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ON ARTICLES IN ***NHQ***

WITH A VIEW

TO PUBLICATION AS LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NHQ, P.O.BOX 3, BUDAPEST 1426, HUNGARY

George Schöpflin

Power, Ethnicity and Communism in Yugoslavia

The rise and fall of Yugoslavia between 1918 and 1991 clearly illustrates the proposition that states require a cohesive set of ideas and identities acceptable to the bulk of the population by which to legitimate themselves. In most cases in Europe, states are based on a single dominant ethnic group which frames the underlying set of ideas that provide the purposiveness that institutions need for their survival. Yugoslavia is significant because no one single ethnic group was in a position to act as the basis for the state and as a result, two alternative concepts were attempted. They both failed.

Nor were there any convincing attempts at constructing a state based on ethnic consensus, admittedly a difficult undertaking. The main contending national groups never sought genuinely to understand the other's perspectives, interests or aspirations. The consequences were predictable—under the impact of the failure of legitimation, the state collapsed, despite the growth of some vested interests in its perpetuation. In the event, these proved too weak to withstand the ethno-national movements that sought and found expression in the programme of separate statehood.

The first of the two attempts at constituting a state, inter-war Yugoslavia, rested on two not wholly mutually supportive pillars—language and monarchy. They both had antecedents in the 19th century with significant consequences for the 20th. The central concept of statehood that emerged in Central and Eastern Europe after the reception of nationalism in the first half of the 19th century was the equation of language, nation and state. Although this proposition was frequently stated as an incontrovertible fact by nationalists, in reality it was a programme. Indeed, all three elements were programmatic and ignored other aspects of the existing cultural and political order, something which could be said of many programmes.

The core of the language strategy was a muddled form of élite accommodation, particularly before the imposition of the royal dictatorship in 1929. It was

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muddled because it was intertwined with elements of hegemonic control. In effect, the Serbian tradition of conquest and expansion dominated the new state, and many in the Serbian élite never really understood the need for accommodation. In this sense, the suspension of the semi-democratic institutions and the slide into full hegemonic control proved to be a logical step for much of the Serbian élite. This outcome, however, was fatal, because it ethnicized the state in the eyes of the non-Serbs and eroded whatever loyalty they had to it. In this respect, the institution of the monarchy, far from legitimating the state, came to be perceived as alien and oppressive. By the 1930s, the absence of a shared political discourse placed the separate ethnic discourses at the centre of politics and these could never be more than *dialogues des sourds*.

In effect, both the legitimating pillars reflected this flaw. To take the question of language first, it was by no means self-evident in the region that a language was in all respects the same as was meant by the protagonists of linguistic nationalism in the West. The difficulty in Central and Eastern Europe was that, with the exception of Polish, none of the languages of the area enjoyed an unbroken history as media of high cultural and political communication. While many of them had had some kind of a mediaeval or early modern existence as the language of a court or literature, this had generally fallen into desuetude and they existed only as series of dialects spoken by the peasantry.

Consequently, the construction of a language as a cultural medium required an act of will, something that was undertaken by the intellectuals who were newly entering the political scene and thereby secured themselves a solid status and base for power. In this respect, the definition of these old-new languages—Czech, Hungarian and, in the South Slav lands, Serbian, Croatian and Slovene—was an act of rational construction, with opportunity for claims to power being smuggled in with hidden agendas. Nationalists might claim that all they were doing was reviving long-suppressed languages and thereby providing opportunities for the spirit of the people to find expression, much as Herder had proclaimed, but the way in which a language was defined unquestionably had implications for the size and population of the nation and state that these nationalists were seeking to call into existence.

In the South Slav lands this problem was acutely complex because, in strictly philological terms, using the spoken language on the ground as the benchmark, the entire Slavonic-speaking Balkans constituted a single language area. Slavonic dialects shaded off into one another, and by linguistic criteria no fundamental distinction could be made between the dialects that eventually became Slovene, Serbian, Croatian, Macedonian, and Bulgarian. When the 19th century intellectuals began their endeavours, therefore, their decisions were to have far-reaching results both culturally and politically (Banac, 1984). With respect to Slovene and Bulgarian, these issues were resolved by the activists of these proto-nations opting for variants that were recognizably different from their neighbours. Macedonian is a separate issue that only emerged as a key factor after the Second World War. The problem of the Serbian and Croatian languages, on the other hand, bedevilled relations between

these ethnic groups virtually from the outset. The essence of the relationship was that, in the 19th century, a group of Croatian intellectuals decided to opt for the particular dialect of Croatian (*stokavski*) that was closest to Serbian, in the conscious belief that in consequence, the groups would come to constitute a single nation and thereby eventually find statehood together.

The Illyrian idea

This became known as the Illyrian idea, which attracted considerable support from among the Croats, who found the thought of Serbian backing against Vienna and Budapest rather congenial. A minority of Croats, however, rejected this and argued that the Croatian nation was separate and different from the Serbs. This division of opinion was never fully settled, but during and immediately after the First World War, the great majority of the Croatian élite opted for Illyrianism and Yugoslavia, although it should be noted that Stjepan Radic, the future leader of the Peasant Party, rejected it from the outset[1]. The Croats had constructed an identity that overemphasized language and understated the significance of history and religion (Roman Catholicism).

The Serbs likewise came to accept the Yugoslav idea, but did so with a different history and with different agendas. This requires this further refinement. Under Ottoman rule, the Serbian patriarchate at Pec became the only Serbian institution, and the identification between Serbs and Orthodoxy grew very strong during the centuries. As far as language was concerned, effectively, the Serbs all spoke the same Stokavian dialect, but politically could be divided into two broad groups, the Serbs of Serbia proper and the Serbs of Austria-Hungary.

The former lived in the Kingdom of Serbia, which had successfully carved out its independence from the ailing Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, and added new territories, inhabited mostly by Eastern Orthodox Slavophones, who were easily integrated into the Serbian national ideal. The Serbs outside Serbia, the *precani*, in the Vojvodina, Bosnia and Croatia, shared the language and religion of the Serbs, but their politics was determined by different considerations—relations with Vienna, with Budapest and, where appropriate, with the Croats.

They identified themselves as Serbs by language, religion and history— the role of the memory of the glorious defeat at Kosovo, which marked the end of the mediaeval Serbian state and the conservation of this memory through the great cycle of oral ballads can hardly be overstated in this context. What the Serbs were reluctant to accept, however, was that other South Slavs, speaking the same language as themselves, could have a substantially different culture. There was a clear tendency on their part to see the Croats as Catholicized Serbs, who would return to Serbdom once the error of their ways was demon-

[1] Dragnitch, 1983

A Chronology of Yugoslavia's History

1918 Unified Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes proclaimed on the 1st of December

1919 First general elections held on whole territory of new state with universal manhood suffrage

1921 Vidovdan Constitution adopted by Constituent Assembly; Communist Party outlawed

1928 Shots in parliament on 20 June kill or wound a number of Croatian deputies

1929 King Alexander suspends constitution on 6 January; name of state changed to Kingdom of Yugoslavia

1931 King grants new constitution

1934 King Alexander assassinated on 9 October; Peter II succeeds under regency council

1937 Tito appointed to head Communist Party of Yugoslavia

1939 *Sporazum,* agreement between Serbian and Croatian leaders

1941 Regency and government overthrown on 27 March after acceding to Tripartite Pact; Peter II declared of age; formation of all-party government; Axis Powers attack on 6th of April; collapse, occupation and partition of Yugoslavia; resistance and civil war begin

1943 Jajce Declaration of Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia on 29 November establishes bases of future communist regime

1944 Belgrade liberated by Red Army and Tito's partisans on 20 October

1945 German troops surrender in Yugoslavia on the 15th of May; Constituent Assembly, elected from a single list, proclaims Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia on 29th of November

1946 First communist constitution adopted

1948 Communist Party of Yugoslavia expelled from the Cominform on 28 June; break with the Soviet bloc

1950 Self-management and non-alignment the distinguishing ideological marks of Yugoslav communism

1952 Communist Party of Yugoslavia changes its name to League of Communists of Yugoslavia at Sixth Congress

1953 Second communist constitution adopted

1961 Belgrade Conference of Non-aligned States

1963 Third communist constitution adopted; name of state changed to Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

1966 Rankovic disgraced

1971 Croatian nationalist upsurge, suppressed by Tito; armed forces emerge as a significant political factor

1974 Fourth, and most elaborate, communist constitution adopted, brings Yugoslavia near to being a confederation by introducing republican veto; Tito life president

1978 Collective leadership implemented at Eleventh Congress

1980 President Tito dies on the 4th of May

1981 Explosion of Albanian nationalism causes extended riots in Kosovo; renewed outmigration of Serbs

1983 First informal re-scheduling of Yugoslavia's foreign debts; 'stabilization' plan adopted

1987 Record number of strikes disrupts industry; demonstrations by Serbs in Kosovo; Milosevic in control of Serbian party organization; democratization under way in Slovenia

1989 Milosevic in control of Montenegro, Kosovo and Vojvodina

1990 Democratic elections in Slovenia and Croatia eliminate communists and elect nationalists; confederal plan rejected by Milosevic

1991 25 June Slovenia and Croatia declare independence; intervention by armed forces unsuccessful in Slovenia, leads to civil war in Croatia; mobilization by Serbian minorities outside Serbia

1992 15th of January Slovenia and Croatia receive international recognition; Yugoslavia formally at an end

strated to them. Alternatively, they expressed reservations about Illyrianism, which they regarded as an attempt by the Croats to denationalize the Serbs.

The strongest current among the Serbs, as represented by the great cultural innovator, Vuk Stefanovic Karadzic, was that all speakers of the Stokavian dialect were Serbs. In this way, there arose two diametrically opposed conceptions of the South Slav nation—the Croats' Illyrianism, which sought to include all the South Slavs while recognizing some of the differences among them, and the Serbian one, which was purely linguistic and ignored cultural, religious and historical factors. By mid-19th century, the Serbian state was influenced in the direction of expanding its power over all speakers of Stokavian, whom it regarded as Serbs. And this unification of the Serbs would take place under the Serbian monarchy, as the only possible counterweight to Austria.

The role of the Serbs of Croatia

The Serbs of Croatia were both subjects and objects of these processes. They looked back on a tradition of separateness defined by the Military Frontier[2], which was directly under the jurisdiction of Vienna, and which gave them an identity of their own. They were uneasy about the rise of Croatian nationalism and tended to look simultaneously towards Serbia, Vienna and Budapest, especially in the last years of the 19th century, when the Hungarian government relied on them heavily as a political base.

The turn came in the early years of this century, when the project of Croatian and Serbian cooperation against Budapest was born at a time of growing tension within the Habsburg Empire. Eventually this was to culminate in the wartime Corfu Declaration, as the basis of a South Slav state based on agreement involving the leaders of the three main protagonists—the Croats, the Serbs of Croatia and the Serbian leadership.

The new state came into being on the 1st of December 1918, and was based, as sketched above, on the principles of one language giving rise to one nation and the Serbian monarchy, which was now elevated to an all-South Slav kingdom. Indeed, the state was initially called the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. It was inevitably based on serious mutual misperceptions on the part of both Serbs and Croats.

Both language and monarchy fell into this category of misunderstanding, but this was exacerbated by differences of style and aspirations derived from different historical experiences. The Serbs insisted on establishing Yugoslavia as a unitary state and were impatient with any suggestion of federalism. They were able to write this into the Vidovdan Constitution not least because Radic insisted on boycotting the constitutive assembly. Vidovdan, St Vitus' Day, 28th of June, was the day on which the Battle of Kosovo was fought; its significance as a symbol of national affirmation for the Serbs was enormous,

[2] Rothenburg, 1966

but its adoption as a Yugoslav symbol was an ominous indication of how the Serbian élite viewed the new state. This emphasis on a unitary state was hardly surprising. Unitarism had been the key Serbian experience. By the same token, the Croats' political experience had been precisely the opposite—continuous argument with Vienna and Budapest from a recognized position of a separate political existence.

On the language issue, the new ruling élite was dominated by Serbs and Yugoslav inclined Croats (as well as Slovenes, of course), and it was decided early on that these two ethnic groups were in fact one nation and that they spoke one language, Serbo-Croat. The 1921 census did not ask questions about national allegiance and returned Serbo-Croat speakers as a single category.

The monarchy was, as agreed, the Serbian monarchy writ large, but with very little evidence that the King, Alexander, had any understanding of the need to appear in a different light to his Croat subjects. He shared the view of the Serbian élite that Croats were essentially the same as Serbs, and where they behaved in an unexpected, non-Serbian fashion, this was occasioned by ill-will or other deviancy or political disloyalty. This attitude was underpinned by the historical baggage which the Serbs brought with them, the idea that the new state must be strong, unitary, centred on Belgrade and run by Serbs. There was no suggestion of proportionality or any redefinition of the state ideology in a way that would satisfy the Croats. In fact, pro-Yugoslav Croats accepted this with reservations, not least because parts of Croatia, notably the littoral, were under threat from Italy and the Serbian connection provided a vital defence.

Croatian political culture

Not that the Croats were without baggage of their own. Crucial in this respect was their experience in their struggle against Vienna and Budapest, which had been legalistic and argumentative. The Croatian discourse was couched in terms of petitions, pleas, counterpleas and the like, which left the Serbian élite, to whom this was alien, perplexed and impatient. Any detached examination of the relationship between the prime minister, Nikola Pasic, and the leader of the largest Croatian party, the Peasant Party, Stjepan Radic, would leave the impression of a *dialogue des sourds.* It was as if the two leaders were discussing entirely different matters; the political process was not helped by Pasic's lack of imagination and Radic's mercurial, unpredictable behaviour.

