the manipulation and oppression of the innocent. Anyone who decides to remain true to himself signs his own death warrant. As the three survivors of the war say in György Révész' *Three Nights of Love*, "If you want to continue living—give in!"

Sometimes the pessimism is adorned or interspersed with poetic mysticism. Gyöngyössi's *Palm Sunday* suggests the Last Supper and Christ's crucifixion, symbolizing the elevation of self-pity into a Hungarian Calvary; in the last scene the *puszta* is strewn with naked corpses and the trees hung with the bodies of dead men, like Armageddon. Miraculous resurrections are the order of the day in Jancsó's *Elektra*. In Gyöngyössi's *Legend About the Death and Resurrection of Two Young Men*, the hero, against a musical background of Kodály and folk tunes, is killed by the gypsies he is trying

to help and then miraculously resurrected. What does this mean? Is this demystification or its opposite? Is it intellectual irony, or a throwback to religious mysticism? Gyöngyössi's *Stag Boys* commemorates an attempted jail break in 1944 during which all of the men were massacred by the SS, but the film offers mystical resurrections, allusions to old Hungarian myths and legends, and a woman who symbolically gives birth to freedom, although she actually miscarries. There is another resurrection in Gyöngyössi's *Sons of Fire*, of a young man shot down after he escapes from prison. The film is about heroic self-sacrifice and "freedom through death." A Hungarian critic says of the pregnant woman in this film that she "tells us something about those who refuse to surrender." It tells us the exact opposite, as a woman's coming to term with her child is one of the most mechanistic and involuntary of human experiences. All of the protagonists, in the words of the title of Jancsó's film, are *Hopeless Ones*, also shown as the *Round-Up*.

"Freedom through death" is good poetic rhetoric but makes no sense. What good is freedom like that? Fábri says somewhere that the cruelty and savagery in his anti-Fascist films are "protests" against inhumanity and the defenselessness of man. Protests, so long after the events portrayed, to whom? To Hungary's anti-Fascist government and people? To the aging or dead perpetrators of the atrocities? To the Security Council of the United Nations, that doesn't look at Hungarian films? To God? Films that show injustice and humiliation make one stop and think, as the critics are fond of saying, but what should one think about?

The villagers in Pál Zolnay's *Photography* without exception have blighted and unhappy lives. The hopeful young people of Szabó's *The Age of Daydreaming* in effect give up their dreams and surrender to the obligations of society. In a word, they accommodate. We are led to believe that the young rebel against conformism in Pál Gábor's

*Horizon* will do the same. In Gyula Maár's documentary on old age, *Végül*, (Eventually) the old pensioner, isolated, unhappy, inadequate and obsessed, returns to his village to sob his heart out in despair.

If no more plausible doom is at hand, film protagonists are destroyed by a *deus ex machina*. In *Professor Hannibal*, Zoltán Fábri's hero, under pressure from the state and a mob, recants his liberal views and is about to be embraced by his formerly hostile Fascist students. He inadvertently steps backward at the top of a stadium and falls to his death. In a parallel action in Gaál's 1971 film, *Dead Landscape*, the young wife, distraught by loneliness in a village depopulated by economic change, is approached at the end of the film by her solicitous husband. She inadvertently steps backward on the promontory on which she is standing and falls, presumably to her death. In Bacsó's *Present Indicative*, a much abused factory foreman, the victim of bureaucracy and prejudice, is finally vindicated and is visited by contrite workers who want to apologize for their conduct; but he is dead of a heart attack. Eventually one may find himself going to see a Hungarian film with expectations similar to those of a Roman in Nero's day going to the Colosseum: In what manner will the innocent be slaughtered today?

Even in the poetic *Sindbad* the romantic images remind us of death and the evanescence of beauty. In the end the defunct hedonist, laid out in a plain wooden coffin, is borne in a horse-cart to his grave, a symbol of futile, lonely and wasted life. The hero of Szabó's *Love Film*, compelled by the power of obligations and habit to forsake his love in France and return to the homeland, is typical of the protagonists who are helpless against the forces that drive them and passive in defeat.

Glum defeatism, paralysis of the will and inability to cope are all present in András Kovács' 1974 film, *Blindfold* (*Bekötött szemmel*). A peasant soldier, a perfectly innocent and decent fellow, a "primitive" with all

the orthodox peasant virtues, has left the army without permission for what is to him an entirely reasonable purpose—to help his dearly beloved young wife have her first baby. He has no intention of deserting. He is caught and, naturally, condemned to execution by a firing squad. Tied to a post facing his executioners, this helpless victim of Hungarian military inhumanity now, on top of that, is doubly wronged by becoming the helpless victim of foreign inhumanity from the sky. An enemy plane drops bombs, the soldiers flee, and when the dust clears the condemned man and his post have disappeared. A young priest, who had been moved by the injustice of the soldier's sentence, finds a piece of clothing, evidence of the soldier's death. However, military, political and ecclesiastical authorities wish to exploit a local religious legend and bring heavy pressure on the priest to give his corroborative blessing to the story that a miracle has occurred and the soldier has been saved by a military saint. This presents the priest with a crisis of conscience and responsibility. Mystify or demystify? Presumably he has a number of options; so what happens? The priest has a nervous collapse and at the end of the film is confined in a mental institution. A Hungarian critic says that this shows that the priest is not in a state of darkness but of rebirth, a man who has learned the truth and will fight for it. I find this astonishing. A fighter who is crazy and has been put away? The rational is similar to Jancsó's, that confrontation with cruelty and injustice is optimistic because "there is no finer aesthetic pleasure than the discovery of justice." Like the "freedom of death."

When I mention this pervasive atmosphere of pessimism to Hungarian film directors, they express great astonishment. What do I want, happy endings? Do I want Kósa to falsify history and have Dózsa win his rebellion, have him crowned with laurel on the throne instead of incinerated, and end the film with a chorus of smiling peasant girls dancing a saraband on a meadow of

spring flowers? As for fictional works, do I want the jaded hedonist, Sindbad, to find true love and retire to happy vegetation in a sunny old folks home, surrounded by his scrapbooks? Clearly the directors believe that they are being true to Hungarian history, celebrated for its defeats from Mohács to the Don. Clearly they respect the convention that a serious work of art must be tragic. Most important, however, is what I conceive to be their belief that they are true to the essential reality of life itself, which, inevitably for every man and woman, ends in defeat, ignoble compromises, and death.

This is an existential view of life, but existentialism comes in many styles. It may be negative in spirit, with man a creature of unrelenting misery, or it may be positive, with man noble and glorious even in defeat. Man may be the product and victim of history and the forces of his environment, but not all existentialists believe that he has no redemptory power of courage, struggle and defiance. Marx, who preached a doctrine of historical conditioning, also believed that individual men were responsible for their actions, could choose between options, and make decisions. This was the view of Hungary's Marxist philosopher, György Lukács. Aristotle observed about two thousand years ago that for effective tragedy the hero must be a person of noble character who falls, not because of some external force (power), but because of some inner fault or frailty. If he falls because of some irresistible external force alone, the spectacle is merely pathetic. He could have been talking about the victimized innocents of Hungary's films.

Carl Dreyer's Joan of Arc is martyred like Dózsa, but she is not a figure of unrelieved human misery. Many of the Bergman films end in defeat and death, but one may leave the theater exhilarated by the dignity of life and the heroism of the human personality. The same may be said of Czechoslovakian films like *Closely Watched Trains* and *The Shop on the High Street*, where the end is not a desert of futility but a celebration of the

human spirit. In the Japanese film, *Ikuru*, the hero dies of his stomach cancer, but he dies with dignity, humor, and even a touch of majesty. I recall no scene in Hungarian films comparable in spirit with the last scene of Truffaut's *400 Blows*, when the buffeted and hounded boy turns, his back against the sea, and confronts a world he never made. Nor is there any scene in the Hungarian cinema comparable with the end of Ed Emschwiller's *Relativity*, when Everyman, the harried victim of his own biology, stands on a pyramid and howls his defiance.

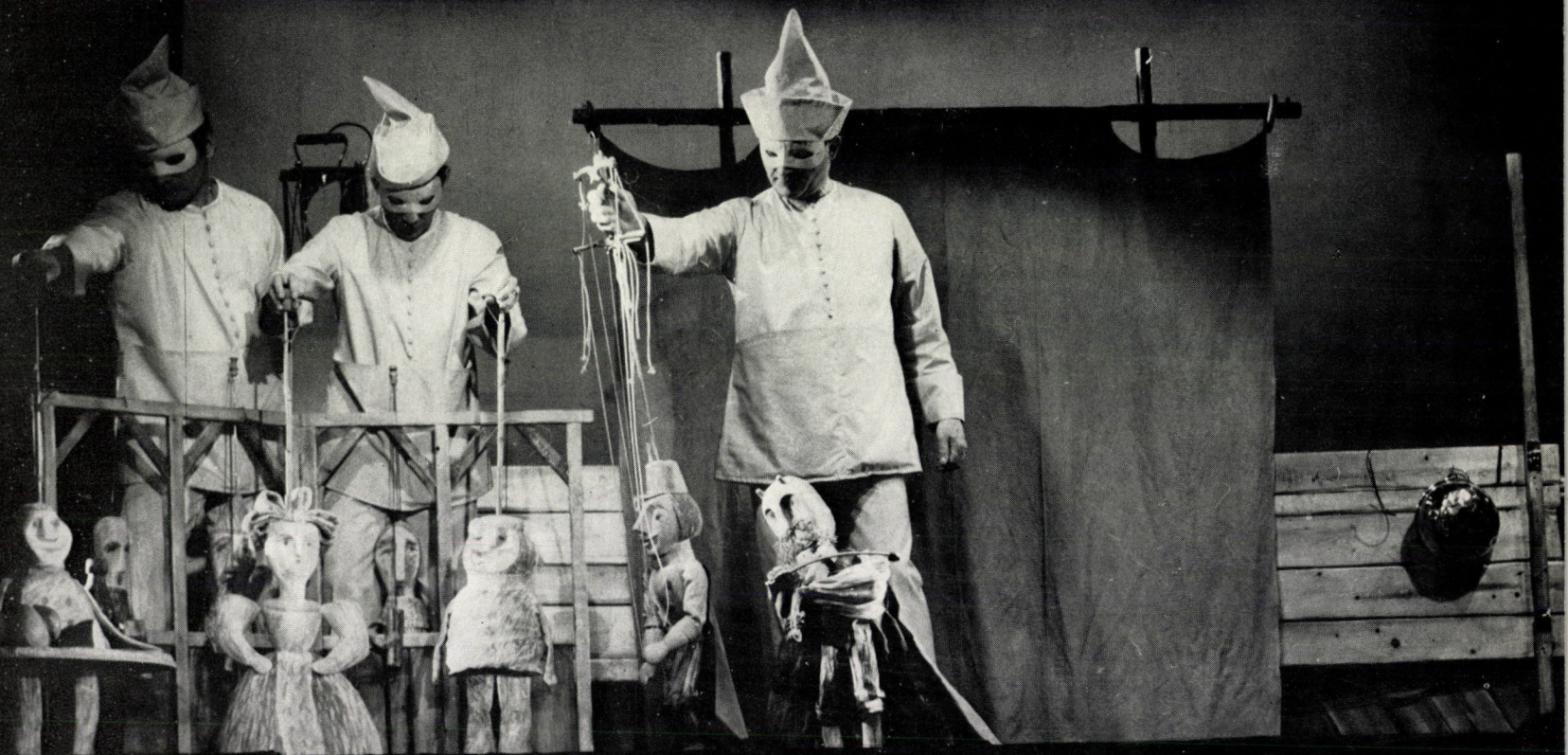
I do not mean that the pessimism in unrelieved, although the anodynes are often themselves melancholy. Gaál's *The Falcons* portrays a closed-in world of cold-blooded authoritarianism almost as hermetic as Jancsó's, but at the end the hero finds freedom not in death but in walking out. This isn't defiance, but evasion, and it may also be a symbol of emigration, a troubling theme in the Hungarian film. The heroine of *Catsplay*, in spite of her troubles, including a suicide attempt, appears determined at the end to persevere with her bitter-sweet memories.

A more positive denouement emerges in Szabó's film of disillusion, *Father*, in which a son who worships a false father-image discovers that his father was not a heroic martyr of the Resistance but quite an ordinary fellow. The son adjusts to a future without the father mystique with poise and good sense, and the film is more positive than Bertolucci's film on the same theme, *The Spider's Stratagem*. Bacsó's *The Last Chance* describes a man who has climbed to the top in the factory bureaucracy and is then ousted, losing his wife in the process. Refusing other posts of management responsibility, he chooses in middle age to prove himself by taking his place again in the industrial system at the point where he started, as a journeyman welder. While not exactly joyful, the ending implies that the hero has achieved a catharsis and serenity of a sort and hope for the future. Another sign of a more positive direction is a 1974 film with the



Budapest Puppet Theatre RAVEL: LA VALSE,  
Book: Dezső Szilágyi; sets and puppets: Iván Koós; directed by Kató Szőnyi

*Éva Keleti, MTI*



Budapest Puppet Theatre

STRAVINSKY: THE SOLDIERS' TALE.