The Serbs felt that the Croats could never be satisfied with what was on offer, while the Croats felt cheated that Yugoslavia did not mean the hoped for liberation through statehood, but a new semi-colonial dependency, made all the worse by the fact that the Serbs operated by a very different set of ground rules from the one that they had learned in Budapest. Nor were matters helped by the monarch, who intervened indirectly in politics whenever he thought that royal or Serbian interests were affected. Finally, the Serbs of Croatia were

initially euphoric, but gradually concluded that the new dispensation did not bring them as much as they had hoped. Matters were resolved in a highly negative way with the murder of Radic in 1928, actually on the floor of the Yugoslav parliament (he died two months later[3])—he was shot by a deputy who insisted that he could no longer tolerate the way in which Radic insulted the honour of the Serbian nation. The Croats took terrible revenge. In 1934, two Croatian gunmen murdered Alexander in Marseilles, where he had just arrived on an official visit, and shot the French foreign minister for good measure too. Before this, using Radic's murder as the pretext, Alexander had suspended parliament and instituted a royal dictatorship, from which the Croats felt themselves excluded. The agreement of 1939, known as the Sporazum, came too late to reconcile the two parties, and when Germany invaded Yugoslavia in 1941, responses from Serbs and Croats were very different. The former resisted, the latter used the opportunity to establish a state of their own. The event clearly demonstrated that the Yugoslav state lacked the support of the Croats, essentially because neither linguistic nor monarchical legitimation gave them enough of an interest to attract their backing, on the contrary.

Partisans and the war

The collapse of Yugoslavia was followed by four years of war. The war years were extraordinarily cruel[4], predictably so, in which the pent-up frustrations and passions of the interwar years, the sense of humiliation felt by the Croats and the sense of betrayal felt by the Serbs, were released in the situation without effective authority. Three main currents emerged. The new rulers of the Croatian state (known by its initials, NDH—*Nezavisla Drzavna Hrvatska*, or Independent State of Croatia) embarked on a policy of constructing an ethnically pure Croatia by genocide and many thousands of Serbs were massacred. The Serbs in Serbia rallied behind the monarchy, as represented by the Cetniks, while those in Croatia joined the communist-led Partisans. As the war unfolded, the Partisans offered the clearest and most attractive programme. In essence, they were successful in creating a threefold legitimating myth, that they were the only truly committed force dedicated to fighting the foreign occupation forces, that they were the true representatives of inter-ethnic peace and reconciliation, and that they would most effectively achieve the aspirations of the radical peasant masses, which had been largely excluded from the politics of the interwar period.[5] Neither the Croatian nationalists nor the Cetniks were able to match this dynamism and persuasiveness, and the Partisans emerged from the Second World War as twofold victors. They expelled

[3] Dragnitch, 1983
[4] Djilas, M., 1977
[5] Bicanic, 1935

MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS IN YUGOSLAVIA 1921-1981

	1921 [1]	1961 [2]	1981 [3]
Serbs	4.66	7.80	8.14
Croats	2.86	4.29	4.43
Slovenes	1.02	1.56	1.75
Muslims	0.73	0.98	2.00
Macedonians	0.59	1.05	1.34
Montenegrins	-	0.51	0.58
Albanians	0.44	0.91	1.73
Hungarians	0.47	0.50	0.43
Yugoslavia, total in millions	12.01	18.56	22.42

Sources:
1 Banac's calculations, (Banac 1948, p. 58)
2 Shoup (1968) citing *Statisticki godisnjak SFRJ 1964* p. 268
3 Ramet (1984), citing *Statisticki kalendar Jugoslavije 1982* p. 21

all the foreign occupation forces, and they defeated their enemies in a civil war. In 1945, they were definitely the masters.

The post-war order was consciously built on the proposition that the prewar system had failed, that a revolution had taken place, and that the new communist ideology was the wave of the future. The self-confidence and energy of the new rulers were unquestionably bolstered by their unshakeable belief in communist ideology and practice, viz. that class was invariably more significant than nation and, say, a Serbian worker could by definition not have different interests from a Croatian worker. Where a different national interest was perceived, this false consciousness could be corrected by agitation and propaganda, by resocializing the population, and by ridding society of its reactionary elements. Nationhood, in this belief system, was a bourgeois device aimed at dividing the proletariat and at preventing it from recognizing its true interest, viz. proletarian internationalism.

The other elements in the mix included the enormous prestige of the communist leader, Josip Broz Tito, who was of mixed Croatian-Slovenian descent but always regarded himself as a Yugoslav. To the Tito factor should be added the prestige derived from victory in the twofold war, and the associated prestige of the Soviet Union in a population which had been sympathetic to Pan-Slavism and tended to regard the Soviet Union as the revitalized Slav power. Among the Orthodox, this was enhanced by the traditional role that Russia had played as the protector of Orthodox Christians in the Balkans. The practical arrangements made by the communists derived from these factors—they established a nominally federal system that remained under the very tight control of the Communist Party. The underlying idea was that communist

ideology would serve as the unifying formula to hold the different nations together, and that Leninist organization would provide the cement. Consequently, the reduction of ethnicity to its cultural aspects was intended to be a first step in the direction of a political order in which ethnicity would eventually disappear.

The 1946 constitution was the outcome of this thinking. It made low-level provision for cultural rights, established a federation on the Soviet model, and sought to ensure the cohesiveness of the system through the political monopoly of the party. In relation to the prewar arrangement, it did set up the new federal republics with new frontiers. Serbia was divided three ways. Serbia proper was the largest segment and was populated overwhelmingly by Serbs, except for the Sandzak of Novi Pazar, where there was a local majority of Serbo-Croat speaking Muslims. The Kosovo had a sizeable Albanian population, which was still restive after the war from the aftermath of the 1944 uprising, which was put down by the communists. The Vojvodina was very mixed, with an absolute majority of Serbs, with a somewhat different tradition from those of Serbia proper, plus Hungarians, Croats, Slovaks, Ruthenes, Rumanians. The Germans were expelled, and their places were taken by Serbian and Montenegrin settlers from the impoverished regions of the south. In addition, the eastern half of Srem (Srijem), to which Croatia had a claim, was added to the Vojvodina. The Croats thus held only Western Srijem (Srem) and otherwise returned to the old Austro-Hungarian frontier, especially with Bosnia-Hercegovina, where there was no frontier change to speak of; in addition, the coastal area of the Gulf of Kotor, the population of which is partly Croatian, was given to Montenegro. The German-inhabited areas in Slavonia were settled in part by Serbs from the mountainous areas, including Bosnia. Only in Istria did the Croats probably get the better part of the bargain, where they gained some territory that could just as easily have been claimed by Slovenia. In one respect, however, the Croats made what appeared to have been a major gain. The plans to carve out an autonomous Serbian region in the Krajina were shelved, despite the fact that the Serbs had to make this concession in the Kosovo and Vojvodina. In the long term, this may not have been quite such a gain, as it gave the Serbs of Croatia a preponderant role in Croatia itself, which caused considerable resentment.

From the outside, then, communist Yugoslavia resembled a state based on élite accommodation with elements of consociationalism (non-majoritarian) built into the system. The mix also included a degree of territorial rearrangement and linguistic realism. The federal system was to make provision for the former, and the recognition of Macedonian, indeed its active promotion, corrected a major anomaly.

At the same time, the new structures offered important symbolic satisfaction to the various different ethnic groups who made up the newly constituted state, albeit both Serbs and Croats had to sustain losses too (severe repression of culture and history in Croatia, a redivision of Serbia into three units). However, the real weakness of the system was that it swept the ethnic issue under the carpet. Ethnicity was not so much dealt with as declared non-existent. The

MAJOR ETHNO-NATIONAL GROUPS IN BOSNIA-HERCEGOVINA

	1961	1971	1981	1991
Serbs	1.41	1.39	1.32	1.37
Muslims	0.84	1.48	1.63	1.90
Croats	0.71	0.77	0.76	0.75

in millions

based on Ramet 1984 and Andrejevich 1991

MAJOR ETHNO-NATIONAL GROUPS IN SERBIA
(INCLUDING KOSOVO AND VOJVODINA) 1991

Serbs	6.43
Albanians	1.69
Hungarians	0.35
Croats	0.10
Muslims	0.24
"Yugoslavs"	0.32

in millions

Serbs make up 65 percent of the total population

Source: Tanjug, 20 December 1991

MAJOR ETHNO-NATIONAL GROUPS IN MACEDONIA 1991

Macedonians	1.31
Albanians	0.43
Serbs	0.04

in millions

Macedonians constitute 65 percent of the population of the republic

Source: Tanjug, 2 November 1991

ideology of Titoist Yugoslavia, having for all practical purposes declared the issue solved (at any rate at the rhetorical level), found it hard to confront the issue when it reemerged on the political stage. The automatic response was repression.

In 1948, the new Yugoslavia faced its first major test. Stalin launched a political assault on the Yugoslav communists, whom he regarded as far too independent, and expected that they would crumple. They did not do so, on the contrary, they were able to mobilize support from virtually all elements in the country, very largely on the tacit argument that Yugoslavs had not fought for their independence in order to see themselves subordinated to the Soviet

Union. This was effective, but it undermined internationalism, especially as it involved communist Yugoslavia in a conflict with the fountainhead of internationalism, the Soviet Union. This conflict represented the first shift in Yugoslavia's ideology in the direction of relying on a form of nationalism, the ideology of the state as a state worth keeping in being for itself, in preference to having it merged in some kind of a proletarian super-state.

Emerging successfully from the confrontation, Tito and his lieutenants realized that they would need to transform their own legitimating ideology and, as much by good luck as by conscious planning, they hit upon the idea of a communism not dependent on the Soviet Union, something that was an epoch making innovation at the time. It boosted their legitimacy, especially when it was buttressed by self-management at home and nonalignment abroad. Both these ideas were used as differentiating factors intended to enhance a Yugoslav identity. As long as tight political control by the party—renamed the League of Yugoslav Communists in 1952, as a symbolic move away from Leninist democratic centralism, one that remained largely symbolic—was in place, ethno-national identities could not find any space for political expression. Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of the wartime killings, the strict policy of the party in clamping down very hard on anything that might remotely threaten its monopoly attracted a certain amount of approbation when it affected nationhood. The proposition that Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian and other identities should fade away, except perhaps as cultural relics, received a measure of popular approval (Shoup, 1968).

One move by the party, however, was to have far-reaching and ultimately fatal results, a classic illustration of the law of unintended consequences. This was the creation of a federal system. Initially, these newly established republics were no more then façades. Real power lay with Tito, his close associates and the party. Gradually the republics acquired identities of their own and came to see themselves as real loci of power. In the early years it did not matter. There were no significant differences between, say, Slovenes and Serbs, and anything that arose could be settled by Tito. But by the 1960s, this arrangement would no longer operate quite as smoothly as it had before. The

NATIONAL COMPOSITION OF CADRES IN FEDERAL INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS 1969 (PERCENTAGES)

	Sb	Cr	Sv	Mc	Mg	1
Leading Cadres	32	15	9	7	9	28
Professional Staff	73	7	3	3	9	5
Technical Assistants	78	7	3	2	5	5

'O' includes 'other', 'undecided' and 'unknown'

Source: Burg (1983) p. 113, citing Milan Matic, *Republicki i nacionalni sastav kadrova u organima Federacije*, p. 73

origins of the 1960s crisis was a seizing up of both the political and the economic machinery.

In a sense, the communist rulers of Yugoslavia were the victims of their own success. They had stabilized the country, created a system which had more than a degree of legitimacy, as well as international recognition, and they were well on the way to industrializing parts of Yugoslavia, in particular the northern republics of Croatia and Slovenia. A threshold had been reached in politics, economics and in society which would require a redistribution of power; how much, in what way and by what criteria then became a matter for debate. This debate was to give rise to the first really serious internal crisis of the post-war era, the Croatian crisis of 1971.[6]

The reforms of the 1960s

The crisis of the 1960s, which was to culminate in the events of 1971, was extraordinarily complex and involved argument from democratization, Marxism, socialism, nationhood, efficiency, and marketization. Its centre was the question of what kind of a state Yugoslavia was to be. No attempt will be made to disentangle any of this complexity here, nor any assessment of the crisis, only an examination of the way in which it impacted on the role of ethnicity and of the policies brought to bear on it. The key starting point is worth restating. All the participants, despite the subsequent rhetoric, started out from the assumption that Yugoslavia would remain in being as a state and that it would continue to be ruled by a self-managing Marxist ideology. The difficulty was that both these notions could be open to a variety of interpretations.

By the early 1960s, the Croatian communist leadership, supported by the Slovenes, but also by the liberal Serbian intellectuals, had begun to challenge the centralizing, hard-hat Partisan generation, that took a view of change as being something threatening and could always block proposals for reform by reference to the communism that it controlled. Indeed, a wide variety of interests could be hidden behind the façade of communism and by reference to the Partisan struggle. It should be understood here that the Partisans could hardly be accused of possessing a very high level of political sophistication. They had come from the villages to sweep away the old, corrupt, exploitative order, found a seemingly perfect recipe in communism, a tailor-made leader in Tito and carried with them all the baggage of the simple messianistic world of the epic struggle against the enemy. They were quite unfitted for ruling an increasingly complex society but were not about to yield power to those who were. Hence if the party condemned some manifestation of discontent as "nationalistic", they simply accepted it and used the tough methods that they always had to eliminate it.