Adaptation: Dezső Szilágyi; sets and puppets: Iván Koós; directed by Kató Szőnyi. From left to right: János Ősi, Pál Elekes, István B. Kiss

*Éva Keleti, MTI*



unlikely title (for a Hungarian film) of *Recovery*, directed by a woman, Mara Luttor. The hero faces the agonizing prospects of losing both his foot and his sweetheart. The foot is amputated and the sweetheart dies, but he is able to cope, and he appears to emerge as a better, more humane, and possibly happier man. This denouement isn't exactly joyful either, but the film doesn't end in another nihilistic zero of defeat.

Sometimes optimism is merely rhetorical, or tacked-on as an afterthought. Kovács' *Fallow Land* (A magyar ugaron, 1972) recalls the Red-hunting days of the counter-revolution in the early 1920's. After scenes of degradation, fear, forced recantations, and a suicide, we are told that the defeated younger generation will keep the flame of hope alive. A quarter century would pass, and the young generation would become middle-aged, before the arrival of Soviet troops made a change possible. I have already mentioned the curious ending of *Photography*, when the photographers, after their encounter with the grim lives of the villagers, show up in Budapest again, all smiles, as if they had just climbed out of a sweat-box. Ferenc Kardos' *Unruly Heyducks* (Hajdúk, 1974) is about an attempted cattle-drive by Heyducks from the Hungarian Great Plain to the Dalmatian coast in the early 17th century. They are attacked by highwaymen, Turks, and Austrians, and at the end, after scenes of savage cruelty, the cattle are lost and the Heyducks all but annihilated. In the incongruous last scene, the two survivors, shown frolicking happily, halfnaked, in the Adriatic shout, "this is not the end; this is the beginning."

Excessive pessimism is a subject of controversy all over Eastern Europe. The Yugoslav animators at Zagreb have made a cartoon film about it. The practical objection is that pessimism turns off audiences and reduces box office receipts. Another objection is political, usually advanced by those who feel that the arts, especially the popular ones, should promote a hopeful and self-

confident national morale. Indeed, we associate optimism with the films of authoritarian regimes, as in the case of the bland "white telephone" films of Italy during the Mussolini epoch and in the kind of official optimism of "socialist realism" that was at its height in the Stalinist period. In the films of Red China, "new" men and women triumph over wicked landlords and are shown smiling broadly as they happily build a new society.

Conversely, we associate pessimism with liberal, laissez faire and permissive nations, where it takes expressive forms that its critics call decadent or the degenerate cosmopolitanism of the West. A good example of the effect of politics on the pessimism-optimism index, and of how quickly a switch in the arts can be managed by ideological control, is the case of Germany. Creativity in the Weimar Republic was often pessimistic and cynical to the point of despair. See Käthe Kollwitz and George Grosz in the graphic arts, Brecht in the theater, and G. W. Pabst in film. Under Hitler, pessimism and cynicism were banished, optimism became official, and creative artists marched under the banner of "Strength through Joy." The result in film included an abundance of images of bright and shining faces of Hitler jugend and merry fairy tales about fair-haired happy Caucasians, in *dirndl* and *lederhosen*, romancing in the Alps.

This thesis cannot be carried too far, as liberal and permissive societies also produce exuberant and optimistic art, and Hungarian films are not devoid of optimistic elements. We are speaking of tendencies and dominant moods, not of absolutes. A modest conclusion is that serious Hungarian films of the last decade are singularly free from any kind of official optimism of the authoritarian stamp, and that their pessimism is not political in the sense of reflecting any formal ideology but only in the sense of expressing a *Weltanschauung*, a way of looking at man, society, and the problem of power.

(Parts 2 and 3 to follow.)

## FOOLING ADULTS

### *Budapest State Puppet Theatre: Faces and Masks*

With good reason, a premiere at the Puppet Theatre gets the same distinguished audience of artists and critics that attend opening nights in the other Budapest theatres. The attention the theatre puts into its adult programmes (in particular) equals that of any production and in one respect exceeds the possibilities of normal theatre, since the manipulation of illusion, which makes puppet theatre so appealing for children, presents special challenges for adults, who might not be so gullible as kids but are equally anxious to be fooled.

The four pieces that comprise the latest adult production at the Puppet Theatre, collectively called "Faces and Masks" (*Arckok és Álarcok*), each approach the possibilities of fooling adults differently. While all have the same director, Kató Szőnyi; the same designer, Iván Koós; and "coreographers" Dezső Szilágyi (who is also the head of the theatre), they had their distinct spirit and combination of actors and puppets to manipulate adults' more developed—and for that reason, more warpage—sense of reality.

The most successful of the evening's pieces is a play within a play set to the music of Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony*. As the composer evokes the spirit of Haydn, so the production evokes the spirit of an eighteenth-century chateau in whose private theatre the prince comes to see a travelling troupe doing commedia dell'arte. The prince, a real person in pony-tail wig and foppish silk suit, walks across the forestage and settles comfortably in the middle of the stage, his back to the audience.

His dog, who follows behind, is a puppet in the style of a popular Hungarian toy—something like an elongated brown basset hound with droopy ears and doleful eyes. He is the scene's protagonist, for as the prince settles back to enjoy his puppet performance, the dog gets excited by these

small human-looking creatures in their own elegant little set. As the commedia dell'arte unfolds on its miniature stage, the dog prances back and forth in the foreground. The prince tries to calm him with one hand while absorbed in the performance. When the puppets on stage begin to knock each other about, the dog pounces and starts to chew up the puppets in the performance. The prince manages to restore order, but when the scene again gets to an exciting point, the dog shows equal enthusiasm as before. This time he is unstoppable, as he pulls off the wig of the human orchestra conductor and plays havoc with the travelling puppet troupe.

The whole scene is pitched just right, letting the audience think itself clever for knowing more than a prince's basset hound while the basset hound makes fun of the humans on stage. It mocks the sophistication of be-wigged gentry without taking itself seriously and never lets the adulthood of the audience interfere with its sense of pure fun.

The success of this, the last of the four pieces in the production, is particularly striking when compared to the first, Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale*. Here an adult audience is too much in the minds of the producers, for the men manipulating the puppets stand on stage and do all their work in full view—as though one has to see the pistons churning to enjoy a car ride. Of course, there is a natural interest in how the mechanism works, but to witness it throughout, as the men stand over the puppets dangling from their hands, turns a supposed unmasking of artifice into an intrusive clattering of the stage.

The other two scenes also in their own way share an approach which is markedly better in the second than the first version. Here, the adults are treated to scenes of love—the less successful (theatrically) be-

tween two mannikens come alive in a museum and the more successful between objects on a hatrack and dressing table. The first of these, performed to Ravel's *La Valse*, does little more than go through the motions of a traditional romance in which faceless figures put on the airs of late nineteenth-century flirtatious relations between the sexes.

In contrast, the bonhomie of the boudoir was done with the lightest touch—a slight movement of a hat or scarf expressed everything. Indeed, it had to, for these sparse props and rather full, evocative voices were the only visible accompaniment to György Ligeti's musical piece, *Aventures*, described as "A musical grotesque in one scene". Unlike the normal habit of making puppets of whatever shape as human as possible, the scarves and hats did not turn into human beings, or rather, they were human with only the slightest extension of their hatness and scarfness.

Of necessity, the actors in a puppet theatre do not get proper credit, since their talents, besides giving voice and movement to the objects they manipulate, usually include unobtrusiveness. Unexpectedly, on another evening when I went to the university theatre to hear one of Budapest's best folk groups, members of the Puppet Theatre had volunteered to do an amateur production—that is, they used simple props, and the seven of them, all in black suits and gloves, stood behind coloured boxes representing animals in the forest who were

being pushed around by a nefarious character named Little Head Big Head. On this occasion, the actors had little distraction, for the boxes were rather small and the faces on them difficult to see half-way back in the theatre, but their voices and enthusiasm for the defiance they show to Little Head Big Head brought out their own talents as actors. They also enacted a poetry competition in the forest, both of these pieces taken from clever stories by Ervin Lázár, another of whose stories appeared recently in NHQ (No. 59). If a puppet theatre has to face an audience more sophisticated than adults or more demanding than children, it could only be from a university crowd, and the group was a great success.

Entertaining as *Faces and Masks* was, it did not show all the inventiveness the Puppet Theatre is capable of. An older production, "Things and People" (*Tárgyak és Emberek*) tried a number of techniques—notably shadow play and man-vs-machine contrasts—that showed the sheer virtuosity of puppetry. It was also concerned with more trenchant themes, like a memorable love triangle among chairs imprisoned in a room, where a relationship is built on the common attempt to stand on each other to get a look out the high window. In a Budapest winter more notable for bad films than bad weather, Monday (adult night at the Puppet Theatre) was something very much to look forward to and—as a backhanded compliment—any slight disappointment is perhaps a measure of the high standards of the theatre.

FRANK LIPSIOUS

## THE ORPHANS HAVE NOT DIED OFF

László Ranódy, "Nobody's Daughter"; Zsolt Kézdi Kovács, "When Joseph Returns"

Probably by mere coincidence, two recent Hungarian films are both about orphans, though in fact the films are quite different. The main figure of László Ranódy's *Nobody's Daughter* (Árvácska)\* is a little girl living in the period of Horthy's regime in Hungary, while Zsolt Kézdi Kovács's film, *When Joseph Returns*, is about a contemporary girl who marries young after growing up in state care with foster parents. The two films both focus on the fact that there are still orphans in the world, and, in a wider context, on the inherent humiliation of their defencelessness.

Ranódy's subtitle, "A Child on Mount Calvary," is strictly metaphorical, since the film takes place on the Hungarian Great Plain, where there is no trace of physical contours—apart from the face of an eight- or nine-year-old girl who for 90 minutes projects all the Biblical sufferings of Christ, or in other words, all human suffering. Zsigmond Móricz's short novel of the same title, which was published in 1941, provides the basis of the film—and the pain that is so graphically depicted. Móricz, one of the greatest Hungarian writers of the early part of this century, drew the story from the actual life of an orphan. He hardly made up anything, for *Nobody's Daughter* experienced every human and social horror. Ranódy, who often makes film adaptations of Hungarian classics, does not in the least try to mitigate Móricz's revulsion—if anything, he enhances it with faithfulness to the novel overlain by his own poetic-realistic approach. The result produces intense shock, created at the expense of many things, including an adequate narrative line.

One's heart goes out to the scawny little girl from the very first shot where she

\*The title of the novel and the film is the little girl's pet name, which is Hungarian for pansy and also means "little orphan."—Editor.

appears completely naked—the nakedness of physical and spiritual defencelessness that men today associate with the horror of concentration camps (though the story takes place during the Horthy regime, when there is peace on the Great Plain). In fact, the river banks, willow groves, and summer meadows are gorgeous.

The child is staying with a rural peasant family, but is considered a "state" child, and her stepmother does not give her even a shirt to wear. At the time the state farmed orphans out to peasants who got money and even clothes to take care of the children, but those who undertook the work for a profit often starved and beat their poor charges.

The story at times becomes poetry as the innocent little soul endures one humiliation after another. In a pasture, a perverse field hand paws and squeezes her; the other children mock her because their mother is not her real mother, only her "dear mother". On one occasion she gives another child half a melon in exchange for her worn-out coarse shirt, and the little girl, whose greatest longing was to be clothed, is overjoyed. But her "dear mother" immediately takes it off her and scolds her. When it turns out that the melon was "stolen", the film goes on to its cruelest scene, in which the "dear father" puts live coals in the palm of the little "sinner" to teach her a lesson about stealing. Indeed, the girl does learn her most memorable lesson, for as her "dear mother" greases her hand with lard, she explains that the girl possesses nothing, only her skin. *Nobody's Daughter* desperately protests, "But I have a shirt!" For the state did give her a shirt and other clothes, which the "dear mother" used for her own children.

The defencelessness of that beautiful little freckled face haunts the film. The girl eventually runs away, with Riska the cow

trudging along behind in a sequence of memorable shots: Towards evening the little girl arrives naked in a village. The cows on their way home surround the tiny soul. She continues to plod through the mud among the huge animals. As night comes, rain begins to fall lightly, and she has nowhere to go, nowhere to sleep. The animals almost trample her, but she is not afraid. She knows them well, for Riska is the only living thing to which she is attached and can talk to in a human sort of way. Another series of harrowing shots: she finds a new mother in the town, who turns out to be an insane brute, beating the girl's head bloody with a wooden slipper for the least infraction. Afterwards, the child is forced to kiss the punishing hand and this time has no chance to escape. But, at least, she has the companionship of an old man with whom she lives in the barn. He takes a liking to her and teaches her many things. He even takes her to church and shows her Christ, the suffering God. The little girl touches the wounds of the figure hanging on the cross. She admires and pities him, not realizing that every human being who suffers like her is also Christ.

The old man and the little girl go home from church, in a series of shots that, even for the film's justly famous cameraman, Sándor Sára, are a rare success—showing the main street of a typical Hungarian village on the Great Plain. A wide, sandy road with several wagon tracks stretch out in the sunlight. The peasant houses gleam with their white fronts and the lanky acacia trees standing in front—characteristic scenes of the Great Plain. It is probably early spring or summer; families, all in folk dress, are leisurely walking home from church. Sára shoots the whole long row of houses; people smiling, talking, and walking in their beautiful costumes and the girl with the old man. It is a holiday, it is as if she is no longer an orphan, as if she has a way out, for there is now a protector who loves her. But this, too, is just a momentary respite.

Rooster-feathered gendarmes happen along, stop, and exchange a few words with the old man just as the new "dear mother" rides up with her husband. When she sees the old man (who is either her father or father-in-law) talking to the gendarmes, the woman's face, at first laughing proudly, suddenly becomes contorted. She assumes the old man is telling the authorities how she and her husband duped him and burned his house down.

Revenge soon follows. She poisons the old man, leaving Nobody's Daughter more an orphan than ever, and now she fears the stepmother, knowing she poisoned the kind old man. She hates the woman and decides to run away once again, but she gets only as far as the river bank, where the gendarmes are pulling a drowned woman out of the water. Nobody's Daughter, who continually calls for her mother to come and save her from suffering in a world without love, believes the dead woman to be her real mother. Now she feels she has nowhere to flee and returns to the cruel farm. The last series of shots show a pig being killed at dawn with Nobody's Daughter holding a dish to catch the pig's spouting blood. She stirs it so it does not curdle before going into the sausage. That evening there is a great feast with two rooms of guests in front of a fully laid table, but the girl gets nothing to eat. Eventually she grabs a piece of blood sausage and runs out to the barn. The last shot of her face shows her lighting straws one after the other while gazing into the flame. She sees, perhaps without fear, that the straw and the entire barn are on fire.

Her face is seen no more as flames envelope the roof and the farmhouse collapses without a single soul running to escape. Thus, the evil world, as it was, is consumed; everything changes, or so the director wants to convey in the poetry of the flames.

For me, however, this is not poetry; it is neither a good, nor very accurately described, metaphor. In the novel Nobody's Daughter does not burn in the fire she started. Why

was it necessary, then, to destroy her? I am not satisfied that *Nobody's Daughter* perishes along with the evil world and the evil people from whom she differed so much. As I do not like the film's solution, I also object to many of its details, especially the director's unwillingness to distinguish what in the film is realistic, and what is lyrical poetic. This confusion produces obscure scenes in which adults act without reason and logic. Or did the director want us to see everything through the little girl's eyes and to understand only as much as she could of our dog-eat-dog world? If this is what he wanted, he is still mistaken: his film shocks the audience. Even with its gifted child actress, *Nobody's Daughter* fails to be a really great film, though it might have been.

*The condemned soul*

Only those familiar with the stigma of an institutional upbringing can fully understand the new film of Zsolt Kézdi Kovács. Such people are marred for life, always fearing some humiliating disclosure and always more vulnerable than children with families. They missed something: they were never loved in the natural way that fathers and mothers love their children. They can never free themselves from this loss, causing a breach that can be seen from the outside, and also on the inside: their souls are erratic, perplexed, and defenceless. There is a problem with their willpower, their insight, and their judgment. In addition, they get angry and suspicious of others, of the whole world.

These are *Nobody's Daughters* grown into condemned souls.

Zsolt Kézdi Kovács who was Miklós Jancsó's assistant for a long time, has always made films on psychological and intellectual themes, like *Mérsékelt égöv* (*Temperate Zone*), 1970; and *Romantika* (*Romance*), 1972. His new one *When Joseph Returns* is not so much an intellectual as a sociological film, being only as psychological as is necessary for

sociological authenticity. As in *Romantika*, the cameraman is János Kende, whose fame as Jancsó's cameraman does not result here in any special effects, since the film proceeds in an eventful, normal way.

Joseph, the character of the title, is a young Hungarian sailor. At the beginning of the film, when he says goodbye to his wife of one month, he also takes his final exit in the film, leaving the very young, almost child bride to the mother-in-law and the audience. The grande dame figure of a mother-in-law makes the daughter-in-law appear all the more shabby—unkempt and poorly dressed, like a drenched bird. She is a typically obstinate, confused, lost orphan from an institutional upbringing. Surprisingly, but perhaps inevitably, such a jumbled soul latches onto a stranger, and Joseph is certainly that. All we know is that he will return after a year, perhaps a year and a half.

Only after his departure does the little wife realize that a sailor's wife lives her whole life alone, except for a husband's one- or two-month leave every two years. Even more sad, though, is the vague feeling she has not yet really grasped—that it is futile to live with a "loving" mother-in-law, for then she is completely alone in somebody else's world. And this is how her married life begins.

Her job is as an odd-jobber in a large factory, and next to the foreman she is just a pitiful immature young girl in a blue apron. What will become of her without a husband? If she were with Joseph, her sailor, perhaps nothing bad would happen, perhaps she could grow into a woman. But as it is, she is merely left to a lonely life, nothing to talk about with her mother-in-law, nothing to reply to the meaningless cards and letters that arrive once or twice a month from her husband. The mother-in-law is preoccupied with a lover, and Joseph is not enough of a psychologist or correspondent to recognize what is going on in the child-like soul of the young woman. At this point a French or American director would lead the heroine

into romantic adventures in which she would fall in love without a second thought for her distant husband. Fortunately, Kézdi Kovács avoids this as he pursues more deeply the fate of such a "condemned" soul. He reverses the situation, so that the girl's experiences, mostly sexual with little feeling, occur against her will. She still loves her distant husband who remains her only security and escape from an institutional past.

But who cares about her problems? Men just make a play for the girl. She escapes the first approach, from a factory colleague, but not from the next, more determined man, an assertive, experienced chauffeur with nerves of steel. The frightened bird does not escape these claws. He even draws love-like feelings from her, or at least a good deal of sexual tension and satisfaction. As the personal chauffeur of a high ranking official, the passionate "friend" even gets her a job as his boss's maid.

In the apartment, or rather villa, social distinctions are for the first time all too apparent to the girl, who is little more than a poorly dressed and behaved proletarian maid compared to the tailor suited, resolute lady of the house. There is everything but equality between the workers of a different calibre in a socialist country. The elite against the lower levels of society: The woman is not provocative, haughty, or disrespectful; she just has her own habits and interests. Among them is the desire that her chauffeur not be involved in a scandal. In a well arranged, short talk, the superior tone of which is as outrageous as its politeness, she tells the girl to desist, since the chauffeur has a family and a scandal would be rather inconvenient.

It is only now that our little orphan finds out her friend is married. That makes her just a cheap whore! In a rage she tears apart the elite, carefully furnished flat. Vases, glasses, the television tube, and exquisite tropical plants soar. She rages in her own, long overdue class struggle. But against what? Lifeless status symbols. She breaks

off the relationship with the chauffeur, but he will always find another sparrow; highways are long, and there will always be somebody to pick up along the way. The affair, unfortunately, is not quite over, for the woman is pregnant. The chauffeur, who up to this point was very helpful, now becomes extremely hard-hearted: he will not even deliver the girl to a visit with her mother-in-law. Even worse, the would-be mother gets sick on the train and has to be taken to hospital—miscarriage. But at least there is no child; the mother-in-law is also relieved not to have the problem of a bastard who has nothing to do with her son.

While recovering at home, she has something of a reconciliation with the mother-in-law. But casting a roving eye on her mother-in-law's latest rather young lover, she is thrown out along with the boy. It is evening, late evening. The boy wants to neck; the girl, however, is frightened to death and feels completely alone. This is the loneliness that only orphans with nowhere to turn can know. She has absolutely nobody in the world and, now, no roof over her head. She gets rid of the unfeeling boy and runs home like one possessed. Home? The only one she has, the one she just got kicked out of.

She rings the bell long and hard. The door opens.

It is the film's most powerful moment. It makes up for everything—the poorly developed story, the bad casting, the poor sequence of shots. The little unkempt creature utters a hardly comprehensible, animal-like cry when her mother-in-law lets her in: "I have nobody." And it will be a long time before I forget the expression that accompanied this animal-like groan: a face in labour, the voice of a woman in labour. With this return and acceptance, some physical and spiritual relationship is born between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. In the following days they talk a lot. And naturally, together they welcome him back "when Joseph returns."

Again the topic covers many aspects of human defencelessness. Kézdi Kovács knew what he had undertaken, but he did not work it out enough in detail. It is in fact crude almost all the way through: a notion rather than a true execution.

It is enough, however, to make us think a little about all kinds of orphans who still exist today because human defencelessness and condemnation still exist. The orphans have not died off.

JÓZSEF TORNAI

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# MUSICAL LIFE

## THE KODÁLY CONCEPT IN THE U.S.

It is important to know the climate of US music education into which the Kodály concept was introduced in the 1960s before one can understand its present impact or direction in this country. For decades the constant complaint of US music educators had been that our children were illiterate musically. The lack of interest in so-called "good" music was attributed to a lack of literacy in musical skills and understanding. Music was not (and for the most part still is not) considered a necessary part of a person's total education; its purpose in education was to lighten the effect of the serious academic subjects—to refresh and to entertain but not to be learned as something of value in its own right. Serious music was wanted by the music educators, but not by the majority of children or their parents—it was for a concert hall élite. The place of music in the schools was largely relegated to public relations purposes—the band for football games, the spring musical for parents concerts for fund-raising purposes.

Into this sterile atmosphere the Orff, (Carl Orff, 1895-) movement injected considerable life in the early 1960s with its basic humanities approach—a synthesis of movement, speech, drama, singing and playing of very simple but beautiful instruments. Teachers, children, parents, principals of schools, superintendents of education suddenly became alive with interest. In its early stages the Orff movement did not deal with

the reading and writing of music, nor did it go far beyond the elementary-school stage; nevertheless it led children to an interest in active participation, it vastly increased their rhythmic abilities and freed their inhibitions as they found several new avenues for self-expression.

### *Earliest Attempts at Transplantation of the Kodály Philosophy*

When the Kodály Method was first brought to the attention of American music educators in 1964, it appeared to supply the missing link in the extremely interesting new Orff concept and to answer the serious complaint of decades of US music educators—namely, literacy. Furthermore, it gave the first real help to classroom teachers that they ever had. Up until this time, regular classroom teachers with little ( $\frac{1}{2}$  year, perhaps) or no training in music were expected to do most of the music teaching in elementary grades, with an outlined plan from a music specialist who visited the classroom occasionally.

Mary Helen Richards, an American music teacher, after a two-month visit to Hungary, returned home to write a book, supplemented by large pictorial charts, titled *Threshold to Music*. This was written specifically to help classroom teachers, and it was immediately successful, at first in California

and on the West Coast where Mrs. Richards developed a model school in Palo Alto, and later all over the US. In Mrs. Richards' early efforts, she was joined by Katinka Daniel, who had received her training at the Liszt Academy in Budapest as a piano major and whose husband Ernő was now head of the University of California's piano department at Santa Barbara.

In the summer of 1965, I was introduced by Mary Helen Richards to Kodály at Dartmouth College's Congregation of the Arts, in Hanover, N.H., where he was composer in residence. Inspired by his ideas on music education, I determined to go to Hungary to study as soon as possible. This I finally did, through the efforts of Professor Elizabeth Szőnyi, during the 1967-68 academic year. At the end of this time I was successful in obtaining the Ministry's permission to bring back with me to the US a talented young man, Péter Erdei, who was just finishing his studies at the Liszt Academy. It was my plan to collect American folk-music and to try some experiments with twice weekly and daily Kodály lessons in a public school. In 1968-69 Péter Erdei and I worked quietly together and were successful in attracting the attention of the Ford Foundation through a Pilot Class trained in both Orff and Kodály techniques. In September 1969, the Kodály Musical Training Institute was established through a Ford Foundation grant, with the approval of Mrs. Zoltán Kodály, the composer's widow and a musician in her own right. Its purposes were to train teachers in the Kodály concept, to develop an American curriculum based on Kodály's ideas and to conduct educational research to determine the effect and value of the Kodály concept on American education. The Institution located in Wellesley, Massachusetts, and started training four teachers.

Concurrently (1968-69) a group of eight talented young men and women were in Hungary studying the Kodály concept through the efforts of Dr. Alexander Ringer

of the University of Illinois under a grant from the National Endowment of the Arts. In September 1969, they returned to teach in the US and went to three locations, in Connecticut, North Carolina and Kansas. The group in New Haven, Connecticut, was the largest and formed a nucleus which became a strong model of Kodály teaching in the New Haven Public School System.