The preeminence of this élite was strengthened by another factor that was almost unique to Yugoslavia in the communist world. Not only was the ancient

[6] Dennison Rusinow, 1977

régime discredited, but its representatives had very largely disappeared. They had died during the war, or had gone into exile, with the result that the new élite had a fairly free hand in determining the patterns and codes of élite behaviour, which they took overwhelmingly from their radical peasant beliefs and from communism. Neither predisposed them to patience, subtlety and compromise. Yet if this élite firmly believed that it was creating a new, anti-national communist identity, in reality matters were more complex. Whatever people's ostensible motives might have been, those affected by communist policies did not automatically abandon their ethnic identities, and a Serbian official would continue to be perceived as a Serb, however much he might protest that he was acting out of communist conviction.

Both Serbs and Croats have undergone the experience of genocide, in 1941 and 1945, respectively. This has structured their attitudes to the past and the present, in as much as neither is willing to make any compromise for fear that the nation will suffer extinction. This means that their minimum position greatly exceeds anything that the other is willing to concede or, to be precise, there is no room for concession of any kind. Trust in the other is non-existent. This is not to imply any kind of moral equivalence between the two massacres, only to explain the utter intransigence of both. The fact that 1941 was committed by a régime long since vanquished, or that the 1945 killings were the work of the Partisans, is irrelevant in this context. All Croats are tainted in the eyes of the Serbs as legatees of the Ustasha state, and all Serbs are guilty as the beneficiaries of Titoism. Besides, the Croatian Partisan contribution is perceived as having been ignored in the calculus of death, while for the Serbs the summary identification of all Serbs from Croatia as "communist" ignores the reality that not all of them were supporters of Tito and, indeed, that some of them suffered discrimination, whether as non-communists or as pro-Soviet Cominformists. Perceived genocide and similar experience of perceived collective destruction leaves deep scars and makes the communities affected ultra sensitive towards anything, real or symbolic, that appears to threaten their collective existence. Some of the behaviour of Israel is explained by this memory—the utter intransigence and refusal to base anything on trust or good faith vis-a-vis the Arabs. Analogous patterns can be discerned among Armenians against Azerbaijanis.

This phenomenon was particularly acute in Croatia, where a clear ethnic pattern was established under the communist veil. The Serbs who joined the Partisans to escape the Ustasha massacres automatically emerged as the winners in the postwar order and were highly influential in the Croatian party and the instruments of coercion. For them, these institutions were seen as a guarantee that the Serbs of Croatia would never again be menaced by fascist genocide, as well as of the success of communism through which ethnic discrimination ended. It should be noted that not all the Serbs of Croatia were communists, but the leadership was very strongly so, and was able to impose its will in the rest of the community.

Thereby they simply ignored the unarticulated Croatian response, which was an expression of an experience of frustration and humiliation and resent-

ment that Croats could not even be trusted to build communism on their own, but had to do it under Serbian tutelage. The fact that the majority of communists in Croatia were Croats did not disturb this picture. Nor was the Croatian view of the world helped by the widely propagated thesis about the "Ustasha nature" of the Croatian nation. For all practical purposes, any expression of Croatian identity could be branded and delegitimated in this way, regardless of the content and regardless too of other interests that might be served by such condemnation.

While in Croatia the Serbian minority's economic interests had merged with the structures of communist party power, in Yugoslavia at large, two larger coalitions of interests had come into being by the 1960s, both of which had an ethnic, as well as a non-ethnic, base. At this time, the economy was beginning to slow down as extensive resources were exhausted, the political factories—enterprises subsidized for political purposes, mainly in the underdeveloped southern republics—were proving uneconomic, and the shift of excess rural population to towns was producing unemployment or underemployment. It was clear that this system could not be sustained for long without dire consequences and, in 1965, the reformers succeeded in pushing through a major economic reform; they were opposed by the conservatives, who recognized that their economic resources and sources of power and patronage would be threatened if the reform was successful.

Reform, conservatism and ethnicity

What was striking here was the line-up. The reformers were mostly concentrated in Croatia and Slovenia, though they also had some strength in Serbia, whereas the conservatives were in the other, less developed republics. Hence the republican structures, which Tito and Kardelj, the Yugoslav party's long-serving ideologist, had intended to be nothing more than administrative agencies, were increasingly acquiring real political content and, given that the republics did have an ultimate ethnic base, the arrival of the ethnic issue on the agenda could not be long delayed. When it occurred, it showed that attempts to eviscerate the ethnic elements of nationhood, and to overlay them with an all-embracing Yugoslav identity, had failed.

Yugoslavism deserves a short discussion in this context. It was launched by Kardelj, who acted as a kind of ideological tailor for the Yugoslav party throughout his long career—if the party needed a new ideology, he would run it up; if it wanted it shortened, or a tuck taken in, or a turn-up removed, he would invariably oblige. In the 1950s, the need was for a justification of federal domination and Yugoslavism met the bill. It had several aspects—history, language, class, in all of which a single Yugoslav variant was distilled and then declared to have been the authentic version and imposed on the population.[7]

[7] On Yugoslavism, see Shoup, 1968

While the attempt to construct "Yugoslav" identity through the rewriting of history and the merging of the Serbian and Croatian languages were largely failures, it did work in one respect—the creation of a category of Jugoslav identity within the country allowed individuals to opt out of rooted ethnonational identities. This proved to be an option of lasting value for a statistically significant number of people (see Tables). Various individuals, who found it difficult to determine themselves as, say, Serbian or Croatian, could escape from what they regarded as an ethnic constraint and avoid self-definition by calling themselves "Yugoslav, nationally undetermined".

Those in mixed marriages and their children used this option voluntarily, but it was also subject to abuse. Conscripts, those living in ethnically mixed areas, who might be afraid to give their identity openly to enumerators, for example a sizeable number of Hungarians, could be put under pressure to declare themselves Yugoslavs. Professional soldiers, high party and state officials (see Table) did so probably out of conviction. It is, however, another question as to whether the category was recognized as authentic by all those professing an ethnically undetermined nationality. Certainly, once the civil war had begun in 1991, Serbs refused to to take Tito's "Yugoslav" identity seriously and insisted that he had been a Croat; Tito himself had always stressed that he was a "Yugoslav" and didactically refused to refer to his Croatian birth, even to the extent of veiling his participation in the First World War in the Austro-Hungarian army in the campaign against Serbia. Nevertheless, the category had some validity. In the 1970s and early 1980s, younger Yugoslavs from urban areas recounted to me with some pride that Yugoslavia was a melting-pot and that a new identity was definitely emerging.

Yet despite some fifteen years of socialization, this endeavour failed, partly because of its inherent implausibility, partly because of the memories it raised of the interwar period, and partly also because of the crass way in which it was enforced. The proof of the pudding became evident precisely at the moment when the covert ethnicity of the 1950s emerged into the daylight in the later 1960s.

The reformers discovered that, despite having the best of the intellectual argument, plus the windfall advantage of the own-goal scored by the conservatives when Alexander Rankovic, the federal Minister of Interior, was found to have bugged Tito's residence and was sacked, thereby removing many constraints on the political base was in the southern republics, fearful of the winds of market competition; in the armed forces, the JNA,[8] fearful of republican power; in the veterans' organizations, fearful of losing their privileges; and in the instruments of coercion, fearful of coming under direct political control. The result was stalemate, neither side was strong enough to defeat the other. In 1969, the Croatian leadership sought to break the log-jam by using popular support, which automatically meant reference to ethnic aspirations. They moved in the first instance against their local conservatives (the Zanko affair),

[8] Gow, 1991

many of whom were ethnic Serbs; the affair was automatically interpreted by the local Serbs as an initiative directed against them. This was true, but again it was partly ethnic and partly to do with power derived from the communist victory. The difficulty was that the dispute could only be argued out in the discourse of Titoism, which of course had no room for ethnicity.

What transformed the reformist-conservative conflict in the 1960s was that, for the time being, Tito was neutral.[9] This neutrality removed a vital curb on the Croatian leadership, which by 1970 was openly encouraging the population in its attempt to garner power. Croatian opinion, long suppressed and grappling with the burden of humiliation, both symbolic and real, immediately began to push for a restoration of its national world, especially in the symbolic realm, much to the alarm of the Serbian minority. This development could then be used by the conservatives to delegitimate the Croatian strategy in communist terms. In effect, there was a conflict of codes, with the ethno-national discourse perpetually denied legitimacy by those who controlled power and thus the language of public discourse in Yugoslavia. In a sense this was understandable. The moment that a communist ruler permits the use of nationalist language, his own credibility as a communist will be undermined, given the theoretical incompatibility between nationalism (basing its ultimate rationale on culture) and communism (on class).[10]

The Croatian nationalists who challenged the party leadership did so on a variety of grounds. What threatened to be the most disruptive, or was perceived in this way, was the question of language. As suggested in the foregoing, philologically there is nothing to differentiate Serbian from Croatian, and this was given a programmatic quality by the Novi Sad agreement of 1954, signed by Serbian and Croatian intellectuals at the height of the campaign in support of Yugoslavism. This proposed that there was one Serbo-Croat language which existed in two variants, each of full validity. But when the Croatian intellectuals began to inspect the dictionary of the language published in Belgrade, they discovered that words in the Croatian variant were frequently described as "dialect", so much so that some of them denounced the agreement and began work on the development of a fully-fledged Croatian literary language. An orthographical dictionary of Croatian was subsequently suppressed as a source of conflict between Serbs and Croats. The attempt to differentiate Croatian identity linguistically was a clear indication that self-definition by language retained its force as an expression of identity in Central and Eastern Europe, however artificial such initiatives might initially be. In the case of Croatian, the newly revived medium took root.[11]

As the Croatian strategy unfolded, however, the Zagreb party leadership discovered an unpleasant reality deriving precisely from this point. On the one hand, they were put on the defensive vis-a-vis the conservatives, given that it

[9] Pavlowitch, 1988
[10] Gellner, 1990, Szporluk, 1990
[11] Franolic, 1984

was difficult for them to ward off charges of nationalism in a system that regarded—and had to regard—nationalism as a most serious deviation. Equally, on the other, they found that, however far they might go in placing themselves at the head of a national-patriotic movement, they could never be fully accepted as the authentic agents of nationhood, but were perceived as a means to an end. They were always vulnerable to being outbid by those who were genuinely nationalist, and this was exactly what happened. Nationalists, unlike the Zagreb leadership, were not concerned with heeding the limits and contortions required of those who sought to enfold their national appeal in pseudo-Marxist language; they could appeal directly to national aspirations. This process immediately brought the key issue of communism to the agenda—a threat to the party's monopoly of power, a challenge to the leading role of the party. It was this development that finally convinced Tito to throw his weight behind the conservatives and purge the Croatian leadership at the end of 1971, threatening them with military intervention. Tito then went on to eliminate "the rotten liberals" from other republican leaderships in an attempt to return to authentic Marxism. This heralded a renewed Marxist attempt to control the ethno-national issue.[12]

Republicanization and the 1974 Constitution

So far this paper has concentrated on the Serbian-Croatian conflict as the core of the national question in Yugoslavia, but it is appropriate at this point to expand the perspective and to look at the issues raised in the context of other national groups as well, because they tended to gain increasing saliency in the 1970s, particularly as a result of the 1974 Constitution (another of Kardelj's excursions into the intellectual rag-trade). The new experiment sought to reestablish the central party as the dominant actor in politics, but is recognized that genuine forces were released in the 1960s which would require some satisfying. These forces would as far as possible be restricted to the republican level and even within the republics, self-management would be upgraded through greater power being given the communes (*opstina*) and the enterprises, in the hope that they would emerge as the true foci of power, loyalty and identity, thereby transcending ethnicity. The external limits of the system would be safeguarded by the armed forces, now formally declared the guardians of *bratstvo i jedinstvo* (brotherhood and unity), the code words for the integrity of the state against nationalist challenges. This political order was fleshed out by a revitalization of the secret police, the reintroduction of political criteria in employment through having to meet nebulous criteria of "moral-political fitness" for various appointments, the reideologization of education, and symbolic campaigns to reenact unity, for example in the numberless films churned out in the 1970s to celebrate the Partisan victory and

[12] Burg, 1983

thereby to reinforce the message of unity in arms under communist and thus anti-nationalist leadership. Trials of those accused of nationalism were particularly tough in Croatia, with long prison terms of four years or more being the norm. This was the time when Franjo Tudjman served his first prison sentence; he served a second one in 1982–1984.

The crucial unintended consequence of the 1974 Constitution was republicanization, a process whereby the republics increasingly became the true centres of power at the expense of the centre, something they were able to do through the introduction of the republican veto in federal affairs. By the 1980s Yugoslavia consisted of eight separate sub-polities (the six republics and the two provinces). The republican parties never lost control of their own *nomenklaturas*, but they were able to deflect some of the initiatives of the centre and increasingly they had to legitimate themselves through a mixture of self-managing ideology and the republic interest. This latter was a curious hybrid of regionalism and technicity, inevitably so, given the original ethno-cultural content with which the republics had been endowed, so that ethnicity, which had seemingly been buried by the 1971 intervention, returned by the back door.

The republican constellation was not what it had been though. By the 1970s, the great innovation of Titoism, the creation of new nations as a means of resolving ethnic competition, i.e. by removing the object of such contests from the political scene through promoting the inhabitants of particular areas into nationhood, had begun to assume a reality and acquire authentic support from those affected.