*Authentic vs. Non-authentic Kodály: The Kodály Idea*

After the establishment of the Kodály Musical Training Institute and the New Haven group, questions soon arose as to the differences between the latter two adaptations of the Kodály concept and that of Mary Helen Richards, which by early 1970 had gathered many loyal followers all over the US. In the summer of 1969, I invited several Hungarian teachers to a summer course organized at the Dana School of Music (where I was Director prior to KMTI's founding in 1969) which was followed in the summer of 1970 by the First International Kodály Seminar in Kecskemét, Hungary, sponsored by Mrs. Kodály. At these courses Americans exposed to Hungarian pedagogues at first hand saw that there was a difference between the work carried on in Wellesley by KMTI, in New Haven by the Ringer Fellowship teachers and that of Mary Helen Richards. Thus the controversy arose: what is Kodály, what is authentic and what is not? It is not possible in such an article to clarify the differences which had arisen and were being practised. It is important to state what the essence of the Kodály philosophy is, according to Mrs. Kodály and the teachers most closely associated with Kodály during his struggles to raise the level of music education in his country and to bring about a national musical culture based on Hungary's own heritage.

As with the Orff movement, there was a tendency with Americans when the Kodály concept first appeared, to take the frosting

off the cake and to use only the "gimmicks". Thus Kodály was at first identified as hand signals and do-re-mi's; it was further described as strictly pentatonic and only for children in elementary grades. It quickly gained the reputation of being successful in its early stages, and then becoming dull and disciplined—too structured. The deeper significance of the concept escaped the average teacher; the fact that only the best (whether in music, literature or art) is good enough for a child, that music is for everyone, and that there is no such thing as a monotone person; in fact that a teacher must strive very hard to be good enough to teach children—that his own musicianship must be of the highest order; that there should be no difference in the type of music education offered the child who will become a professional musician or remain an amateur up to the age of about 14; the fact that the most important age for learning is between 3 and 7 years of age, that folk-song is the school of good taste, that pedagogy is only a convenient skeleton on which a gifted teacher may hang his ideas, that there is no such thing as a Kodály "method", that Kodály didn't teach a method, that he believed only in leading a child to great music through lessons which, if they were not a source of joy and refreshment, had better not be given at all—all these things and many more which are true hallmarks of Kodály philosophy escaped American educators who attempted to teach the Kodály "method" on too short acquaintance or training.

#### *Subsequent developments in authentic Kodály*

Any article describing the Kodály concept in America as it is today, 1976, must acknowledge the existence of many types of Kodály groups, which are the results of either authentic, superficial, or too little Kodály training. Dr. Klára Kokas, in her recent article in this magazine (No. 59), is right in stating that Americans want results too quickly. Especially if something is good,

they want it and they want it fast—overnight, if possible. Thus it was, after the early success of Mary Helen Richards' *Threshold to Music* book and charts, that many teachers and professors visited Hungary for periods of time ranging from 2 days to 2 months, returning ablaze with excitement as new Kodály experts to teach the "method". In this way much damage was done and in many places the Kodály way of music education earned a bad reputation because of the poor adaptations of inadequately trained teachers. This is inevitable in a country the size of the United States.

Nevertheless, a great deal of good has also resulted, and it is the intention of this article to draw attention, wherever possible, to the impact of Kodály's lifetime work on a totally different culture. (From this point on, reference will be made only to "authentic" Kodály teaching.) It must be remembered that conditions for absorbing a concept in which so much stress is laid on individual excellence within the framework of group responsibility were not so easy in this country as in Hungary; folk-music had to be re-discovered here (as it had to be in Hungary), but from a far greater variety of ethnic sources; the average American child does not look upon education as a great privilege and as valuable in itself, but rather as something one has to go through in order to get a job later in life. In addition, it took Kodály and his followers 50 years to achieve the current state of music education in Hungary, but the current generation there has been brought up on Kodály's ideas since kindergarten and does not realize it has been taught the "Kodály concept"—it knows, understands and appreciates good music as its birthright. In the light of the foregoing facts, it is no inconsequential achievement that the authentic Kodály concept has been so securely established and made such rapid progress in the US. Ten years is a relatively short time for the inroads which have produced excellent models in public, parochial and private education, which have estab-

lished two strong centres of teacher training with current Hungarian master teachers on their faculties, plus an emerging group of American master teachers, and numerous publications based on American heritage to aid others wishing to learn and teach the concept.

#### *Models in Public School Systems*

Two models of Kodály teaching, as found in Hungary, but based on American material, developed simultaneously on the East Coast. The Kodály Musical Training Institute started both types of schools current in Hungary: schools where music is taught twice weekly, and also daily, in Boston, Massachusetts, and in Needham (suburb of Boston). These schools started in kindergarten and added one grade a year, for the purpose of developing curriculum and serving as a model for the training of American teachers. At first staffed only by Hungarian teachers, they were increasingly staffed by the Institute's own American graduates, who still remain under the supervision of Hungarian master teachers on loan from the Hungarian Ministry of Education. The other similar model was developed in New Haven by the Ringer Fellowship group; though it has not existed for the explicit purpose of training teachers, it has helped many teachers within the New Haven school system, and has collected American material and developed curriculum of its own.

At the same time, a strong model was developed in Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Pittsburgh, by Elizabeth McLaughlin Moll, who went to Hungary in 1967 and stayed two years. Today there are several schools using Kodály in the Pittsburgh area, and strong solfège courses at Duquesne University (Pittsburgh).

In 1971, the West Hartford School System Music Department asked KMTI for help and became the Institute's pilot city. KMTI sent a gifted young Hungarian, Klára Nemes, through arrangement with

the Hungarian Ministry, to develop a Kodály programme there. Today all of that city's elementary schools have employed KMTI graduates, as they have become trained, and Kodály will continue into upper levels in years to come. Another nearby town, Bloomfield, Connecticut, asked for and received a Hungarian master teacher, Mária Mihalovics, and also employs KMTI graduates. Other authentic models in public school systems developed in Westbury, Long Island (New York); Baltimore, Maryland; Seattle, Washington; and Ann Arbor, Michigan.

In parochial education, Katinka Daniel (who had been trained in Hungary but left in 1960) branched off from Mary Helen Richards with whom she at first collaborated, and established one of the first models at the San Roque Parochial School in Santa Barbara, California. After Sr. Mary Alice Hein of Holy Names College attended the previously mentioned 1969 summer course at the Dana School of Music and the 1970 summer courses at Esztergom and Kecskemét she broke her original connection with Mary Helen Richards, wishing to establish an authentic model, which she did in St. Theresa's Parochial School in Oakland, California, which is attached to the college.

Models had also been established in private education as early as 1968 at the Dana School of Music by myself, the Haverford School in Pennsylvania by Sean Diebler in 1969, and the Shipley School in Pennsylvania by Susan Engle in 1970. Today, in 1976, many more private schools have adopted the Kodály concept, especially in the North-east area. Thus the Kodály concept has already permeated all types of American education—private, parochial and public.

#### *Performing Models*

There are now several examples of the fruit of Kodály training—namely, fine choruses and choirs. Some of these preceded

the first attempts in public school systems and were trained by Hungarians who had left Hungary earlier. The first fine Kodály-trained children's choir was the St. Kilian's Choir directed by Árpád Darázs, former conductor of the Budapest Radio-Television Choir. Since then, those which have achieved a reputation are the Texas Boys' Choir, University of South Carolina Chorus, the Berkshire Boys' Choir and the Pocono Boys' Choir.

#### *Teacher Training*

From the beginning, it was quite clear that we could not benefit from Kodály's type of music education in this country unless we trained teachers. This has not been and is not now an easy task, as colleges, conservatories and universities do not take easily to change.

KMTI was the first institution for authentic teacher training in Kodály, established in 1969. It has a one-year course in the US, where teachers are trained mostly by current Hungarian master teachers; its two-year course sends prospective teachers to Hungary for the second year of study. In addition, in the summer time it trains 150 teachers from all over the US, Canada and some foreign countries in a month-long intensive course. Many of these teachers return for a second, third, fourth and fifth summer. Since 1971 all of these courses can lead to a Master's degree through the New England Conservatory of Music, an institution similar to the Liszt Academy; since 1974 six other institutions grant Master's degrees with Kodály emphasis in affiliation with KMTI. They are: American and Catholic Universities in Washington, D.C.; University of Connecticut at Storrs; Hartt College of Music; Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music; and Ithaca College, New York.

Other institutions granting Master's degrees are Holy Names College, Oakland,

California; and the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater.

The first four-year undergraduate programmes leading to a bachelor's degree in Kodály music are Silver Lake College in Wisconsin, and New England Conservatory in affiliation with KMTI. In addition, summer courses abound: month-long courses are held at Holy Names and KMTI; there have also been several KMTI-sponsored two-week courses at various colleges such as the University of New York at Albany, Hartt College of Music, American University, Ithaca College and others.

#### *American Materials, Publications*

American materials on Kodály could appear only after they had been tried out in the schools and have therefore been somewhat slow in being published. The first (besides the controversial Mary Helen Richards' *Threshold to Music*) was *Sight and Sound* by Árpád Darázs and Stephen Jay in 1965. KMTI published my *Let's Sing Together* for 3, 4 and 5-year-olds in 1971, my collection of 46 *Two-Part American Folk Songs* and KMTI's own curriculum text, *Kodály for Beginning Levels* in 1973 and Keith Knighton's *Fa and Ti Bones*, in 1976. Boosey & Hawkes published KMTI's 150 *American Folk Songs*, principally selected by Katalin Komlós and edited by Péter Erdei in 1973. Sr. Mary Alice Hein's *Music for Wonder*, Vol. I. appeared in 1973, Vol. II in 1975; Lois Chosky's *The Kodály Method* in 1974; Sr. Lorna Zemke's *Kodály: 35 Lesson Plans and Folk Song Supplement* in 1974; Sr. Lorna Zemke and Robert Perinchieff's *Kodály Transparencies* in 1974; Katinka Daniel's *Kodály Approach* in 1975; and Erzsébet Hegyi's *Solfège According to the Kodály Concept* in 1975 the latter commissioned by KMTI but published by Kodály Zene-pedagógiai Intézet). KMTI has also produced one film and several video tapes; in addition, both Sr. Lorna Zemke and Katinka Daniel have produced videotapes.

*Research*

No description of the Kodály Method in America would be complete without mentioning research done to prove the value and effect of the Kodály concept in US music education. Realizing the need for such research if the concept were ultimately to be accepted here, KMTI built research into its earliest plans for the Institute. Before the Institute was founded, Péter Erdei and Denise Bacon conducted informal research experiments in the Winchester Public School System where they taught before establishing the Institute's model schools in Needham and Boston. Before 1970 they invited Dr. Klára Kokas to set up a research programme for KMTI. For three years she worked hard with Dr. Barrie Bortnick, also of the KMTI staff, and doctors at the Boston Children's Medical Center, in designing tests and programmes which might test both musical literacy and transfer results into other areas of education. Excellent preliminary findings encouraged further proposals: one very favorable report was recently published in *The Journal of Learning Disabilities* (March, 1975). KMTI is now awaiting results of a research programme involving two kindergartens in a Needham, Massachusetts, model school. Another large research proposal approved by the National Institute of Mental Health is now awaiting funding.

Informal research has also been conducted by the New Haven and West Hartford groups; to date, and to this author's knowledge, the only scientifically controlled research has been done through Drs. Kokas and Bortnick of KMTI, jointly with Drs. Wolff and Hurwitz of Boston Children's Hospital.

The spread of interest in the Kodály concept in the United States has been little

short of phenomenal since the authentic concept was brought to the forefront of public attention through the establishment of the US Kodály Institute in 1969. In six short years, Kodály groups and associations have been formed in many parts of the US. These include various regional groups (MKMEA, MUSIC, NKCEN, etc.), which ultimately resulted in the formation of the national society of OAKE (Organization of American Kodály Educators). In addition, spread of interest in the US has led to formation of groups in other countries, such as the Kodály Institute in Canada, and last summer, to the establishment of IKS (International Kodály Society).

*Conclusions*

In summary, it can be said that much has been accomplished in a short time under difficult conditions. While the Kodály idea at this particular time in history runs somewhat counterculture in this country, it has had an enormous impact on American educators as a whole. Children are learning to read and write music where they could not before; teachers are excited about teaching music where they were not before; administrators are interested for the side benefits they see in children through increased alertness, concentration, reasoning powers and improved reading scores.

The concept has definitely survived the fad era which is the *bete noire* of all innovative ideas—it is here to stay. The implications for the children of this generation and the next, in fact for society as a whole, are enormous. If it continues on its present path, the Kodály concept gives promise of a more discerning, responsible and sensitive human being.

DENISE BACON

## DENIJS DILLE ON HIS COLLABORATION WITH BARTÓK

*Q: Tell me, Professor Dille, when did you get acquainted with Bartók's work, his music—how did it happen?*

A: When I was 18 years old—53 years ago. That was when I got acquainted with Bartók's music, that is, his volume entitled the Bagatelles. My piano teacher showed them to me, then played them and said: Here is one of the greatest composers of the future. I discovered Stravinsky at the same time and in the same way, and after that I found Schönberg myself. Outside of Debussy, it was these three composers I studied most profoundly in the course of my lifetime, I held them in the greatest esteem. In those days fewer people were interested in Bartók.

I knew that Hungary deserved particular attention for other reasons as well. . . It appealed to us Flemish because we once had the same kind of struggle for the preservation of our national language and our cultural independence. When these struggles took place in our country, I became to a certain extent a victim of them. That is, I was barred from the Board of Directors because I flung myself—well, if not in the political movement, then at least in the agitation for the national language.

*Q: How and when did you meet Bartók personally?*

A: When he first came to Belgium, at his first public concert in February 1937, at the Radio. I was asked to write the programme notes for the concert, as I was regarded an avant-gardist in modern music in Belgium. Since I had written the programme notes, a French weekly in Brussels commissioned me to interview Bartók. I called on him, and indeed the first step was difficult, because Bartók usually received people with distrust, and somewhat morosely asked me: "What

An abridgement of a broadcast on Hungarian television, October 21, 1975.

do you want here?" I immediately asked him a question concerning his technique, and he sat down at the piano and spent more than an hour explaining. . . To a person in the West the problems of folk-music are always incomprehensible, since in the West, for all practical purposes, there is no longer any folk-music. Bartók said the same thing: "You people in the West will never again know what folk-music is. You can't understand it, unless you come to visit us." When I came to Hungary the first thing I did was visit small villages. Thus I looked up most of the Rumanian villages, too, which Bartók visited, and I became acquainted with many Hungarian and Slovak villages. This was how I came across an aged peasant, for example, he must have been about ninety years old I guess. He was lying on a rickety wooden bed, under a ragged cover, a very poor man. I asked him to play something that he had played for Bartók. He said: gladly, and took his peasant's flute out from under his mattress. At first he blew it a few times; he said it wouldn't produce a sound while it was too cold. Then he began to play the flute and said: this was what I played for Professor Bartók, too. He played five or six songs this way.

*Q: Before Béla Bartók's first concert in Belgium you had already given a lecture on him on the radio?*

A: No, I only wrote a commentary text for the programme. It was also published in a separate booklet, it appeared in ten thousand copies and sold out within two weeks, it was that popular. Then it was issued a second time. Bartók earned tremendous, overwhelming acclaim in Belgium at his first concert.

*Q: When was that?*

A: 1937.

*Q: How did Bartók play?*

A: Well, it was fantastic. I had never

heard anyone play with comparable ease. He had an exceptionally light, delicate touch, but when a forte came, then I had the impression that the keys would sink into the piano, he crashed down with such force—although his hands, his arms were delicate and thin. I know, I saw them, because at rehearsals he generally took off his jacket and I just stared: how could this man do so much. His strength was unbelievable. At the same time he had a fault, of which he, too, was aware, as he admitted to me. He emitted hoarse sounds during his playing, and they could be heard at a distance of two or three metres... He played his Second Piano Concerto, for example, with incredible ease, I have never heard anything like it since.

*Q: That piano concerto is extremely difficult!*

A: Especially the Presto! But how easily he played it! Well, just imagine: once when he was playing the Presto, one of the most difficult selections in musical literature, isn't it?—he turned towards me and shouted: Scarbo! With this he wanted to show that he was just trying out the tricks of Ravel's fingering. I had heard Ravel play, I was acquainted with him too—Ravel had larger hands than Bartók. Bartók spanned ten notes, a tenth, where others grasped only an octave, eight notes. In his music we quite frequently find tenths, even in rapid tempo, because they were easy for him.

*Q: After your personal meeting you wrote your biography of Bartók in 1939. Before you prepared it did you speak with him about his life?*

A: Yes, of course. This was not actually a biography, but rather an introductory study, for his works. This was the reason for writing it. Since Bartók scored such a great success on the Radio, we arranged another public concert in Brussels, in 1938. It was primarily Gertler who organized it—he was one of the most competent interpreters of Bartók.

*Q: Bartók was already living in Brussels then?*

A: Yes, he lived there. By that time everyone had read my interview with him.

Gertler, therefore, asked me to introduce the concert the evening before the concert. I spoke about Bartók for two hours—and then on the next day I asked him whether he had heard it, and he replied: "my dear Sir, I congratulate you, they say the lecture was excellent..." I asked him what he thought about my continuing it, studying his works more profoundly, would he be pleased with it? "Oh, yes indeed," he replied, "because a poor book about me will soon appear, its author is Haraszti, and your work would compensate for it." Very good, I said, but please help me because without it I will be unable to write the biography authentically. "I agree," he replied, "you write it, and I will correct it." Thus together we compiled and wrote this study about his works. He gave me a great amount of help. And just imagine: he even kept the drafts we prepared in the course of the work. I learned about this in 1949 from Ditta Pásztor, his second wife...

*Q: You also gave a lecture on Bartók's crises.*

A: This lecture emerged from the material that I had compiled for my last book about Bartók. In my opinion a certain kind of—moral crisis began in Bartók's life in 1912. Personal problems also played a role in it and serious problems arose in Hungarian musical life, among Budapest musicians. Many among them opposed Bartók, they attacked him, or outright thwarted his undertakings. Bartók would have liked to form the New Hungarian Musical Association, as he was the president of the Young Hungarian Musicians. Kodály and many others were inclined rather to accept certain compromises, they waited for a more opportune moment. Bartók was incapable of this. Instead he withdrew from public life.

External circumstances were also a factor: the war broke out, he could not travel as he wished, they wanted to conscript him. And something else happened: in 1914 he happened to be in Paris making arrangements for issuing Hungarian and Rumanian records. It seemed that his plan would



succeed. He would have liked to obtain support from the French Government to travel to the Arab countries, but this proved impossible to get. Then Bartók went to the seashore, to the Paris *plage*, and one day he glanced at a newspaper on the table at his hotel. He learned from it that Austria had issued an ultimatum to Serbia, and he immediately recognized its implications. He boarded the first train and arrived in Paris just in time to catch the last train for Vienna. This was how he managed to avoid being interned in France. Meanwhile in Paris he lost ten of the best manuscripts from his collection of Arab folk-music. They were lost for good.

I searched for them in Paris for more than a month, but everywhere I was told, they're not here, they're not here and finally I got to a place where they said: yes, we burned them. They were never found. Unfortunately they were all burned during the war.

*Q: Did you consider this the first source of the crisis?*

A: I believe there were several periods of crisis in Bartók's life. In my opinion Bartók's psychological make-up must be taken into consideration to understand and interpret his works. In my lifetime I devoted a great deal of time and profound thought to the study of his psychological composition and I spoke quite often about this with Kodály, among others, to be sure I wasn't mistaken. For example, here is the problem of his Op. 15. It cost me ten years of hard work before I succeeded in solving it...

Bartók fell in love with Stefi Geyer\*... He sought a number of opportunities to meet her... Stefi's brother, József, was a professor of organ and acoustics at the Academy. Brother and sister usually took their summer vacations at Jászberény. Their uncle was an apothecary here. Bartók went

\* Stefi Geyer (1888-1956) was a well-known Hungarian concert violinist at the beginning of the century. From the 1920s she resided in Switzerland.

there on the pretext of collecting folk-songs, but he did no work, Stefi told me later. He would visit them every day and they would have a good time entertaining themselves. They played music, sometimes seriously, often only jokingly.

In those days Bartók was writing canons—very difficult songs with multiple voices. One day he remarked: Enough of these serious things, let's sing something more cheerful—and he immediately began singing a children's song, entitled "The Donkey Is a Stupid Animal". He used this melody in the Violin Concerto, too... nobody understood how it got there. But this is exactly how it happened, he even inscribed its date, in memory of that evening...

Bartók composed his splendid work, the Scherzo for Orchestra and Piano, in 1904, and dedicated it to Richter.\* I found the score in Bartók's legacy, but the first page was torn off. Bartók did this only when he wanted to destroy a dedication. The same thing happened to the score of the Violin Concerto. Its dedication was addressed to Stefi Geyer. But I have the torn-off page. And there is still another work to which he did the same thing, I don't recall which one. Well, each time he tore out the dedication page he hid the score as well.

It is incomprehensible that this wonderful work, the Scherzo for Orchestra and Piano disappeared... he never wanted to perform it. And he was always against having the Violin Concerto introduced. Instead he concealed these works. I appealed to him to explain why, you know, when we worked on the biography. I said to him: let's see, somewhere there ought to be a Violin Concerto here, I heard about it...

*Q: We must never forget that Bartók was a lonely man.*

A: Bartók was just never really capable

\* János Richter (1843-1916), world-famous Hungarian-born conductor. He conducted the Vienna Philharmonic, the Wagner performances at Bayreuth, the Covent Garden operas and the Halle Orchestra in Manchester.

of conveying his emotions. You will not find a single letter in which his feelings are expressed. Only from a long time ago, perhaps—from his youth. I received a letter, for example, from Márta Ziegler, Bartók's first wife, as a gift. Bartók had written it to her a few months before their marriage. He writes about his emotions in 1909. He says: I already see the direction of my life, that in my life I will never be a success. Yet I am going to follow this road all the way, I am going to adhere to my principles, and write new music. Not music like the Russians, and not like the Czechs. It will be national music, but still entirely different. Do you see? In 1909 he knew exactly what his fate would be.

*Q: Professor Dille, you were the one who compiled a thematic catalogue of the works of Bartók's youth, from 1890 to 1904. This is a basic study which is important to Bartók research. Please say something about it.*

A: Bartók himself designated these dates for me. I was absolutely certain that anyone who was interested in Bartók's art would find a knowledge of his youthful works very useful, showing among other things how the young Bartók developed, how he began to compose, how he found his own individual style.

Naturally there is an enormous difference between the small works of his early years and those written when he was already at the Academy—the latter are already creations of the future great composer, who, however, had not yet formulated his individuality.

It must be acknowledged that Bartók's youthful works are not a bit better than the pieces of many other composers. But it must also be borne in mind that until he was 13 Bartók did not have a music teacher, he almost never heard any real music—at best Rossini and Hungarian dances, when his mother sat down at the piano.

*Q: His first composition was a Waltz in D Major. He wrote it in 1890 at Nagyszéllős at the age of nine. How can Bartók's development as a composer be traced?*

A: Obviously his development falls into various periods, until Bartók got to Pozsony (Bratislava). Only there did he begin to study composition, and his composing style was still rather conventional. Then in Pozsony he found an outstanding teacher, Erkel, who not only taught him piano, but also talked him out of composing simple fantasia music. Up to then that was all he did.

*Q: Excuse me Professor Dille, which Erkel was this? The son of Ferenc Erkel?\**

A: Yes, Ferenc's son, László.\*\* He lived in Pozsony. . . He advised Bartók either to give up composing, or to compose serious music. And since chamber music was much appreciated in Pozsony, the talented Bartók was quickly discovered there, and the devotees of chamber music invited him to join their performances as pianist. Then he began to compose sonatas, trios and other chamber works. Two years later Erkel died. Bartók was then 15 years old, and he went to another teacher, named Hyrtl. He immediately began to teach him harmony and form, and from then on Bartók's artistic development gradually speeded up. He composed four quartets in Pozsony—before he was 18 years old.

There is a so-called "Clavichord" quartet, whose piano part he played. He introduced its first two movements at a school celebration, but still this was already good music. Perhaps a bit in the style of Brahms, though in the Scherzo he went quite beyond Brahms: here he already made use of syncopated rhythm, which was truly surprising and unexpected from a boy of 16 or 17.

Bartók was also fond of this work, because he copied it and presented it as his piece for the entrance examination to the

\* Ferenc Erkel (1810–1893), composer, pioneer of Hungarian national opera.

\*\* László Erkel (1844–1896), music teacher, leader of the Pozsony Hungarian Choir.

Academy. Thomán\* wrote a few lines on a call card to Koessler,\*\* something like, I am sending you a remarkable pupil, he would like to submit his first works to you for your opinion. Koessler recognized at once that he had met a significant personality.

Bartók composed a symphony. This work was lost, it was really never found; he himself regarded it only as a school assignment. He kept only the Scherzo from it. He himself orchestrated and performed it, I believe, three times.

In 1958 Béla Bartók Jr. handed me a few separate sheets of music manuscript to arrange in some kind of comprehensible order. . . I distributed the sheets about my room. . . and began to study which belonged next to which. On the first day I found a sonata, on the next day I found all sorts of things. Finally I could put together the quartet, and something else, too.

In the meantime I found a page on which was written, "III. Scherzo." Fancy that, I said to myself, this must belong to a symphony. Later I found yet another sheet of manuscript, bearing themes of the Scherzo, and followed by a Lento. And with one section of the Lento was a finale, a few lines in fast rhythm. Thus with another page, I had already three movements of a symphony. Not much later, in about a week, I found the fourth movement, too. I went to Kodály and showed it to him. Ah, so the symphony has turned up—he exclaimed.