Matters did not change immediately after Tito's death in 1980. For a while the post-Tito leadership attempted to rule as if Tito were still alive. Various symbolic reenactments of his personal authority were tried and criticism of the late president was prohibited. Decisions were made collectively and consensually—republicanization meant the republican veto. But it was evident that this system could not work without Tito's authority, as the republican interests were growing, without there being any effective countervailing force. It was now difficult to avoid the conclusion that the institutional arrangement left behind by Tito was deficient not only in that it required a semimonarchical figure like himself to make it work, but also that the absence of either an effective all-Yugoslav identity and an all-Yugoslav interest made the problem of constructing a new political formula insurmountable. The process of decay was accelerated by a number of contingent factors. Yugoslavia's economic situation deteriorated steady, as it was ran out of extensive resources and the system proved weak in generating new ones; foreign loans kept the economy ticking over, but only at the cost of mounting indebtedness. Then, the party's legitimating myths were beginning to wear out. Whereas in the 1960s, the Titoist package of self-management, foreign policy success through non-alignment attracted a measure of support, this was less and less the case by the 1980s. It was much the same with the myth of the Partisan struggle; to a generation born after 1945, what happened during the war had little relevance. And the key proposition, that the communists were the most effective in

resolving the national question, was similarly under threat from republicanization.[13]

Still, some of the successes of the Titoist solution continued to hold. Macedonia was one instance. Before the war, the Slavophones of the Vardar valley were described as Southern Serbs, and the area was run as a de facto colony by the Belgrade authorities. In the terms of the language they spoke, these Slavophones could opt to become either Serbs or Bulgarians or Macedonians and, being Orthodox Christians, religion was not an impediment. During the war, Macedonia was annexed by Bulgaria and the Partisans, in order to mobilize support, promised the Macedonians that they would receive recognition as an independent nation in its own right. This move gave the Macedonians a vested interest in both Yugoslavia and in the communist variant of Yugoslavia that Tito established. Hence communism operated hand-in-glove with nationalism in Macedonia. Communist support for the declaration of autocephaly by the Macedonian Orthodox bishops (autocephaly has universally been seen as a mark of independent nationhood in the Orthodox world) was a good case in point. Macedonian intellectuals busied themselves with creating a new language different from both Serbian and Bulgarian and constructing a history and literature, again with considerable success, so much so that towards the end of communism, Macedonia was a stable factor in the Yugoslav equation, because their overriding interest was in using the Yugoslav state framework as a protection from Bulgaria, which did not even recognize its autonomous existence.

The evolution of a Muslim nationhood was a parallel and in some ways even paradoxical device used by the communists. Muslims of Serbo-Croat mother tongue, i.e. speaking the Stokavian dialect, and living in Bosnia-Hercegovina, had had a weak national consciousness before the war, and they tended to gravitate towards whoever was in power (before 1918, they were one of the bastions of loyalty towards Vienna). In the early years of Titoism, the communists did not really know what to do with the Muslims; in the 1953 census, the only category they could use was "Yugoslav", but by the 1960s, the category "Muslim" was introduced and, as a result, many of those who had previously defined themselves as Serbs, now declared themselves Muslim; some remained Croat. The net result was that in the 1961 census, they were returned as the largest ethnic group in the republic for the first time, at the expense of the Serbs, who took this shift rather badly.

On the other hand, the establishment of the Muslim national category did achieve a long term aim. It resolved the national allegiance of this group by giving it a separate identity and thereby ended the competition between Serbs and Croats, both of whom had entertained hopes that the Muslims would join them. During the wartime Croatian state, which included Bosnia, they were defined as "Croats of the Islamic faith". Both Serbs and Croats entertained

[13] Ramet, 1984

belief that at the end of the day, the Muslim would opt to join them. Had they been successful, they could have claimed the whole of Bosnia-Hercegovina on ethnic grounds at the expense of the other rival. This scenario was now bankrupt.

Yet at the same time, the notion of creating a nation on the basis of religious adherence, especially when it was promoted by communists, was astonishingly contradictory. It cut across the formal consistency of Titoism and weakened the legitimating power of its ideology, while it simultaneously moved ethnic criteria to the foreground of the public stage. This contradictory posture applied to Macedonian nationalism as well. There must have been at least some people in Serbia, Slovenia or Croatia who would have asked themselves why it was permissible for Muslims and Macedonians to promote their ethno-national identities, but it was a major political deviation when they did so.

Something similar applied to Kosovo, though with important variations. By the 1980s, the Albanians in the province had come close to achieving parity with the other nations of the country. This political shift automatically raised major and intractable issues, notably it questioned the tacit South Slav nature of the state. The word "Yugoslavia" means "land of the South Slavs", and although under Titoism a Slav identity was never an overt symbol in the legitimation of the state, it undoubtedly existed at the affective level. Besides, Albanian assertiveness provoked serious questions about the very deep-seated emotional significance of the province in the Serbian view of the world, as the cradle of Serbian civilization. Matters were exacerbated by the near-colonial régime run by Rankovic and the secret police in Kosovo between 1944 and 1966, which created far-reaching resentment among the Albanians. The disproportionately high Albanian birthrate—the highest in Europe in the 1970s and 1980s—pushed the Kosovo Serbs into a demographic minority, to the extent that many of them concluded that they had no future in the province and emigrated. Finally, the reforms of the post-1966 period, like the establishment of an Albanian-language university in Pristina, permitted the Albanian intellectuals to begin mobilization and to organize the population into a Yugoslav-Albanian national consciousness. In reality, there could be no long term place for such an identity in a Titoist or a Slavonic order.

The Serbian response

The processes described in the foregoing had a major unintended consequence—the rise of a Serbian separatism. The Serbs had seen themselves as the strongest pro-Yugoslav element in the country, but by the 1970s a group of Serbian intellectuals were beginning to question the value of this status. They argued that the Serbs had always made the greatest sacrifices for Yugoslavia, but had gained little from it; that as a nation they had sustained defeat after defeat (in Croatia, in Bosnia-Hercegovina and in Kosovo); and, perhaps, that they might now reappraise their support for Yugoslavia, certainly as

constituted at the time. This line of thinking was associated with the writer Dobrica Cosic and it found expression in the Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences in 1985,[14] which subsequently came to be perceived as having prepared the ground for Milosevic's strategy in the 1980s. Serbian separatism was relatively uninfluential until Milosevic took power in an internal party coup in 1987. Until then, it had had to compete with the remnants of Titoism, which enjoyed support in the federal administration (obviously, this justified its continued power) and armed forces (likewise); and also with a relatively well established liberal reformist current, which, despite the defeats of 1972 (the purge of Nikezic) still claimed the loyalty of a significant section of Serbian intellectuals.

One of the particular tragedies of the Serbian experience of Titoism was that it came to be identified with the territorial dismemberment of Serbia. A lingering sense that Yugoslavia was, after all, a kind of Serbia writ large, a poor alternative to Greater Serbia, incorporating all the Serbian-inhabited areas, never fully disappeared and was exacerbated by the sense of humiliation that Kosovo and Vojvodina had also been detached from the Serbian heartland, and that, in turn, was linked to a sense of defeat in the Second World War. As long as the Titoist order held, this sense of loss was not articulated, but with the decline of Yugoslav legitimation, it came to be expressed ever more clearly. For all practical purposes, the Serbs were suffering a "loss of empire" trauma at a time when the other national groups in the country regarded them with distaste on account of their unitarism and hegemonism (to use Titoist terminology). And this affective current among the Serbs was easily transformed into a political resource by those challenging the established order. The outcome was that when nationhood returned to the political agenda, many Serbs perceived it in strongly territorial terms.

The situation was thus complicated by the fact that the Yugoslav state was perceived as only semi-legitimate at best by the different ethno-national groups. For the Serbs, Yugoslavia was meant to be a compensation for the loss of the Greater Serbian dream.

In reality, many Serbs regarded Yugoslavia as a dubious construct, to an extent superimposed on the Serbian nation, even while for the non-Serbs, the Yugoslav state was increasingly an ethnicized entity serving Serbian interests, the symbolic "proof" of which was that the federal capital was Belgrade. Once the Serbs had entered upon this process of seeking their identity in territorial terms, there was virtually nowhere else for them to go but to define their aims in terms of the reattachment of these areas, i.e. a return to the "conquest" mode of perception, which had had such a strong historical role.

The year 1987 can be taken as one of the hinges of postwar Yugoslavia. It marked the moment when the republicanization process of 1974 culminated in an unbridgeable split on the future of the civic aspects of Yugoslav politics (as distinct from the ethnic ones) and implied that it would be increasingly

[14] Civiic, 1991

difficult to maintain the state as a single polity. As already argued, republicanization was initially kept in check by the federal party, the armed forces and to some extent the federal government; until Tito's death in 1980, his towering personality was more than enough to resolve conflicts, mainly by simple intervention. What he said went. Unfortunately, no one could succeed him, despite somewhat pallid attempts by the federal defence minister, Nikola Ljubicic, and the secretary of the party, Stane Dolanc, to don Tito's mantle.

In reality, there was a stand-off between the centre and the republics. The former could no longer exercise superior power over the latter, once again, with consequences as sketched, viz. that in conflicts of this kind the republican leaderships increasingly referred to their tacit ethnic base as a source of power. Nevertheless, until 1987 the system was still broadly similar throughout the country, in as much as republican parties (Leagues of Communists) exercised a leading role and eliminated challenges to their monopoly. The results were at times highly contradictory. Central legislation was frequently ignored by the republics, even when they had actually agreed to it (e.g. with the stabilization plan of 1983) and, as the 1980s wore on, there were growing divergences in how the different republican parties interpreted their leading role. Some were neo-Stalinist (e.g. Bosnia-Hercegovina), others were very relaxed (e.g. Slovenia). It was clear even at the time that this state of affairs was so unstable as to be untenable. In fact, it was the Slovene party which broke ranks and gradually permitted a shift towards one-party pluralism.

Slovenia moves towards democracy

Although the Slovene changes were argued in non-ethnic terms, it was understood in Ljubljana that Slovenia was in a position to determine its own fate and that this would be done regardless of the interests and opinions of other Yugoslavs. I received this message very clearly during a visit to Ljubljana in 1987. It was not clear whether those involved fully recognized that a move in this direction would mean accepting an ethno-national foundation for the new Slovenian order. One-party pluralism, as it turned out, was only an instrument of transition towards pluralism proper, and in a short period of time, the Slovenes were pressing for a far-reaching autonomy with an increasingly explicit ethnic message. A part of this message, however, was non-ethnic—it implied that Slovenia was committed to establishing a democratic order and that they felt that this could not be done within a Yugoslav framework.

This proposition was never spelled out, but it was unmistakable from the way in which the Slovenes approached the problem, in that they rapidly gave up any idea of transforming the rest of Yugoslavia, which would probably have been beyond their abilities in any case. Hence the Slovenes' democratization project carried within it the hidden message that, as far as Ljubljana was concerned, the communist legitimation of Yugoslavia was finished and that at that point the sole alternative legitimation was national independence, coupled

with statehood. The Slovenes did not, of course, shift in this direction overnight, but their attempts to maintain a single Yugoslav state declined in enthusiasm as each of their initiatives met with a rebuff from Belgrade, both on nationalistic and on neo-Titoist grounds. The confederation plan of October 1990 was the last gasp of Yugoslavism.

From the Serbian vantage point, the situation appeared to be quite different. Just as in Slovenia, the Titoist system was widely perceived to be, if not exactly bankrupt, certainly eroded in its capacity to command loyalty and support, but sources of this process of erosion were different. The catalyst was Kosovo, where demonstrations by the Albanians in 1981 were followed by a rising outmigration of local Serbs. This outmigration produced a deep shock in Serbia, something that was enhanced by the result of the 1981 census, which returned an Albanian population in the Kosovo of around 90 percent.

The reaction was an outraged Serbian opinion, which could not bring itself to accept that ethnically they had lost the game and that the most sacred of Serbian lands was now in no way culturally Serbian. The visceral, racist anti-Albanian response of the Serbs—strengthened as it was by the religious cleavage, as the Kosovo Albanians are largely Muslim—not only had its historical roots, with Muslim Albanians substituting for Muslim Turks in this mythologically suffused mind-set, but it was spread by the Serbian media, which used the Kosovo issue to claim autonomy from political control.

The simultaneous challenge of a sense of national injury, and the threat to communist power was exacerbated by the growing economic crisis, to which the Serbian leadership had no answer. It rejected proposals for moves towards democratization, like the redistribution of power and the introduction of market conditions, as this would have undermined its power and privileges, as well as resulting in the probable collapse of many enterprises. In the event, Milosevic captured the leadership of the Serbian party and rapidly moved to consolidate his position by repeated reference to Serbian nationalism and the grievances of the Serbian nation. His liberal opponents were vanquished and the Titoists saw their opportunity to salvage their power by joining him. A new neo-Titoist-cum-Serbian nationalist political formula was well on the way to being born.

Milosevic had Yugoslavia-wide ambitions. He rejected the democratizing programme of the Slovenes and insisted that only through a recentralization could the economic crisis be resolved. None of the other republics was prepared to accede to this, especially as they increasingly understood it to be a revived Greater Serbian programme, albeit it was argued in terms of both Titoism and pan-Serbianism. Fears of the latter were enhanced by the way in which Milosevic dealt with Kosovo and Vojvodina, both technically provinces within Serbia but de facto enjoying the powers of a republic. In 1988–89, Milosevic put an end to this status. His supporters chased away the Vojvodina leadership—a coalition of hardliners and neo-Titoists who were united in seeking to maintain an authoritarian régime in Novi Sad—in the "yoghurt revolution", so-called because the Vojvodina apparatchiks fled when they were pelted with yoghurt cartons by an angry crowd. Montenegro was an

analagous case; it was a full republic, not a province of Serbia and its inhabitants have always considered themselves Serbs, though a minority of Montenegrins have sought to develop a separate Montenegrin consciousness. The ousting of the Montenegro leadership began at more or less the same time and the Kosovo followed soon after, both processes being completed by the spring of 1989. Thus Milosevic effectively controlled the whole of Serbia and Montenegro as well, which put him in a strong position to dominate both federal, state, and party organizations.