But only the Scherzo was orchestrated. I orchestrated the slow movement. Kodály said, very good. Naturally, he noted, the composition had some faults, mainly the fact that it was too long. He suggested I orchestrate the whole symphony, he in-

sisted that I do the entire work. I finished it in 1968. It was performed here on radio, and then in Brussels, too, it was played on two or three occasions.

*Q: According to my information you have in your possession unusually interesting records. I'm thinking, for example, of the recording of the Allegro Barbaro.*

*A: The leader of the Belgian military band was an excellent musician in those days, the 1920s; he was very fond of Bartók's music. He transcribed many modern musical works for military band, that is, a wind instrument orchestra. Among others Petrusbka and a piece by Ravel, then he transcribed Bartók's Allegro Barbaro.*

*Q: A peculiar idea: Allegro Barbaro for military band.*

*A: Well yes, in those days they believed this was some sort of barbaric music. Bartók himself initiated this misconception. When he composed an Allegro in 1911 he wanted to ridicule the French critics who the previous year called Bartók "a young Hungarian barbarian" after he gave a concert in Paris. Therefore as a joke he said to Kodály: I'm going to name this work Allegro Barbaro—although really it was not barbaric music, he even played it in a way Mozart might have done. We in the West understood it to be barbaric music. And if they had wanted to perform this Allegro in a really barbaric way, then music coloured by the clash of heavy cymbals would indeed have emerged from it.*

*Q: No doubt you are aware that there exists yet another transcription of this Bartók work.*

*A: Yes, a pop version. Here Bartók fell victim to his own title.*

He wanted some kind of mystification and he became the victim, because this is indeed barbaric, *the* barbaric music, and there is plenty of noise in it. I frequently heard him play the Allegro Barbaro, it was really fast. Not only is the tempo lively, but its energy accentuated as well. Bartók used accents of unusually great energy.

*Q: I have the music of the Five Hungarian*

\* István Thomán (1862–1940), Professor of Piano at the Budapest Academy of Music, one of its finest teachers. His pupils included Bartók and Ernő Dohnányi.

\*\* János Koessler (1853–1926), German music teacher, Professor of Composition at the Budapest Academy of Music, 1882–1908, and 1920–1925.

*Folk Songs* edited by Denijs Dille. The introduction is extraordinarily interesting.

A: Bartók had the five songs recorded by Medgyaszay.\* Kálmán Nádasdy—he was Medgyaszay's accompanist—told me that Medgyaszay went to Bartók and said: Maestro, I would like to sing a few of your songs. Bartók replied: Excuse me Madame, but I don't believe you are capable of it. But Medgyaszay, a stubborn woman who usually got her way, did not flinch—instead she appealed to him: But Maestro, at least listen to me. Please be so kind—listen to me for a little bit. Very well—said Bartók, not particularly overjoyed, and he sat down on the divan.

The woman began to sing. After the first song she looked at Bartók, but he did not even stir. After the second song... again he did not move. Not after the third, or even after the fourth. He sat motionless after the fifth. Then Medgyaszay could not bear it any longer. "Maestro, I beg you, please say something!"

"You can sing", commented Bartók.

And then the five songs were to be recorded. His Master's Voice had commissioned them, and Bartók chose Medgyaszay as the singer. We never found the original text of the songs.

The five songs appeared in the volume *Twenty Hungarian Folksongs*, which we prepared for printing together with Bartók, but the texts of the five songs in it are different. Kodály often asked: where can the originals be? Haven't you found them? No, I said, nowhere, nothing. But then we have the records, I know from them that the five songs were entirely different. One day I happened to be visiting Ditta Pásztori, and she said to me: "Do you know these pages of music manuscript? I don't know what's on them." I looked at them. Well, they were the songs, but only sketches, because Bartók improvised in part, particularly in the fourth folk-songs,

\* Vilma Medgyaszay (1885-1972), a chanson singer of the first half of the century.

where there was a great deal of improvisation.

Q: Professor Dille, would you please be so kind as to tell us about the *Documenta Bartókiana*?

A: When I was regularly visiting Hungary and had gathered a considerable amount of Bartók documents my problem was how to preserve them. I spoke with Professor Bence Szabolcsi\* and said that a Bartók Archives ought by all means to be set up in Budapest. They asked me to draw up a draft proposal. I prepared it in 1960, and handed it over to Professor Szabolcsi. He then spoke with the officials of the Academy of Sciences, Bartók's family, and naturally with Kodály.

They asked me to head the Archive. I said I would be glad to, all the more since I would be retiring in Belgium in 1961. Therefore I would be pleased to undertake it if they wanted me to, and I could assume the office a year later. They agreed, and I came here in 1961. By that time we had such a large collection of documentary material that I thought: since everybody cannot come to Budapest, we have to dispell certain legends before a larger public, and so our first task was to publish the most important documents we had. Thus we prepared a few thick volumes... and I believe my successor has already compiled two more, which will soon appear.

Q: In one of the volumes you published letters written to Bartók.

A: Yes, there was a wide choice—at least two thousand letters, Bartók carefully preserved everything. I selected 175 of them, and not even the most interesting ones, by the way, but I wanted to show who wrote to Bartók, what kind of letters he read. Some of them came from children about 10 years old who wrote, for example: "Maestro, we play your pieces written *For Children*, they are so beautiful!" and others

\* Bence Szabolcsi (1899-1973), musicologist and Professor of the Budapest Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music. He was a member of the NHQ Editorial Board.

like that. There were letters with an insulting tone, and others that asked him for all kinds of things.

*Q: Among the letters that Bartók wrote I looked for one addressed to Göring but I did not find it.*

A: Because such a letter never existed. Certain journalists must have invented the story. The letter never existed. Bartók could never have written it. He never wrote to any officials in Germany, at all. It was a stupid legend, the creation of an incomparably stupid imagination.

*Q: Professor Dille, you related an interesting story to me—about Bartók when he was in Brussels and once heard Hitler's name. . .*

A: Ah, yes. It was enough only to mention the name of Hitler to him and he virtually turned pale. He said he could not control himself, it made him ill. One day he happened to be rehearsing with Gertler,\* and you must know that the adjustment of the piano chair was always a serious problem. It was either too low, or too high, there was always some trouble with it. Finally we brought in a few books, put them in front of the piano and sat down on them. Fine, this will be all right—he said. At the moment when he finally wanted to get settled, Charles Leirens, the famous photographer, in whose home that rehearsal was being held, shouted: Look out, that's *Mein Kampf*, Hitler's book! Bartók turned green, he paled and he nearly leaped over the piano. We began to roar with laughter, but when we saw that he was almost sick, we were frightened and suddenly fell silent. Seriously, it became an illness with him!

He had a fanatic hatred of Hitler, of nazism and the regime. Nobody was allowed to mention these words before him. We corresponded in those days—and I knew he wrote more fluently in German. So I wrote to him in German and replied in German. Then one day he wrote: "I don't want you

\* Endre Gertler (b. 1907), Hungarian violinist living in Brussels.

to write to me any more in the language of Mr. Hitler." That was how it was.

*Q: Professor Dille, you have spoken to us about Bartók the pianist. Has the style of performance of Bartók's piano works changed since then? Are we following Bartók's conception faithfully enough today?*

A: I think this always depends on the performer. A few of them interpret Bartók's work most faithfully and authentically. For instance, György Sándor\* and Gertler, and then Ormándy,\*\* as conductor—their presentations are exceptionally authentic. Here in Hungary, too, there are many such artists. Sometimes, however, certain influences, misconceptions prevail, for example in the *Cantata Profana*, which generally starts off too slow.

But in connection with Bartók one should always take into consideration what he said towards the end of his life, namely, "This is nothing more than an indication,"—not his formal will, only a suggestion.

*Q: What kind of goals do you have for your further research, and what are the most important tasks that remain for posterity?*

A: I don't believe I have many more goals, I have accomplished everything that I could here in Hungary. We must not forget, I am a foreigner. What I regard as most important, for my part, is nevertheless a thought I once received from Bartók, a long time ago. When I asked him, Maestro, I don't understand where I might find folk-music elements in your quartets—because in my opinion the quartets are Bartók's most difficult, and at the same time his greatest works. In the modern musical literature, among the composers of our day no one has written quartets like Bartók's. Since Bee-

\* György Sándor (b. 1912), pianist, a pupil of Bartók and Kodály at the Budapest Academy of Music. In 1939 he went to reside in the United States.

\*\* Eugene Ormándy (b. 1899), Hungarian-born American conductor. He was a pupil of the violinist Jenő Hubay at the Budapest Academy of Music.

thoven he has been the only great master in this genre as a quartet composer.

"Well," he replied, "I am unable to explain this to you. In order to understand it you would have to hear the entire folk-music of Hungary, in the way that I became familiar with it, but do not try to learn it from books, from mine or others'. You must go to the villages, to the birthplace of folk-music. Listen to it there, or if you are not able to do that, then listen to the recordings made with Kodály in the course of our collecting tours."

At the time I thought he was exaggerating because we knew nothing about folk-music in the West, we did not even know what true folk-music was. But when I arrived in Hungary, I began to visit the villages. In those days few people had cars, but I had one, and I made my way to many places. Later I went to Slovakia, and Rumania, I followed the same road that Bartók once travelled. With Bartók the basis was always Hungarian folk-music—first of all its rhythmical aspect because the Hungarian musical rhythm, the *parlando* and everything else, is fundamentally rather rigid, and above it undulate the melodies, don't they.

For example, observe the finale of the Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta. You will find in it ten separate sections. This truly does homage to the folk-dance, whose basic sounds are found in it. We find also Bulgarian and other motifs, but beside it there is the Hungarian element. And later—at a precisely defined moment, at important points—this Hungarian rhythm returns again and again. This Hungarian rhythm is the basis of everything. It is the essence.

A few of the conductors, for instance, Boulez, are not familiar with it and so are completely disoriented. But if you listen to Reiner, who was Hungarian, he conducts it marvellously. I also heard Solti, he too. And Ormándy—he is also Hungarian, marvellous. Because they sense that the most important moment is always the appearance of the Hungarian rhythm, that's what has to be

watched. It is like a bridge over which one must by all means cross again and again.

*Q: These, therefore, are our tasks. In your opinion what is the significance of Bartók as composer and pianist in the music of the twentieth century?*

A: Since we have mentioned the piano I would like to note that throughout his lifetime Bartók was very harshly criticized for his playing. They accused him of having a dry style, that he practically bombards the piano, etc. In my opinion, today the technique of piano playing is changing from every standpoint because they play now entirely differently from those days. Bartók also followed in the Liszt tradition—in his day that was the example to follow. Today, however, the style is different, it is true. Well, as far as his "dry" piano playing is concerned, I think that nowadays every great pianist reaches this level. In my view, therefore—without this being conscious in everyone—Bartók established a school. Or at least he set a good example.

*Q: And as a composer?*

A: As a composer—well, every one of his contemporaries, including me and all of those who at that time belonged anywhere near the avant-garde, and today the well-intentioned, reasoning, true musicians all have to acknowledge that Bartók is one of the three greatest composers of the century. And all three, he, Schönberg and Stravinsky—I give the names in alphabetical order—represent a specific, pure trend in the musical art and musical conception of our times.

In Bartók we find the true, most profound human features. This is lacking a bit in Stravinsky, in whom, however, perhaps technique has greater perfection—a remarkable professional, a genius, Bartók himself told me this. In 1939 he stated firmly that Stravinsky was the greatest composer of our time. On the other side there is Schönberg, the great inventor, who disclosed the gateway leading to the future, and together with it all, or despite it all, composed wonderful music. I know many do not agree with this, but I

like Schönberg, I deeply admire him. I consider the three of them equally great. But if I have to speak of the human aspect I turn to Bartók, to the profound humanism which we find both in his person and his works.

Everyone must choose which composer he likes the most, but I believe Bartók represents the atmosphere of our times most perfectly, the atmosphere in which we live. We have arrived at a point when technique

has reached a perfection that is unbelievable... but at the same time this technical perfection threatens us. All of us live in this atmosphere, and we are already beginning to dread the future.

I believe this is the reason that Bartók expresses and represents most authentically the atmosphere of our age. He speaks most comprehensibly to the hearts of people today.

IMRE ANTAL

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## PHOTO-VARIATIONS ON BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE

At first, castles were feudal nobles' residences, fortifications or refuges. They were centres of power and pomp. Poets sang about them, and new dramatic works were performed there. When the castles were no longer inhabited, people who had never lived in them wrote poetry about them. These poets were inhabitants of manor-houses, members of the middle classes or even former serfs and villagers, inspired by trashy novels.

At first castles were the background for romantic blood-curdling scenes drenched in an Ossianic atmosphere, with ghosts that came at scarlet-grey dusk. Knightly glory, sinister curses bringing bad luck, family vices, intrigues and hunger for power, revenge, tortures and cruelties were the subject-matter of such novels. Then, all of a sudden castles themselves became the major character, the symbolic embodiment of ideas, feelings and thoughts.