Milosevic and the other republics

This assault on Tito's legacy appalled the other republics, but they ultimately found themselves powerless to stop him. Milosevic successfully exploited the ambiguity of the situation, in which he could use party and state structures to promote Serbian nationalism. There was no answer to this, because the legitimating force of Titoism was largely exhausted and the only alternative was nationhood and democracy, the Slovenian road, but communist leaders lacked the ability and the plausibility to adopt this model. For all practical purposes, by 1989–1990, the future of Yugoslavia as a single state had a major question mark over it. If Yugoslavia could not be held together as a communist state, was there an alternative? It was evident that Milosevic's Greater Serbian variant was unacceptable to the rest of the country and that the communists from the other republican leaderships would have to be replaced before an answer was available.

This answer was given in 1990. In essence, in parallel to, and to an extent influenced by, the collapse of communism elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, the Yugoslav communists were eliminated from power in republic after republic as free elections were held. Democracy represented the death-knell for Yugoslavia, because it implied consensus and there appeared to be no way to bring the Serbs to accept a compromise. Elections were held in Slovenia and Croatia in the spring of 1990, in Bosnia-Hercegovina and Macedonia in the autumn; in all cases the communists lost and ceded power to various nationalists, who proclaimed themselves democrats as well. In Serbia, Milosevic was well entrenched and was able to control the electoral process in December 1990.

It should be noted that in both Croatia and Serbia the electoral system influenced the ethnic composition of the new legislatures. The voting was a first past the post, two ballot system; this allowed large parties to maximize their votes, and produced the result that in Croatia Tudjman's Croatian Democratic Alliance (HDZ) won 205 out of 356 seats (57 per cent) with only 41 per cent of the popular vote. Nor did it help matters that the Serbian minority divided its vote between the reform communists and the overtly Serbian parties. In the Serbian elections, after two rounds Milosevic's reform communists ended up with only 48 per cent of the vote, but this brought them 194 out of 250 seats (77.6 per cent); the voting was marred by various

irregularities and a boycott by the Albanians, which obviously boosted Milosevic's total.

The previously mentioned confederal plan was put forward jointly by the Slovenian and Croatian leaderships in October 1990. It constituted the only attempt to transform the country on the basis of democracy. The plan proposed that the six republics become independent states in alliance, with some common institutions and all decisions to be taken unanimously. It was not taken very seriously by Milosevic and, conceivably, the authors of the plan knew this too, so that is was put forward more as an alibi than anything else. From that time on, the disintegration of Yugoslavia was no longer a question of if but of when.

In looking back on the process, it is striking that the key role in pushing for greater devolution leading to disintegration was played not by the Croats but by the Slovenes. Throughout 1988–1989, there was a shrill dispute between Belgrade and Ljubljana, which confirmed the Slovenes in their belief that there was little to be gained from persevering with Yugoslavia. They concluded that the Serbs in general, and Milosevic in particular, were incapable of compromise and step by step the conviction grew that they would be better off outside the Yugoslav framework. There was, indeed, a certain correlation between the growth of democracy and the turning away from Yugoslavia, above all because both the old and new leaderships found it more congenial to rule by consent, enjoying a popularity denied to communists, and this experience ineluctably pushed them to rely on their ethno-national base. As Slovenian nationhood was thrust further into the centre of the political stage, the Slovenes too found it more difficult to compromise or, at least, found fewer reasons why they should look for some kind of an agreement involving give and take. True, at no point was Milosevic ready to give; this made matters much easier for the Slovenes. Ironically, by contributing to raising the temperature the Slovenes ended by making matters much worse for the Croats. Slovenia could always be detached from Yugoslavia with relative ease, as it enjoyed a relative prosperity and good connections with the West, not to mention the fact that there was no minorities question to complicate relations, but for Croatia, as argued already, the Yugoslav connection was far more intricate.

Croatia and the armed forces

Two other factors require discussion—the fate of Croatia and the role of the last Titoist institution, the armed forces. During the period when the polemics and tension between Serbs and Slovenes were mounting, Croatia remained quiet, indeed it was almost a bastion of Yugoslavist loyalty. It took till the end of 1989 for the Croatian party to conclude that free elections, on a multy-party basis, could not be put off any longer. There were several reasons for this caution. It was far harder for the Croats to envisage full independence than for the Slovenes, given that there were Croatian minorities in Bosnia-

Hercegovina and the Vojvodina; then, the Croatian leadership was full of trepidation at any move liable to lead towards democracy, because it understood that this would revive the issue of nationhood, something which had caused the crisis of 1971; finally, the Croatian communist leadership must have realized that in the event of any real move towards independence, the whole question of the Serbs of Croatia would leap back to the agenda with a vengeance.

This difficulty did not trouble their successors, who in the first flush of victory in April-May 1990 behaved with complete tactlessness and incompetence towards the local Serbs. Indeed, they adopted policies virtually calculated to mobilize Serbian opinion against Zagreb. They quickly adopted the symbols of the wartime independent state, on the proposition that these had always been the Croatian symbols, and ignored the Serbs' susceptibilities. More seriously perhaps when they began to purge the *nomenklatura,* the Serbs went first and, in some cases, Croatian members of the *nomenklatura* remained. In general, they did very little to reassure the local Serbs that Croatia would be a democratic state in which there would be enough space for Serbs to live as they wanted, with their own ethno-national agendas and symbols, like the Cyrillic alphabet.

Possibly the greatest error of all was that Tudjman made no attempt worthy of the name to build up a moderate Serbian leadership in Croatia, with which he could do a deal. On the contrary, it was as if he was doing everything to polarize the situation. When the Serbs presented their demands, these were dismissed and they were told that only cultural rights were on offer, there could be no question of any territorial autonomy. And to rub it in, Croatian policemen were sent to the heavily Serbian inhabited areas like the Krajina. In a very short period of time, moderate Serbs were marginalized and the hardliners from the rural areas seized the leadership. They were much less sophisticated and were not inclined to listen to argument about compromise. Indeed, in their world view, their worst fears were confirmed—for them it was return to 1941 and soon the air was full of cries of "the struggle against the fascist Croats".

From this state of affairs it was a very short step to the ad hoc alliance with the armed forces, which turned out to be the fuse that eventually set off the fighting in the summer of 1991. The armed forces for their part viewed the disintegration of the country with dismay. They saw clearly that without a Yugoslavia, they would have no role and their power and privileges would be transformed into an insubstantial pageant. From an early date in 1990, the armed forces intervened in Croatia ostensibly and to some extent genuinely to protect the Serbian minority—it was a good case of political actor looking for a role and finding it, regardless of the consequences.

The attitude of the JNA was a mixture of military professionalism, Titoism and, given that around two-thirds of the officers' corps was made up of Serbs and Montenegrins, with many of the Serbs from the minorities outside Serbia, pro-Serbian sympathies. The armed forces, therefore, took the Slovenian and Croatian declarations of independence in June 1991 as acts of treason, and

decided to put an end to it by direct intervention. In other words, they insisted that the protection of *bratstvo i jedinstvo*, with which Tito had charged them so long before, was still their valid role, utterly regardless of the vary different circumstances in the early 1990s.

This explains the initial intervention in Slovenia, which turned out very badly through military incompetence, and the subsequent intervention in Croatia, which seemed to have a much more definite purpose. In reality there were at least three such objectives—the restoration of Yugoslavia in the Titoist mould; the protection of the Serbian minority; and support for Milosevic's strategy of creating a Greater Serbia out of the Serbian-inhabited areas of Croatia, Bosnia-Hercegovina, plus Montenegro, Vojvodina, and Kosovo. The armed forces vacillated around these three, something which helped to explain the hesitation and inconsistency with which it pursued the war. Without a clear political direction—and there was no government behind the armed forces to provide this—and without a political purposiveness of its own, the JNA's involvement seemed senseless. It was almost as if it fought simply to demonstrate its own existence. *Bellum gero ergo sum.*

Conclusion

Milosevic too found himself in the position of having to run ever faster in order to remain the same place. His particular genius in 1987 and after was to offer promise after promise of "salvation" to Serbian opinion, which he never had to keep, but to achieve this, he had to keep raising the stakes. It began with Kosovo, continued with Montenegro and Vojvodina, and then oscillated between a Serbian dominated Yugoslavia and Greater Serbia. To achieve his aims, he was perfectly prepared to use the JNA in Croatia, while fully understanding that their interests were only temporarily coincidental. The motives of the armed forces were vague and uncertain; Milosevic was protecting his own power an power base. His legitimating ideology could not be anything other than a Serbian one and beyond a certain point, Serbian opinion would not support his project of a Greater Serbian Yugoslavia, hence his shifting between the two.

In the final analysis, the chances of converting Titoist Yugoslavia into a democratic Yugoslavia were never very good. The failure of the two previous attempts to hold the country together—linguistic-monarchical and communist—meant that the conditions imposed by the various actors would be severe, almost certainly too severe. The necessary agreement on the benefits of keeping a Yugoslav state in being was absent, and communism collapsed too suddenly, act different rates of speed in the different republics, for the various republican élites to find common ground.

Then again, the democratic traditions in the different republics varied widely, with the Western aspirations of the Slovenes being in stark contrast to the volatility and political inexperience of the Serbs. The chance factor was also

relevant—neither Milosevic nor Tudjman was fitted for the role of holding a complex state together at a time when it was riven by the deepest tensions and contradictions; Milan Kucan, the communist-turned-democratic president of Slovenia was. And the one institution with a genuinely all-Yugoslav purposiveness, the JNA, had no interest in democracy. Keeping Yugoslavia together was always going to be a very difficult operation; a democratic Yugoslavia would always have been nearly impossible. And the nearly impossible was not on offer when it was needed.

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Lóránt Kabdebó

A Protean Master: Victor Határ

In nations where history constantly influences the shaping of private lives, the events in a man's life affect style as well as subject matter. Such is, and has always been, the case in Central Europe. Victor Határ's oeuvre may well be representative even from this aspect, simply because it contains the modern currents of literature crossing paths with direct historical determination. Határ would distance himself from all contingency of place or occasion, yet all aspects of an oeuvre created under the aegis of art as such display motifs inspired by the history of a place. That oeuvre is linked to contemporary aspirations and is open to the important concerns of philosophy, while maintaining connections with Central European and specifically Hungarian cultural and literary traditions as well. At the same time, there is self-ironic understatement in Határ's complaining of being cut off from the subject matters of Hungary's literature: "I have sinned, brethren, I have grievously breached our national code of literary good manners, and have done so more than once. I have written (also!) books that, apart from being written in our language, have nothing to do with my being Hungarian. Indeed, they could have been written in any of the Western tongues." To my mind, however, there is more truth in the view held by friends, a view that one of them, a fellow poet, Sándor Weöres, communicated to him in a letter in 1956—speaking about one novel but providing a valid characterization of Victor Határ's whole output: "(...) Once in the company of writers, we talked about whether there is a Hungarian novel that could become an international success, which would not sink into mediocrity in German, English or French translation but shine as a work of irreplaceable value. We took about half a hundred writers in turn, past and present. Some of them seemed likely to fall under the shadow of classic authors of world fame, appearing as secondary, the fault not being theirs, as a rule. (...) Most of them would give the impression as when entering a small town's ethnographic museum where absolutely authentic local fish traps, gate posts, bodices, stools, bagpipes, spinning wheels can be seen by the hundred: they are very real but not at all interesting, such are the local variations of a fish trap,

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gate post, etc. and that's that. Finally, to the great surprise of all of us, we ended up with your novel *Heliáne*: it is European without being Western, interestingly Danubian without being provincial, if translated into a Western language, it would not sink out of sight into the backyard of some great predecessor."

Victor Határ's oeuvre is shaped by two extremes: he lives at a great distance from the continuity of Hungarian literature, yet he is linked to the peculiar world of one region. If I search my mind for authors in a similar situation, I would perhaps come up with the names of Eliade, Gombrowitz, Milos, or Nabokov. Not simply because Határ like them, has spent a considerable part of his life in exile, but also because his literary work (including the time spent in Budapest) has remained outside Hungarian literary life. Indeed, his exile seems to provide more of a link to Hungarian literature.

He was born at the outbreak of the Great War or, rather, at the time when, as war hysteria in this part of the world had it, the soldiers were supposed to have returned home "at the time of the falling of leaves", in the autumn of 1914. History, of course, thought otherwise: the war went on and the father, serving in the army, was not able to gaze on his newborn son. Later this father, an expert on printing paper, was to become a war invalid who had to be nursed throughout his long life. The family moved to Budapest, but the invalid father was unable to head or support it, even to keep it together. The young Határ soon had to support himself. The financial troubles of his early years taught him to create a life for himself apart from writing. Consequently, almost all aspects of Határ's biography differ from the usual Hungarian writer's life. He was a skilled architect, later his knowledge of languages (Greek, Latin, German, English, French, Russian, Spanish, Italian) made him a much sought after translator. He was able to maintain a standard of living above that of the average professional both before and after the Second World War, and yet to ensure enough time for writing. He studied music as well as architecture, and was regarded also as a philosopher in his own right. Meanwhile, he matured into a writer in almost total obscurity, avoiding journals and literary company.