The legend of Bluebeard underwent a similar transformation. Serious and less serious researchers imagined they found real models for Prince Bluebeard among the French nobility who, in feudal times, were famous for insatiable demands in love, an unrestrained desire for beauty and at the

same time for a magical power enabling them to bewitch and obtain those whom they wanted.

Among the symbolic meanings of colours, this charm was represented by a bluish beard, from which the noun "bluebeard" was formed and then elevated into a proper name: Bluebeard, the name for all men who are fickle, woman-mad and at the same time captivating. Whether a real person or not, Bluebeard became a symbol: sometimes he is the hero of staggering, horrible, gruesome romantic adventures, or of ridiculous ones.

The one-act opera based on Béla Balázs mixes the two symbols, the castle reflecting the soul of a hero condemned to loneliness with a heart full of secrets which in the end he cannot hide. Bluebeard is the plaything of destiny, a living labyrinth with mirrored walls in which he finds his own reflection as he wanders lost in his labyrinth, that is, himself. At the same time he is sure enough of himself to lure new victims, whom he locks into the cave of his soul. He then becomes a weak lover who cannot resist showing her the labyrinth. Much experienced in love and always a slave to longing and hope, he becomes wise only after he has closed his great lovers into the burial vault among the

flowers and thorns of his happiness, grief, his kindness and brutality.

His companion in this love adventure is Judith, the victim and fulfilment of his destiny. She wants to know the soul of Bluebeard, every secret of his past, as well as his feelings, sufferings and delights. After almost every lock of the castle had been opened, she demands to know the secret of secrets, the last door, although she had been warned that death awaits her behind that door—as usually happens in tales—but Judith runs the ultimate risk and accepts the fate of a glorified, deadly beauty.

To be sure, like any good symbolic story, this can hardly be understood by common sense and realism; to the extent that such tales are open to various interpretations, they provide a wonderful rainbow of colours and meanings. Still, the ultimate sense amid the confusing alternation of light and shadow is of a desolate and gloomy world.

And it is the beauty of this world that the young Béla Balázs wanted to show in his morbid formulation, "surely—it is death". The human lot is cruel, even the mostly glowing emotion must burn itself out; love is only a trickle that one day disappears in the desert. To face the horror embodied in inevitable ruin and loneliness is—artistically—the most courageous beauty.

As one of the outstanding composers of the Hungarian secessionist movement, Bartók was deeply interested in this peculiarly coloured world, with its motionless events and intense emotions. In particular its rough intrinsic nature and hard constitution most attracted the composer.

Surely, even Bartók specialists begin to recognize his most fundamental experience in a sympathy for Man, cast out and left alone in this indifferent universe, his passion left to die out, his very birth the first step towards death. Such fields he explores in his works on nature and night, his archaic and modern funeral dirges, his works of loneliness and complaint. Of course, it is only one side of the experience; the other is his daring

opposition to this force, opposing infinite vastness, and crippling constraints with selfless liberty.

Bartók used Bluebeard's Castle as a frame, which he had the strength and capability to fill with splendid music, while in his evocation on stage of the tragedy of human fate he even surpassed himself.

Bartók makes the opera both ancient and modern, a desolate torment that is swept up in the rising strength of his musical gifts.

So Bartók endows this work of folk-poetry with a deeper meaning and importance—deeper than that of its fashionable model, when the plot was emphasized. Now its natural richness grows still richer with the language of modern music, hammering and singing, coldly flaming and so full of emotion that one almost chokes, only finally to be sated in rest.

The same occurred in Debussy's opera, *Pelléas and Mélisande*: the dramatic tale of a noteworthy poet (in this case, Maeterlinck!) was elevated from fashion to lasting importance, by a composer of genius with the gift of poetic imagination and creation. Similarly *Prince Bluebeard's Castle* set to music became richer, more sublime and more severe. The flames of music enlightened the scenery of the legend, but at the same time reduced them to ashes by bringing out the essence which the poet would have liked to express, but could only really point to.

Its history is very interesting, for *Prince Bluebeard's Castle* originally caused an extraordinary uproar. In 1910 Béla Balázs might have written it directly in the form of a libretto, and a year later Bartók was ready with the score. Since then it has been performed on the most important stages and concert halls in the world. It has scarcely any plot in the general sense of the word: Bluebeard walks through the hidden rooms of his own soul with Judith. Once he buries his new wife among his former loves, he disappears in the darkness.

No doubt this is the reason that the early performances emphasized the visual





KÁROLY GINK: PHOTO-VARIATION ON BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE



KÁROLY GINK: PHOTO-VARIATION ON BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE

effects: the fantastic castle became identified with the soul, its secret rooms opening and closing, and so on, but later, the nearer Bartók's music came to the feelings and thoughts of our age, the more numerous became its concert performances, and the simpler the stage arrangement. Now the castle hall is represented only by high-rising arches while the openings and closing of doors is done solely by lighting effects, so that properly speaking the characters only carry on a dialogue. This allows the music to take its proper central place, as in any case it carries the real essence of the opera.

Other variations, too, encourage a simplification which bring the opera closer to the audience—pictures and text that can be read and seen; an unfriendly but realistic style that conveys a power beyond itself; stylized nature and characters, which still allow the characters to predominate; and even the stylized prose of basic directions, which also point only to the essence.

Béla Balázs originally envisioned opening the doors of six rooms: the torture chamber, arsenal, treasury, flower-garden, empire and finally the lake of tears. Having seen them, Judith enters the vault that changes Bluebeard's former lovers into mere memories: so at first sight the castle preserves only the secrets of the manly soul.

In the spirit of Bartók, we have the feeling that we choose four doors opening into the most significant fields in the indifferent world around us. The three not chosen—a lifeless rocky basin, living vegetation and streaming water—lead to the celestial spheres.

That is the direction in which the young soul seeks a way out, and if it fails, it cannot escape the loneliness of the human condition and must assume the mask of death.

These variations take us far from the text of the original, but, let me repeat, the aim was not to illustrate the work, but to convey its essence and inspiration.

DEZSŐ KERESZTURY

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## FRITZ REINER—AN EARLY BARTÓK-CONDUCTOR

Fritz Reiner was twenty-six when he left Hungary for good in 1914. During the First World War and the years following he worked in Germany, until he moved to the United States in 1922. To the Hungarian musical generation raised after the Second World War his name is somehow coupled with the notion of inaccessibility, as if Reiner were from another age or planet. However, as Bartók's letters became increasingly known after 1948, so too did the rather small circle of institutes and people who made up his *Lebensraum*, and among them Fritz Reiner's figure suddenly appeared in strong relief. What startled readers of Bartók's letters was not only the composer's regard for his former piano-pupil—at the time a conductor six years his junior—as an authority at least of his own stature; but also that the Bartók whom “nobody could help” and never accepted anything from anybody turned to Reiner with a request. . . . A few years after the publication of these letters the first music recorded by Reiner arrived in Budapest, further increasing our esteem and admiration for him. The magic of completeness, perfection, something never to be repeated radiates from these records. We feel nearer to him as his interpretations make him better known to us, but also further away as his achievement becomes unapproachable.

Three and a half years before his death, in May 1960, I had the opportunity to see him work. It was not a concert or an opera performance but a recording session in a suburban concert hall of Vienna, the Sophiensaal. Reiner was recording Verdi's *Requiem* with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra for Columbia Records. How well I remember the intense “intellectual suspense” (or perhaps, electric intensity) of the hall which had been converted into a studio. This suspense

came from the suggestiveness of this great interpreting personality, able to understand and transmit every sound, every gesture of an immortal masterpiece.

And the immediate source of this suspense? It was the eyes of the Maestro, which seemed to talk in their highly expressive and severe way. He had no other conspicuous features: he was shorter than average; he explained very little to the orchestra, he held to the principle that a conductor must express his ideas without words. His eyes were made even more severe by special, half-moon “owl” glasses. He conducted with a very long baton but with little movement. At the rare raising of the baton to shoulder height, the orchestra responded with an unforgettable, dazzling fortissimo.

His performance had a striking effect. Patterned after “absolute hearing”, it struck me as perhaps an “absolute sense of rhythm”. Presto movements written in a defined rhythm unfolded in an awesomely even beat without, however, falling into any kind of metronome mechanicalness, so the music could be felt coursing up and down. Besides his individual endowments, Reiner benefited from the heritage of Liszt and Bartók: a favourite Hungarian pupil of Liszt, István Thomán, taught Reiner at the piano faculty of the Budapest Academy of Music; and his last year at the Academy was spent under Bartók's tutelage. He studied Beethoven's great Sonata in C-minor and Liszt's Sonata in B-minor under Bartók. The inflexible rhythmic suspense of Bartók's piano-playing would later be felt in the way Reiner conducted Beethoven and Liszt orchestral works.

Reiner was born in Budapest on December 19, 1888. When he enrolled at the Academy of Music he had already conducted an orchestra. For at the age of 12, he organized an

orchestra at his secondary school and conducted Beethoven's Symphony No. 1 before a specially invited audience. According to himself, he never "learned" to conduct, at least not in a formal sense. As he expressed it later: "What I did, rather, was observe, as often as possible, István Kerner, the orchestra leader of the Budapest Opera House and the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra. His style left a deep impression. It was not any kind of choreography but a conducting style of fine, small movements, he was a fantastically precise man with a fantastic ear and memory. Broad, big movements were utterly alien to him."

Everything Fritz Reiner said about István Kerner was pertinent to his own conducting as well. But let us see how he became a conductor!

After receiving his diploma at the Academy of Music, he began his career at the Budapest Népszínház-Vígopera, along with his friend Leó Weiner, who was later awarded the Coolidge Prize as the famous professor of several generations of Hungarian chamber-music artists. Together they helped stage *The Dancing Hussars*, the first theatrical work of their mutual friend Albert Szirmai. Szirmai later became an operetta composer renowned in Europe and George Gershwin's confidant and adviser. Weiner coached Reiner conducted. . . Together they studied Bizet, who was to both of them one of the greatest composers in the history of music. One evening the conductor of the Carmen performance at the Budapest Népszínház-Vígopera suddenly fell ill and Reiner deputized for him without a single rehearsal. His success was enormous. And so began Reiner's conducting career.

His admiration for Bizet's *Carmen* never flagged. He made the most beautiful, sweeping, impassioned and lively recording of it, which also managed to capture an authentic atmosphere.

In 1910 he went to Ljubljana as a conductor. At his début he conducted Smetana's opera, *Dalibor*. His work here was both in-

teresting and varied, especially considering that the orchestra had only 30 members and a single cellist. A year later he was engaged by the Budapest Népopera. His name here is associated with an event in musical history. On January 1, 1914—as soon as the copyright of Wagner's work had expired—he was the first to conduct *Parsifal* in Europe, following the performance in Bayreuth. The daily *Magyar Estilap* commemorated the last great musical event before the war in a page-and-a-half report.

According to the paper, "Frigyes Reiner, the brilliant young musician, accomplished an excellent piece of work by rehearsing this very difficult opera and one must write of him with the highest praise." He was then 25 years old!

In May, 1914 he succeeded to Richard Wagner's former post as "royal Saxon orchestra conductor" in Dresden. This position secured him the entire Wagner repertory. And here too, he became acquainted with Richard Strauss's music, conducting his operas *Salome* and *Elektra* and also Bizet's *Carmen*. As the conductor of the Staatskapelle he also did a number of Strauss's symphonic works, evoking the liveliness of a Strauss orchestra with a restricted passion, an enrapturing accuracy, which always captured the sweeping impulse of the young Strauss's orchestral works.

In 1922, Reiner went to the United States, where he first worked with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. Overcoming great resistance from both the audience and critics, he introduced modern works, including those of Stravinsky, Hindemith and Bartók. He conducted the first American performances of Bartók's two orchestral suites and the Dance suite. In 1931 he went to Philadelphia as professor in the conducting department of the Curtis Institute. It is perhaps sufficient to name Walter Handel and Leonard Bernstein as his pupils there. In the meantime he also conducted at the Philadelphia Academy of Music and was guest conductor in New York, Boston, San

Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Rome, London, the Milano Scala, Salzburg and Lausanne. He worked with the world's greatest soloists including Jasha Heifetz, Arthur Rubinstein, Vladimir Horowitz, Nathan Milstein, Béla Bartók and Pablo Casals.

From 1939 to 1948 he was music director in Pittsburgh. This period was followed by five very fruitful years in New York as conductor of the Metropolitan Opera House, where he conducted 113 performances till 1953, among them Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*, *Tristan and Isolde*, *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*, Bizet's *Carmen*, *Salome*, *Elektra* and the *Rosenkavalier* by Strauss. He was the first in the United States to conduct Stravinsky's opera *Rake's Progress*. And he introduced the compositions of Leó Weiner, an important contemporary of Bartók and Kodály. Young Giancarlo Menotti's first stage work, *Amelia Goes to the Ball*, had its world première and became a success under his baton.