His manuscripts of before the Second World War have been lost. He had been actively in opposition to the ruling Right in politics and was arrested. Manuscripts found in a search were said to contain expressions reviling Miklós Horthy, the Regent; they were sent on to the Regent's office in the Palace and probably perished in one of the archives there during the siege of Buda. (In 1945 Határ found the manuscript of only one of his novels in the bombed police archives, *On the Outback of Eurasia, Land of Miracle*, this, after revision, appeared in London in 1988, as two volumes of the Hungarian-language Aurora series. The political content of his novels drew a sentence of five years imprisonment on Határ. After Hungary was occupied by the Germans in March 1944, he was involved in a political mutiny within a prison, from which he had a miraculous escape.

Although he had been actively opposed to the Right from before the war, he remained an outcast right from the start of the communist system as it emerged after the siege of Budapest. A volume of poetry (*Liturgikon*, 1948) and a novel

(*Heliáne*, 1947) were pulped, the threats contained in a review of the novel in a leading literary journal made Határ fear for his life. In 1949 he was expelled from the Writers' Association and had to support himself as a translator. György Lukács was prompted to quip: "Határ must be given many translations to do, this would be a double gain for socialist literature, for the man is an excellent translator and meanwhile, he would have no time to write works of his own." His new novel, due to the political circumstances, was unpublishable (*Az Őrző könyve*—The Guardian's Book, 1949; published by Aurora Books, Munich, 1974; later Életünk Books, Szombathely, 1992). Határ attempted to leave Hungary without a passport. He was caught, charged and sentenced to two and a half years in prison, after which he was interned. (He spent some of his sentence in the same prison where by then a memorial tablet honoured the anti-fascist prison mutiny he had participated in during the war.) As a result of a strike in protest against prison food, he was punished by a transfer to the dreaded maximum security prison at Márianosztra. There his dramatized hallucinations formed the first version of *Golgheloghi*, his "world drama" in 9 parts, that would later be considered his chef d'oeuvre. (In exile Határ elaborated on the text his memory had preserved, and published it in book form first in 1976, then Aurora Books, Munich in 1989 with illustrations by János Kass, and again, that year in the Szombathely Életünk series.)

On his release from prison, he worked as an architect for a time, then went back to translating for a living, producing an excellent Rabelais and brilliant versions of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and *Sentimental Journey*.

After the crushing of the revolution in 1956, he and his wife left Hungary. For a time they looked around in Vienna before leaving to settle in London and work for the BBC's Hungarian Section. He lives in a Victorian house in Wimbledon, called Hongriuscule. It is in London that he finally came to blossom: the novels written back in Hungary were published in succession; so too were those he wrote in Britain. Since 1986 Hungarian publishers have also taken him up. Once the change of the political system was effected, Határ became one of the authors best appreciated by his country, receiving, on his 75th birthday, one of the highest honours. This was followed in 1991 by the award of the most prestigious distinction a Hungarian artist can receive, the Kossuth prize, the first exiled Hungarian writer to be given it.

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After the appearance of his *Heliáne* in 1947, and the 1948 volume of poems, *Liturgikon,* Victor Határ was labelled a surrealist, Hungarian readers assuming him to be an avant-garde author. Although Határ no doubt knew of the avant-garde schools and made use of their trappings, his own work is linked to essentially different ways of creation. I consider the method that describes him best that kind of twentieth-century modernity which, maintaining the idea of the possibility of creating literary works, is aware of the poetic and philosophical experience which, following Musil, Joyce and Pound, questions,

in both poetry and prose, its two foundations: the potential to express personality and the author's mastery over language. In novels written with linguistic wit and talented construction (and also in well-executed poems) he presents the impossibility of finishing a story and the impossibility of a finalized familiarity with the ways of the world. Határ's language pleases and his composition is encouraging; yet, in and through them, one experiences the fragmentary nature of lives and may even be shocked to see how helpless man remains. He both frustrates and pleases at the same time.

The excerpts that appear in the current issue are good examples of the above qualities. His prose poem *Vampire* starts from an erotic sensation triggered by some physical feature, and displays the polyvalence of a sexual relationship, as well as casting light upon the mental operation in which the linguistic game invoked by words affects the working of the mind and may influence even instinct. Such is the reaction of art: etymologically and vocally playful qualities of words may transform or, to use a modern phrase, reprogramme even the most intimate events of a partnership. Just as in *Finnegans Wake*, language may become a world-creating principle based on the game principle. The sketch *Spare Guest* may be an example of shaping a story. The hyper-exact description that an almost baroque heaping of words performs, almost imperceptibly changes into its grotesque opposite. Everything described there might well happen, yet as a whole, a chain of events emerges that can never take place anywhere. This duality, also resembling Sologub's sketches, creates in readers' minds a vibration that triggers the reader into reviewing the whole of his existence along different lines as well.

It is the prose author who is the definitive Határ. In addition to those mentioned above, his major prose works that he wrote while in Hungary are *Pepito and Pepita* (Aurora, London, 1984; Magvető, Budapest 1986, and in French from Julliard, Paris, 1963); *Anibel* (French translation in the Les Lettres Nouvelles series of Denoel, Paris, 1970; in Hungarian from Aurora, London, 1984, and Szépirodalmi, Budapest, 1988); *Eumolposz* (Aurora, London, 1990). Then came *Bábel tornya* (The Tower of Babel), Hungarian Institute, Stockholm, 1966; *Éjszaka minden megnő (Archie Dumbarton)* At Night Everything Grows (Archie Dumbarton). French translation, Denoël, Paris, 1977; in Hungarian from Aurora, London, 1984 and Magvető, Budapest, 1986; *Köpönyeg sors. Julianosz ifjúsága* (Turncoat. Julian's Youth) from Aurora, London, 1985; *A fontos ember* (A Man of Consequence), JATE Publishers, Szeged, and Aurora, London, 1989. Two collections of his short stories were published in 1987: *Angelika kertje* (Angelika's Garden) and *A szép Palásthyné a más álmában közösül* (The Beautiful Mrs Palásthy Copulates in Somebody Else's Dream), Aurora, London, 1987.

Avoiding the shape of the traditional 19th century novel, and ignoring the attractions of the *grand recit,* Victor Határ develops his individual form by linking with eighteenth century novels (say, from *Candide* to *Tom Jones* or *Wahlverwandtschaften*). He does not aim at describing the process of the education of man; instead, he surveys the circumstances of human existence by

moving about different characters in different situations, contrasting them to one another and putting them into conflict. The fate of the scientist in science-fiction is a topic in his novels, just as the biological and ethical problems arising from the use of certain "methods" are (*On the Outback of Eurasia, Land of Miracle*, *Heliáne*, *The Guardian's Book* and even *The Tower of Babel* and the fantasy *At Night Everything Grows*). The problem of community behaviour is also present in the stories, including the problem of man's degradation and growing helplessness (imprisonment, torture, the termination of the rights of the individual) as well as the pathos of resisting humiliation (*On the Outback of Eurasia, Land of Miracle*, *Heliáne*, *The Guardian's Book*, *Cloak Fate*). Examining the mechanism by which man finds his way in this world, Határ seeks to establish, by trial and error, the preserving power of the "refusal to serve" as against subservient existence; this he was doing at the same time as Koestler and Orwell, though his intentions were never directly political (*Heliáne*, 1947! *The Guardian's Book*, 1949!). Perhaps his most important work, *Heliáne*, serves for an example. *Heliáne* is the ironic description of an initiation ceremony, a satire declaring the author's doubts concerning various kinds of 20th century intellectual sectarianism. Of course, it is much more too: beside questioning the validity of the initiation, he also looks at the extent to which individuals are free to act in a world where all individual activities are predetermined. He invokes a natural disaster, to place his figures in peril, yet even in such a situation he can only imagine a handful of people thinking morally and standing out, at least thanks to their gestures, in the controlled crowd. Let me quote here a curiosity: a précis of the novel, the genesis of which is just as adventurous as the novel itself. It was produced by a Miguel de Seabra, a Portuguese friend of Határ's in exile, who learnt to read Hungarian for the sake of this novel. After the fall of the dictatorship in Portugal, he left for home and disappeared from the author's horizon without a trace.

"The land of the Thousand Islands is called Panpesvalginesia; a never-seen island world of the South Seas, south of South were the timeless primitiveness of the jungle and the streamlined civilization of the Brazilian government's representative office exist side by side. It has two faces: that of the native yunyuries' superstitious world, and that of the capital city's Bohemian society of painters, sculptors, dreamers, and maniacs. In the island world of Panpesvalginesia prevails an attitude impossible to find elsewhere on Earth, and a unique religion. Everything is 'at the same time' here, and time, while passing, stands still; everyone is fully aware of all the details of his fate, yet they accept the good and bad meted out to them with the same obedient fatalism. Seated on the summit of the island world's Olympus, the Fate-God-Beast is to be found, the principle of chaotic irrationality. Fate-God is portrayed as a grey-haired huge buffalo. His beastly stupidity is the counterpoint of 'divine wisdom': no human mind can penetrate its erratic streaks or the complete metaphysics of its stupidity.

"According to scientific forecasts, Panpesvalginesia is threatened by a cosmic catastrophe, in the passing of the Nigragor, that is, an attack by a swarm

of comets which, incidentally, means the destruction of the Earth and the end of the world. As a matter of course, the society of the island world continues in the pursuit of its pleasures and excesses in wild excitement, even though the minds of most of its authors and artists are elsewhere: even in the last minutes of Earth's existence, they want to be immortal. This is when Barnabás Bikornutusz arrives, with the mission and curiosity of Europe in his heart. An adventure of some kind drops him into the middle of the menagerie of artists.

"This living, communicating, wasting, tripping, laughing, drinking menagerie, its life arranged like that of a strict sect, is headed by a father-figure painter king, the two-ton Gábriel Gabrielusz. He may have a palette, but in principle, the several volumes of his unwritten but studiously blabbered works convince all and sundry that Gábriel is their destined leader, and Gábrielianism is the most universal, purest artistic and philosophical creed. Every member of the company is familiar with his or her fate, yet they all accept it in holy merriment, not even trying to escape. Thus, the ascetic and poet Ferenc Nein (an unhappy being, who was born hanged on his umbilical cord) knows that he is going to be the victim and executor in a double drama of love. Nepomuk Prozeliusz, a much-respected dyer and falsifier of foodstuffs, knows that a falling brick will kill him—he even knows the house from which it will fall. Lulof, the bar pianist, a wastrel of a musician, and the modest supporter of many parasitic friends, dies of fright, the fright of being afraid when the comets passes. Hebaminte, the retired supervisor of the seas and inventor, survives the disaster, but while out walking, he contracts the pneumonia that takes him off. Actually, Hebaminte is the inventor of the 'perfect state-machine', which governs the state without any human intervention and turns natives into docile, 'overhead-contact' subjects. Hebaminte escapes from home and circulates the news of his death in order to dedicate the rest of his life to his invention. His wife, the statuesque Mrs Hebaminte, believes that she is now a widow and looks after her tenant Barnabás with growing affection. Alas, on one of his aimless strolls, Barnabás falls headlong in love with Heliáne, one of the anointed maidservants of Holy Prostitution. Knowing that, according to the dictate of Fate-God-Beast, they may never meet or know each other, the girl takes flight. At the once a year Witches' Carnival, however, the god provides a suspension of the Law of Fate and allows one day of free will. After their idyllic encounter, and before the carnival is over, Barnabás decides to snatch Heliáne from the grip of Holy Prostitution and take her to Europe, the home of free will. The unhappy and abandoned Mrs Hebaminte encounters her husband, the inventor, at the Carnival: with knife raised high, and shrieking rabidly, she announces that she is possessed, she is the Witch. The crowd parts before her in holy terror. The frustrated witch throws out her lodger, Barnabás, who is now faced with hard times.

"He clings desperately to the mysterious sagacity of the sect and the whole drinking gang; a breach soon occurs in the Gábrielian church, and the unhinged Barnabás is unable to choose between tyrannic schools of thought. The European Consolata Maientau, a girl with hazel eyes, arrives at the island on board

the Transylvania. Drawn to Ferenc Nein, the ageing poet, she is alienated from him by Heulaffen mother and daughter (Carenzia), for they have other designs on this pretty creature. In fact, the Heulaffens are good and heed the dictate of the Fate-God to be cruel in holy self-sacrifice; Barnabás hates them and strives to aid the odd couple.

"Soon he gets word of his old flame Violante's far-fetched fate. A medical student, Violante is in correspondence with Viktor Szinapsziusz, a doctor serving in a Central Asian clinic, who asks her to marry him. For his sake, the girl takes up the study of tropical diseases and on graduation she sets out on an adventurous journey. As a result of some local wars, Viktor disappears and, Violante, overstaying her welcome, is forced by his relatives into becoming their maid and, eventually, their slave. With the help of the 'good robbers' she escapes to Nauru, the island of lepers, to be a nurse and to forget. Meanwhile, Viktor Szinapsziusz is taken prisoner by a robber lama, Dambin Dzhamczang, who accuses him of spying. Once the Reds march in, the doctor finds himself buried for some more years, this time in Communist prisons; Viktor and Violante will never meet however many letters they have exchanged. Witness to their lives, Barnabás is unable to provide an acceptable explanation of their impossible fate, even 'in the light of Gabrielian philosophy'.

"The catastrophe takes place. Volcanoes are born and islands are sunk. Nigragor passes through—yet the world fails to perish, far from it. As if it had not been them who had been the bearers of the bad news, those who had predicted the end of the world continue to denounce those who believed in their future—with the same unshakeable confidence as they had displayed when denouncing those who had no faith in them. Children re-invent agriculture, shopkeepers re-start their businesses, Holy Prostitution is in business again. The Gábrielian sect already counts its dead. In a bout of jealousy, Ferenc Nein shoots the innocent Consolata and himself. Nepomuk Prozeliusz is hit on the head by his brick, as scheduled. Hebaminte survives the hell of Nigragor unscathed, only to die of the destined cold breeze. Barnabás rebels at those outrageous, stupid twists of fate, yet the Gábrielians pressure him with increasing intensity to submit himself to the Law of Fate and become a real Panpedelupeian. They put him to a ritual test by tying him to the Rock of Terror at low tide, to see if he is able to face the tide that, on the point of washing over him, releases him at the last moment; the day of initiation is already set—he will learn the fate that has been meted out to him. But Barnabás makes a terrible discovery: his idol Gábriel, steadfast advocate of full asceticism, has secretly bought Heliáne out of the brothel-nunnery and married her. The European in Bikornutusz explodes against the prison of fate that is the Thousand Islands, and runs amok. Pigs, geese, goats fall to his knife, while children flee screaming and the streets empty. Warriors start chasing the amok who is attacking the Law of Fate; the mob in pursuit is urged on by Heliáne herself. At the last possible moment, under a hail of spears, Barnabás jumps from a steep rock into the sea; there, owing to the miraculous and majestic intervention of (who else but) Fate-God-Beast, he escapes the swarm of boats. Bedridden on the peace-

ful island of Roc-Y-Ioco, he tells his strange story to the local quack's daughters in his feverish gibbering."

Such is the plot, one that could well have resembled Swift or even be a variation on *Candide*, had not Határ taken the stories of his narration and telescoped them into a whole. These mosaic pieces are not individual stories that end properly: the whole novel rolls them along—and leaves each of them unfinished. Indeed, the actual names of the characters keep changing in the text, as pronunciation and phonetic form are separated in Határ's presentation—one could even say his labyrinth. This method of handling story and characters might be best compared to that of Bulgakov, though the two created similar techniques unaware of each other's existence. (All the same, there are many similarities in their biographical and historical circumstances. I can even identify common ground in their subjects: the theatrical world in Bulgakov's *The Master and Marguerite* closely resembles the plots and atmosphere of Határ's *Anibel* and *Pepito and Pepita*.)

In the novels written after *Heliáne*, Határ examines how a community dissolves in joint action (*The Tower of Babel, The Guardian's Book*). *The Guardian's Book* contains a peculiar piece of futurology. During and after the Second World War, and after, when a Third World War was feared to be imminent, there were innumerable apocalyptic literary works dealing with the extinction of mankind in war. Határ compares the nuclear age with the warfare and raiding of the Age of Migrations which brought the ancient world to an end, rather than making a comparison with the Neolithic Age. In the novel, great powers fight with modern weapons, before breaking up; the history of mankind continues in the form of tribal wars. Határ wrote all this in 1949. With today's hindsight, now that all this has, as it were, already happened, the book radiates prophetic power.

The novel's story disentangles into a single "chronicler's" mind and becomes a "message" there for the supposed future. The author is able to postulate a human mind in which a dissolving world history is resolved and interpreted. He works along similar lines in *At Night Everything Grows*. In this strange story of a certain Archie Dumbarton, a Willy Loman-type salesman, the author describes that kind of spiritual elevation that enables one man alone to save the entire world. The world around this man suddenly turns dead. In that solitude (and this is the plot of the novel) he deduces that what he has to do is to repeat the Crucifixion, so that through his sacrifice the earlier order of the world should be restored. The novel is both a degradation of "miracle" and the apotheosis of human generosity.

His most recent novel, *Köpönyeg sors* (Turncoat), is concerned with the youthful days of the Emperor Julian. This is the life of a young man who must find his way and overcome his enthusiasms, all the while awaiting assassination. For political reasons his life is superfluous. Here Határ describes endangered man learning tolerance: at the outset, the reader encounters an Arian Christian, who gradually embraces the mythology and the gaiety of the ancient world. Language overcomes the ugliness of history in a novel that allows the revealed

pomp of linguistic-rhetorical education to prevail over a world of primitive imagination and style.

Apart from his novels, Határ's output as a poet is also significant. His collections stand as important events in Hungarian literature: *Hajszálhíd I-II.* (Gossamer Bridge) Aurora, Munich, 1970; *Lélekharangjáték* (Deathbell Chimes) Aurora, London, 1986; *Medvedorombolás* (The Purring of Bears) Aurora, London, 1988; *A léleknek rengése* (Soul Quake, selected poems) Magvető, Budapest, 1990; *Halálfej* (Death's Head) Aurora, London, 1991.

His stylistic and rhythmic talents help him display the irony of human existence. As a poet, he is *one* in opposition with his friend Sándor Weöres, as both create worlds through the sparkling linguistic wit that permeates their work. Yet Weöres constructed his poems according to the laws of myth-creating; by means of myths the individual dissolves into a spiritual wholeness, thus both extending and destroying himself. Határ, on the other hand, moves in the opposite direction: he writes poems in which, out of the elements of civilization and discarding mysticism, he conjures up an independent world around the individual, then sits back to enjoy how man can come through in that world created around him. Here, man plays with language but language also plays with man: where the two games meet, a poem that characterizes both man and language emerges.

A good example of his poetic world is "Identifications", dedicated to the English poet George Szirtes, Határ's friend: if words and rhymes were capable of performing magic, identifications could actually take place. After all, every individual creature would like to become something or somebody else. Looking spurs desire, desire is manifested in the text—the world created in a different way is reorganized in the poem. But irony lets Határ know that this restructuring of the world is possible only in sorcery. Thus the poem becomes both pantheistic and pessimistic: through the poems man can achieve everything while still being forced to remain within his factual reality. Határ's poem is thus both a soaring ode and a resigned elegy. That duality is balanced in the poem by irony.

The stories degrading man and the playfulness of the language which carry these stories, provide the opposition that forms Határ's dramatic world. A first reading of these twelve plays, collected in the two volumes of *Sírónevető* (Laugh and Cry) Aurora Books, Munich, 1972, plunges the reader into a desolate and aimless world. Yet if the reader pays heed to the linguistic sophistication of the plots and the sparkling wit of the dialogue, the pleasure and mirth of playfulness come to the fore.

I can only mention in passing his work in philosophy which, beside the tract *Intra Muros* (in which he forecast and deduced the inevitable fall of Bolshevism some decades ago), includes the musing *Özön-közöny* (Cosmic Unconcern), the three volumes of *Szélhárfa* (Aeolian Harp) of philosophical comments, along with *Az ég csarnokai* (The Halls of the Heavens) and *Filozófiai zárlatok* (Philosophical Cadences). He published studies in three volumes under the title *Rólunk szól a történet* (The Story is about Us). A familiarity with all those

is required to fully interpret and appreciate Határ's most important piece, that summary and unifier of his oeuvre, the play-cycle *Golgheloghi* in its entirety.

Taking place at the close of the first Christian millennium, it deals with the transformations of Golgheloghi, the hero who assumes different parts (and, through him, Man as he appears in history), which recall the most important roles occurring in history. The dramatic and tragic, the farcical or circus-like horizons of human existence are revealed as crossing one other in the scenes of the play. The universe becomes a circus tent, where the operator/conductor is at best an Oz-like magician-craftsman. As observed by one of Határ's critics, György Gömöri: man and his creator are both fallible figures who keep each other in check, threatening each other with the coming of "the last judgement", the destruction of the world. A circus tent and the universe: man simultaneously suffers the pains of his human existence and enjoys the miracle of an existence that keeps on renewing and transforming itself. In the play the author embraces the never-ending work of both struggling Man and the director of that struggle, the craftsman working the potter's wheel.

Meanwhile, above all that, there sits Satanael on his throne, viewing this world with "immeasurable indifference", but supporting it as well. According to his last words, "Using the majestic privilege of a supporting column, I am retiring to my crowned *indifference* and, while you display your miserable brilliance, I shall have the power of sea and sky over you—in a princely way." This power, external and internal at the same time, is the determining factor of Határ's art: language itself dominates his oeuvre. His extraordinary knowledge of the history of human culture, philosophy and style is intertwined in his linguistic ingenuity and power. That is the supporting column of his entire work: it contains everything, and simultaneously steps aside "in a princely way" from everything, shrouding itself in "crowned indifference". It struggles along, and also supports the struggle itself.

Victor Határ

Poems

Translated by George Szirtes

The Shot Hare

Lőtt nyúl

Hare Like
He flies before the volley, riddled through
As I, my Lord, being wounded, flee from You

On Film
A vast crowd gathers to observe the game
As you release the safety catch, take aim

Screen
The gamekeepers are cherubim; they ring
Us round in choirs, wildly signalling

The Kill
Your angels too forget their customed hymns:
From lofty tribunes rise their mingled screams

Three
I leapt three Himalayas, but I found
None of Your vaunted mercy, no safe ground

I Fear
My ears pinned back, I strain hare-ears to hear
(The hare's own shadow knows enough of fear)

Report
The firing stills my terror. "Brave wee chap!
His glossy coat would make a winter cap
To crown the Milky Way." The hammers tap,

They nail me up, but I'm not quite done in:
My skin may yet suffice to save my skin.

(1950)

The Flame Gone Out

Kilobbanásra

I loved you, world, I loved you desperately
I loved you, I doted on being alive
you guided me to gather and make thrive
unquenchable, first real reality

you commanded me to love the terrible
dangers of existence, light of your sun
and night of your moon, my wholesale consumption,
for you I was insatiable

this was how the bondage of becoming
became for us a cursed affair
your task for me was prayer:
fidelity and beauty blossoming

I had to beseech you: let me still continue!
I dote on living: distribute life and weigh it!
I'd round up your numbers, make them complete
do not scorn my wolfish greed for you

not in my loves, not in music, nor
in the thundering of heavy artillery:
in your scheme of Last Things let me
try to melt back, separate no more.

I clutched and held as much as I could grasp:
this pittance in the palm of my brain
through the glass of indifference, my glass faith may gain
a new reality in death, one I can clasp

My eyes grow wide consuming you, prostrate
I will not seek you, nor swear by my success,
in ambiguities, delusions, deviousness
be merciless, transparent distillate

with one crack of your whip, you whipped me into line
eyes, ears, all five senses I gained by your grace
so you became the vast expanse of space
an endless prodigal bank of fact and sign

I merely catalogue you, reckon up your all
bewitched, inscrutable phenomenon,
whelping forth, productive daily cauldron!
pediment topped by sun or star-dial!

no lees from the wine-press could compense us for your loss
no wretched deathly *post hoc* of the soul,
but you within me, and I within the whole:
let being enter being in one round cosmos!

however slyly approaches the hour
with its monsters and cancers whatever the choice
only for you will I raise my voice
cry, hold on! to perception and to power!

unquenchable, first real reality
you guided me to gather and make thrive
I loved you, I doted on being alive
I loved you, world, I loved you desperately

London Lament

"for a tyrant"

Londoni gajd

She runs her gamut of enticements, wields her treacly charms
my *deariedums*, my *sweetikins*, my *love-come-to-my-arms*

so lavishly she pets and preens, so lavishly she flatters
she gives her all, asks no returns, it's yours, it hardly matters

her strictly legal honeycombs, her paradise of treats
who'd argue with a tyrant so replete with scents and sweets

demands are couched in gentle terms, obsequious request,
her discipline is just as mild: your study, room arrest

prodigal with her radiance, her panaceas of cheer
the lady with the linament! one glance—pains disappear

like horses they stand, neck on neck, frozen in a kiss
and would remain so evermore. epitomes of bliss

they'd stay like this for ever, requiescat in pace,
their feet resting on little dogs, one stone dog for each party

two guardian angels to prepare their beds in the stone choir
inscribe: Behold! Here lie the Lord and Lady of the shire

*

but when the fit is on her then her fiery eyes grow mean
the steely glance becomes a blade, Madame la Guillotine

her mood flares florid, frosty roadsides brook no interruption
her ready fret and fury shows the tyrant in eruption

It isn't done? Where have you put it? Am I supposed to find it?
(She makes it clear what is your stuff and where she has consigned it.)

spend all this money? pay so much? when this won't feed a fly?
such trivial botching? this? you call this housework, darling? why?

so this is how a man does housework? what is so amusing?
the dusty sideboard, the creased pillow both look on accusing

a filthy mess, a leaking pipe, a fire in the attic?
a fine homecoming! you are so annoying, so pathetic

and when she flings her locks back and shakes them in a fit
be sure she'll smack her *babyboo*, she'll lord any lady it

a dripping rope, a cycle chain—mechanics of command
sirrah, the whip! the fool is beat, the lash lies close to hand

though other times it's *sweetiepie,* or *sweetiedums* or *sweetie*,
should gravy slop on his new suit the treatment's beyond entreaty

a soft boiled egg might smear his cuff eliciting a slap
black forest gateau sadly slip and slither in his lap

She only has to turn the key, her footsteps are a caution
—when they are heavy—he can forecast what will be his portion

sweetiepoops's shirt's askew, his bellybutton peeping,
let him scuff and potter about all night without sleeping

moustache is a bedraggled tail, his duck's arse mane is spiky,
infuriating his whole being, his coxcombly psyche

sweetiepoops but opens his mouth in unpropitious dither
a hefty swipe makes one ear ring, the wall slams on the other

should he grimace or should he grin, he shifts from foot to foot
his essence shrinks and fits her palm, he's shrivelled and minute

heel already bound behind him, waist snapped, suicidal
the strap off his own back provides a useful bit and bridle

a thumbscrew wanted? it's on tap no need to go and fetch
behold the female tyrant, public hangdame, Ms Jack Ketch

*

but when the turning of the lock portends a gentler mood
you'll kiss the gilt edge of her cape with mild solicitude

she goes on tiptoe, little scamp, her little hooves clipclopping,
comes dripping with a Christmas tree and gifts of copious shopping

here are twopence-coloured books, postcards in profusion
(the tyranny is inhumane yet blessed with constitution)

no need to eat and drink she'll blithely waive necessity
in her be-gateauxed, clownish, imperial capacity

like horses they stand, neck on neck, frozen in a kiss
and would remain so evermore: epitomes of bliss

they'd stay like this for ever, requiescat in pace,
their feet resting on little dogs, one stone dog for each party

smiling, all-embracing, serene, all things at her beck
the swelling cello of her hips the viol of her neck

it is a yoke, it weighs one down and yet how it bewitches
a sleight of hand decapitates, the headless body twitches

her burden's joy, her tyranny diversion in a wife,
you'll snug down with her in her nest within the Tree of Life

Vampire

Vámpír

once in the course of my stealthy expeditions, my capacious cloaked circumambulations, I happened on a heart-rendingly beautiful Neck of Improbable Length

my eyes glued to it I lapped up this vision of the Neck and like a drunk mathematician calculated the three possible uses to which I could put it

the first. I would kiss it until it choked and she expired in my Kisses Appropriate to Long Necks

the second. As we adhered to one another in the course of the kiss I would sink my teeth in and bite through Longstem

the third. Instead of kissing her to death or biting her in two I would hold her at arm's length, strangle her and visually enjoy the long death agonies of Longstem

in the end I chose the fourth course. I married her

ever since then, day and night, I have lived under the spell of this Neck of Improbable Length. I can never exhaust my appetite for its contours

often it happens that I cling to her in such a mad ecstasy of love that I forget to listen to what she is saying and I don't understand her. Then she gets very angry:

You're not listening to what I am saying. What did I say? You pay no attention to me...