From 1953 he was the conductor of the Chicago Symphonic Orchestra. The orchestra had a long tradition, as the third oldest in the United States, but when Reiner took it over, its place among American orchestras was not a distinguished one. Under his leadership it became one of the finest in the world. Reiner was also a great educator,

a severe and awesome teacher, producing a result that was always apparent.

After a ten-year break he returned to the Metropolitan Opera House in 1963, where he prepared the revival of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*. He did not live to conduct the first night, for he fell ill during the rehearsals and died on November 16 at the Mount Sinai Hospital in New York.

He remained loyal to Bartók till the end, introducing his compositions to the American public, conducting his Piano Concerto No. 1 at the première in the United States instead of Mengelberg, introducing Bartók as a pianist to a public which was not enthusiastic about new music. In 1943, he conducted the world première of the Concerto for two Pianos, Percussion Instruments and Orchestra, written from the Sonata for two Pianos. After the composer's death Reiner conducted the recording of three Bartók compositions, the Concerto for Orchestra, Hungarian Sketches as well as Music for String Instruments, Percussion and Celesta, the outstanding masterpieces of the Bartók discography. These records bear witness to the superb accuracy, excellent sense of colour, atmosphere-evoking force and fascinating rhythmic intensity of Fritz Reiner's work. While a humble follower of the Liszt and Bartók school, this great conductor also inspired a school of contemporary music which remains a monument to him.

FERENC BÓNIS

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

I read with interest the article on "The Kodály Method in America," written by Dr. Klára Kokas, which appeared in your Autumn 1975 issue (No. 59.) Dr. Kokas is our Hungarian Research Consultant, and one of the major contributors to the work of our Institute in this country. In this connection, I would like to make a few comments about Kodály in America which are not covered in this article.

We are very proud of our Institute, the objective of which is to adapt Hungarian methods of music education to the U.S. Mrs. Sarolta Kodály helped to plan our academic program, visits us regularly, and is an honorary member of our Board of Directors. In addition, we have a close relationship with the new Kodály Institute in Kecskemét which has the strong support of Mrs. Kodály. All of our own two-year students take their second year of training at the Institute in Kecskemét.

Our Institute was founded in 1969, and we have always had master teachers on our staff, brought directly from Hungary with the cooperation of the Hungarian Ministry of Education. Their help in training our American teachers according to the highest Kodály standards has been of inestimable value. These Hungarians have not only taught our teacher-trainees at the Institute, but also have taught side by side with the American teachers in the classroom, so that we could develop model schools for other American teachers to observe, and for curriculum development.

I wish to stress this aspect of our work, because we have pride in the calibre of our American teachers, and feel that it is important for your readers to know that we are committed to maintaining the high standards of Kodály teaching which they reflect.

A second part of our work in teacher training is our summer course which is held

in Wellesley, Massachusetts. It accommodates 150 music teachers annually, who come from all over the United States to attend. In 1976 there will be seven Hungarians on the teaching staff of the summer course. They are a vitally important part of our program.

Through our Institute's courses, since 1970 we have made possible the training of over four hundred music teachers, who teach the Kodály concept in their classrooms.

Another important aspect of our work has been our curriculum development. Again, working with teachers from Hungary, we developed and published a Kodály curriculum for Beginning Levels based on American materials. In 1974, "150 American Folk Songs" was published. It was edited by the Institute's staff under Péter Erdei, Director of the Institute at Kecskemét.

In summing up, we recognize the excellence of many Kodály programs throughout the world, and feel that there are many in the United States which can be counted among the finest of these.

*Howard M. Turner, jr.*

President,

Kodály Musical Training Institute  
Wellesley, Massachusetts

U.S.A.

Sir,

I have been reading NHQ with great interest and do realize with surprise that up till now I really knew so little about the fascinating literary and cultural scene of new Hungary. Every issue of your Quarterly is a mine of information and a veritable feast to a person like me who lives at a great distance but feels closer while going through the pages of your Quarterly. Looking forward, as always, to the next issue of your Journal.

*Dr Jagannath Chakravorty*

Department of English

Jadavpur University

Calcutta

India

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

ANTAL, Imre (b. 1935). Radio and TV broadcaster, a concert pianist by training.

BACON, Denise. Director of the Kodály Musical Training Institute (USA). Awarded Braitmayer Fellowship for study in Hungary 1967-68. Founded U.S. Kodály Institute in 1969 through Ford Foundation grant. Soloist Diploma (piano), Longy School of Music; Bachelor's and Master's degrees from New England Conservatory of Music (Boston). Author of several articles, composer and arranger. Publications: "Let's Sing Together" for 3, 4 and 5 year olds: "46 Two Part American Folk Songs." Brought 22 American children to Budapest to make the film "Let's Sing Together"; Gábor Takács, MAFILM, 1970. Speaker at first Hungarian music conference at Győr, 1970. Visits Hungary regularly to see diploma students of U.S. Kodály Institute who spend their second year at the Kodály Zenepedagógiai Intézet in Kecskemét.

BART, István (b. 1944). Translator of English and American fiction, an editor at Europa Publishing House in Budapest. Regularly reviews periodicals for NHQ. See Nos. 58, 59, 60, 61, 62.

BERECZ, János (b. 1930). Head of the Department of Foreign Relations at the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, a historian by training. See "European Security and the Role of Public Opinion," No. 53, "World Peace Congress in Moscow," No. 54, "The Class Content of Peaceful Coexistence", No. 58.

BOGNÁR, József (b. 1917). Economist, M.P., member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Heads the Institute on World Economy of the Academy. Member of the Editorial Board of, as well as a frequent contributor to, NHQ. See "Economic Growth and the Quality of Life", No. 48, "Economic

Objectives in an Interdependent World" No. 49, "The Changing World through Hungarian Eyes" No. 53, "New Forces in the International Economy", No. 58, and "Changes in the World Economy and Hungarian Economic Policy" No. 62.

BÓNIS, Ferenc (b. 1932). Professor of Musicology at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest. Heads the music department for the young at Hungarian Radio and Television. His main field is the history of Hungarian music. Recently published works: *Bartók und der Verbunkos* (1970), *Béla Bartók, His Life in Pictures and Documents*, (1972 in English.) See "Bartók and Wagner" in No. 34, "Meeting Ansermet" in No. 36, and "The Magnum Opus of Bence Szabolcsi" in No. 53.

DÉVÉNYI, Iván (b. 1929). Art critic and teacher. His main interest is twentieth century Hungarian art. Has published books on the painters Lajos Tihanyi and Károly Kernstok. See "The Unfaithful Faithfulness of Jenő Gadányi," No. 60.

FEKETE, János (b. 1918). Economist, Vice President of the Hungarian National Bank, in charge of international operations. Has published numerous papers on Hungarian and international monetary problems. See also "Credit and Foreign Exchange Policy in Hungary," No. 50, "Inflation and the International Monetary System," No. 55, and "East-West Economic Relations: A Re-appraisal," No. 59.

FERENCZI, László (b. 1937). Literary historian, on the staff of the Institute of Literary History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Regularly reviews poetry for this journal.

FRANK, János (b. 1925). Art historian, one of our regular art critics.



HORLER, Miklós (b. 1923). Architect, a graduate of the Budapest University of Technology. Heads a department at the National Inspectorate of Historical Monuments. Member of the Hungarian National Committee of ICOMOS, and the Historical and Theoretical Committee of Architecture of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Published a topography of Budapest Monuments in two volumes, as well as a number of studies on this subject. See "Protection of Historical Monuments," in No. 46.

HORVÁTH, György (b. 1941) One of the art critics of this review.

ILLYÉS, Gyula (b. 1902). Poet, playwright, essayist, translator. See poems in Nos. 35, 37, 46, 48, 56. Hungarian titles of his poems in this issue: *Milyen bamar; Panaszdal a szolipszizmusról; Öt éve. . .; Az élet fordulóján; A Sancta Marián; Dölt vitorla; Lemez-zene közben.*

IMRE, Samu (b. 1917). Linguist. Graduated from Debrecen University. Senior research fellow at the Institute of Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. His main field of research is the Hungarian language in the 15th and 16th centuries.

ISZLAI, Zoltán (b. 1933). Critic, on the staff of *Élet és Irodalom*, a literary weekly. Graduated from Eötvös University, Budapest, in Hungarian and librarianship, was editor of *Új könyvek*, a journal for libraries. Has published two volumes of poetry, and two volumes of short stories.

KERESZTÚRY, Dezső (b. 1904). Poet, literary historian, essayist, member of the Editorial Board of this review, a former Minister of Education. Has published books of poems, a collection of essays, a life of János Arany, the 19th century Hungarian poet, as well as translations from German poets. See "A Gift and a Challenge," No. 53, and "Discovering Small Finno-Ugrian Peoples' Literatures," No. 61.

LÁZÁR, István (b. 1933). Journalist, on the staff of the Budapest monthly *Valóság*. Author of three books and numerous TV documentaries. See interviews with Deputy Premier István Huszár, No. 61, and Emil Schultheisz, Minister of Health, No. 62.

LIPSIUS, Frank (b. 1947). American journalist, on the staff of this review. A graduate of Cornell and Cambridge, his biography of Alexander the Great was published in 1974 by Saturday Review Dutton in the US, and Weidenfeld and Nicolson in Britain. See "Rescuing the Classical Repertoire," No. 59, and "Hungary in 1776," No. 62.

McROBBIE, Kenneth (b. 1929). Poet, Professor of French History at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada. Formerly edited *Mosaic*, a quarterly journal for the comparative study of literatures and ideas, published by the University. Has translated verse from the Hungarian for a number of years. Oxford University Press published his translations of Ferenc Juhász's poems in 1970. See his review "The Poems of Endre Ady: Something from Nothing," No. 42.

NAGY, Zoltán (b. 1944). One of the regular art critics of this review.

OSZTOVICS, Levente (b. 1940). Critic, playreader for the Petőfi Theatre in Veszprém. Heads the Anglo-American section at Európa Publishing house specializing in foreign literature in translation. See "Some Leftovers and a Remarkable New Play," No. 61.

RÁKOSY, Gergely (b. 1924). Novelist. Graduated from the University of Agriculture.

RIEGEL, O. W. is a farmer, writer, and Professor Emeritus of Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia. He was Cultural Attaché with the American mission

in Budapest in 1945-1946, and has visited Hungary several times since then. He lives in the Valley of Virginia.

RUZSICZKY, Éva. Senior research fellow at the Institute for Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Graduated from Eötvös University in Hungarian and German. Main fields: synonyms, lexicography and literary style, on which she has published papers in scholarly journals.

SCHOENMAN, Theodore (b. 1903) Hungarian-American of Hungarian birth. Was forced to seek political refuge in Paris in 1919. Studied cellulose chemistry. Following his retirement in 1966, he worked for years as West Coast Director of Studies in the Third World Foundation. In collaboration with Helen Benedek Schoenman, shared a lifelong interest in the exploits of those political refugees of the 1848 Hungarian War of Independence who went to America in the years preceding the Civil War. The Schoenmans are preparing John Xantus's "Travels in Southern California" for publication in 1976 (Wayne State University Press.) Another book by Xantus, "Letters from North America," appeared in their translation in 1975.

TORNAL, József (b. 1927). Poet, translator, our regular film reviewer. Hungarian titles of his poems in this issue: *At kell adnod; Mondjuk a könyörgést; Meghalni valamiért*. See other poems in Nos. 38, 61.

THURZÓ, Gábor (b. 1912). Novelist, playwright. Author of more than two dozen novels, collections of short stories, as well as film and television scripts and plays for the stage. Recently he wrote the script,

based on his own novel, for András Kovács's film "Blindfold." See his story, "In the Lion's Maw," No. 10.

URBÁN, Aladár (b. 1929). Associate Professor of Modern History at the University of Budapest. Contributing editor of *Századok* a monthly published by the Hungarian Historical Association. Fields of interest: Anglo-American history in the 18th and 19th centuries, the American Revolution and the revolutions of 1848 in Europe. Published books and articles on the European revolutions of 1848 and on army organization in Hungary.

VÁRADY, Szabolcs (b. 1943). Poet, translator. Graduated in English from the University of Budapest. Editor at Európa publishing house in Budapest. Translations include essays by Susan Sontag, a volume of selected poems by Archibald MacLeish (with István Vas), and a volume of selected poems by William Jay Smith. Hungarian titles of his poems in this issue: *Székék a Duna fölött; Egy kívülálló, ha volna ilyen*.

ZELK, Zoltán (b. 1906). Poet, son of a cantor. Supported himself by odd manual jobs before the war. Was imprisoned and subsequently expelled from the country for his communist activities, returned and lived for years under an assumed name. 1942-44 served in a forced labour battalion. Began publishing in 1925. 1957-58 served a prison term for his activities in 1956. His latest volume, *Abogy a kötéláncosok* ("Like Tight-rope Walkers"), from which his poems in this issue were taken, appeared in 1975. Hungarian titles of poems: *Tengernél erősebb; Megkövült perc; Abogy; Só és emlékezet; Visszhang*. See other poems in No. 44.

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