Silently I hear out the buzz of her accusations but my ears are tuned to her neck now rather then her throat, and—

say it now! say it now! once more!—I cry. And she repeats her accusations gurgling and cackling under my kisses

(by the way) partly, (since it is through my sensuous parts I have proceeded part by part along her and tasted all the flavours of her neck), partly through my kiss-sensors I have sought out her jugular. Now! Now! the thought has flashed through my fangs, now I ought to cut short her life, to put an end to her struggles. Now! Now!... but she dropped her fourfold blonde portcullis over my eyes and I found myself in a golden cage. As Odysseus clung to the ram that saved his life, so she battened her arms and legs around me in a brainstorm of embraces; though I was practically there, her carotid pulsing between my canines—too late. I had the perfect opportunity and missed it. Instead, scorpion fashion, I injected my stinging tail into her from below, and once I was sure that I could penetrate no deeper I released my paralysing poison. I ordered the flooding of her cavities and marshalled an ejaculation

she gave herself up to death by ecstasy and obediently accommodated her pelvic rhythm to our mutual dying. When we woke from our corpses there were three of us; but only in an emblematic sense, heralding only a pair of twins, otherwise there might have been a whole army of them like a set of organ pipes. And beside me on the pillow there still stretched the long slender junoesque Neck

—You obstinate, you roughneck!—I continued gently, twisting the rough word into her neckverse, just as I had always sharpened my knowledge of vernacular rhetoric on her. You Neck! You've got a "neck": even without your ornaments you have an Ornamental Neck!

—And you, you're all tongue: leave me alone! You cling to me like a necklace...!

I don't remember her face, I never saw it. I carried the majestic vision of the Neck with me into my cinerarium which is cast in the form of Isis the Earth Mother, and I mingled my dust with hers in the jar—eternal peace measured to its precise length.

Identifications

Azonosulások

monkey monkey monkey monkey
    locked away in monkey shape
myself am locked up under one key
    inside a solitary ape
consciousness self knowledge cannot
    worm however hard it tries
out of its monkey skin and phizzog,
    monkey fur, face, ear and eyes.

spider will remain a spider,
    catfish gawp as catfish do,
you'll not cut yourself from inside or
    shed your skin by slicing through!
ants are ants and have to stick it
    gladly though they'd flee the heap
walk two legged through the wicket,
    or sprout avian wings and cheep—

on your neighbour's skull go knocking:
    its chitin armour will not give!
friend! my body needs defrocking!
    one must change if one's to live!
How keen we are to swap our tallies
    with any likeness! Oh our dust
might yet be human, though our bellies
    heave with the old toad of lust

life gulps, grasps, slobbers, croaks and jostles:
    all gut! a thousand mortal tussles!
and from disgust's amphibian roe
    the glooms of pantheism grow.

Victor Határ

Spare Guest

(Short Story)

We looked around the magnificent antique shop in wonderment as the smooth-skinned, elderly proprietor followed our curious gaze, his hands folded priest-like above his stomach. This would-be-nice-to-have. Wouldn't-have-that-even-if-it-were-free. This one over here if-only-it-wasn't-so-expensive. That one over there handsome-but-not-quite-our-cup-of-tea. My wife was inspecting a dog. It was an enormous guard-dog, a Newfoundland, sprawled sociably on a thick wool rug, but underneath the black jowls lurked neck-crunching jaws that boded ill for intruders. It was only by the enamel lustre of his eyes that you could tell he was made of terracotta and not alive after all.

"Used to be very fashionable at one time," said the soft-spoken antique dealer officiously.

"We shouldn't be holding the gentleman up," I said to my wife, "there's a customer been waiting to be served here for goodness knows how long."

And I pointed at the distinguished-looking gentleman in a shiny coat sitting with his back to us.

"Him!", said the dealer, lowering his voice still further, perhaps so as not to embarrass his costumer. "Him?!" And he led me between stacked crates of antiques to bring me face to face with him. "Take a good look".

I let my eyes rest upon him a moment, then quickly looked away. My wife gave him a passing, stealthy glance, nonchalant, indifferent, as though she were looking at something quite different.

"Take a closer look—take your time", the shop owner urged in that throaty voice. I wished I knew what to make of his reverential whisper, but I took him at his word. Now, as I stood facing the customer, his eyelids seemed to flicker as he gave a slight nod, registering our presence, but waiting calmly, patiently. To be introduced.

"A collector?" I asked in a whisper, for the manner of the antique dealer seemed infectious, and began making guesses as to which category of curioso hunters the ruddy-cheeked stranger, sprawled so comfortably in his chair should be included: as a collector of watches or of stuffed birds, bronzes or mounted butterflies?

"Him?" the antique dealer stared at me, feigning surprise. "He's no collector. He's a collector's showpiece."

I did my best to conceal my shock and now gave the seated gentleman a thorough looking-over.

"Good God!" cried Kornelia, and her hand flew to her mouth in an effort to stifle what she had just uttered in the manner that truth dawning upon one is generally portrayed in old novels.

"That's right, Madam, you've got it," the dealer said, confirming her inference in a meaningful whisper.

He was a gentleman of between thirty and forty, dressed somewhat in the fashion of the last century—though these days, when it is no longer in fashion to be fashionable, it could as well have been the fashion of tomorrow as that of yesterday. The colours, the cut and the material of his clothing all bespoke of quality and faultless elegance alien to cheap modern shoddiness. Brown and red checks; tobacco-coloured (or perhaps well-used meerschaum-coloured) spats, cherry-red patent-leather shoes, a velvety silk smoking jacket with lapels and facings, ruffled shirt-front, cuffs that flashed diamond struds, and tapering slim fingers toying-fidgeting with a talisman dangling from a watch-chain, legs nonchalantly, elegantly crossed. What made me think he was closer to forty were the first crow's feet around the eyes, though the face was mischievously youthful with a boyish half-smile, the suspended smile of a man who knows too much about the world to... but who is still young enough to... I sensed an imposing private library behind those eyes, rows upon rows of leather bound volumes, that the owner of that civilized brain had absorbed all the erudition worth assimilating. Familiarity with the ways of men and serenity radiated from this captivating person—from the distinguished, silvery-white, downy side-whiskers (which have come into fashion again)—this man knew the tribulations of ecstasy, the fiery bitterness of libertine epicureans faced with the purity of the gospel, the pleasures of forgiveness, and the art of chasing the everlurking Tempter away. Travel, contentment, a wide circle of influential relatives, family and parliamentary connections, blasé dalliance with a paramour, the taste in one's mouth before and after assignations, and moderation in the arrangement of these trysts that begin at home with a bath, a rest and end with the reading of a Greek author, musing upon this and that while reading, dipping into the book now and then while musing; and the only reason that the much-sought man about town, the esteemed causeur does not now practice the art of converstion is that he is at present sharpening the sword-blades of his wit—the dreaded dagger of raillery—on the grindstone of melancholy; which grindstone is the dearly acquired spoils of the worldly-wise and is granted only to those who, sitting quiet and still in such a cushioned, ample, scarlet plush armchair, gazing out of palatial windows, can range their eyes over woodlands and snowcapped mountains that they can call their own, the likes of which we, ordinary mortals can only rarely, reverently view on the occasion of conducted tours of great houses, in snowy woodland heights in which age does not entail proprietory rights.

"I warmly recommend him," the proprietor continued in a whisper, and adjusted the price-tag peeping out from beneath the fringed trimming of the armchair at the back, in order that it should escape our attention.

"What is it?" Kornelia and I asked almost simultaneously, thinking the same thoughts, as old married couples used to each other tend to do.

"This? It dates back to the last century. Seventies or eighties. Dogs I always keep in stock, they had many of those made. They were life-like enough to scare off burglars prowling around the house in the twilight, they made hundreds of dogs. This is something different. It's a rarity. The price, naturally, is proportionally..."

The antique dealer was in high spirits and in his element, but would say no more.

"Yes, but what is it?"

"Take a look at this, if you will. There is no flaking, no cracks or flaws, the glaze is still perfect. If you would just step over here, Madam, and take a look from over here, in semi-profile. Who'd say he wasn't alive?"

"You're right. Who would? It's not only that he seems alive, his mouth seems ready to speak, I can almost hear what he would say..."

"Or if he doesn't say it," continued Kornelia, "it's only because he is biting it back so as to let someone else speak, wishing to be tactful and considerate."

"The gentleman! The ideal guest!"

"The Platonic idea of a guest!"

"That's right, sir. You have hit the nail on the head. That is what he is, absolutely."

"Absolutely what?"

"A spare guest."

We turned to face each other, Kornelia and I, and laughed, enchanted. A spare guest! How glorious! The dealer continued to explain in his throaty voice:

"That's right. A spare guest. Lends itself particularly well to. For example. One of your guests should unexpectedly cry off at the last minute. Or refuse your invitation, or accept but forget to turn up after all. You just carry your spare guest in from the store-room, put him in the drawing room, seat him in the missing guest's place."

"Carry him in? We'd break our backs. He must weight a ton."

"Trundle him in."

"You mean the armchair goes with him?"

"Not only is it included in the price, it is all of a piece. They are built together, an entity, so to speak. It is included. In the price."

My eyes met Kornelia's. We were thinking the same thought. It would be terrible. Carrying him around like a corpse. And how are we to know that he isn't a carefully mounted corpse beneath that modern plastic-embalmed poly-vinyl coating? It gave one the shivers. All the figures in a waxworks are coarse, clumsy botched pieces compared to this, our spare guest, individualized with biological exactitude and perfection, minutely detailed and delicately tinted, to the cobweb-fine wrinkles, the pores of the skin. He does everything but breathe.

The dealer continued to enthuse, still in a whisper.

"It can be trundled in, sir, of course it can, on the original brass castors. I should think so! Oh, the laughter there is when the guests find out just what he

is: conversation livens up at once. Just think, sir, Madam, just imagine. But there need not be other guests. Just roll him in, seat him between the two of you. Nod to him now and then, smile at him, wink at him, offer him coffee, urge him to have another slice of cake. Listen to music together, in the cosy company of three. The illusion of hospitality, entirely. A spare guest can make life brighter. Give life meaning. Make it more intimate."

My wife and I exchanged a meaningful glance.

"And the price?"

"I will tell you directly."

The proprietor disappeared into his glass cubicle to look up the price of the piece in his book while we, in pleasurable anticipation over our purchase, strolled about the shop and looked round, happy and excited. As one does when one has resolved that—cost what it may—the desired object shall be acquired.

We paid no heed, indeed hardly noticed the light carriage, nor when it arrived. It was suddenly there. Kornelia discovered it, pointing with her gloved hand through the medley of the display: look, a carriage. Though it was most peculiar looking, for a carriage.

A glossy-coated black horse pawed the ground pretentiously between the lacquered shafts, the coachman sat in state high up at the back above the ornamented bird-cage-like coach-box; a key-and-crown on the coat-of-arms on the door, escutcheons of gold. We heard the swish of a cloak and the slap of a stick beating age-old dust (the proprietor did not even look up from the book he was perusing). The unknown gentleman got up from his plush velvet armchair and, his amiable expression unchanged, straightened up. He was taller than one would have thought on seeing him seated.

"Good God!" said Kornelia for the second time, but this time near to fainting. I, too, shivered as I stared after the tall figure striding towards the door.

At the door he turned back and gave me a last glance side-ways—looking me straight in the eye. I could not suffer his gaze, it cut me to the bone.

"Have it wrapped for me."

And he pointed at me with his carved ivory walking stick. With blithe superiority, supreme indifference.

Upon hearing the husky deep baritone, my sympathy changed into unsuppressable repulsion. I'd show this impudent cad!

"Hem! Hem! Hem!"

The words came out disjointed, unintelligible. (Was I imagining it? Or did I only wish I were?) The antique dealer was already standing in the door of his glass cage, his spectacles pushed up on his forehead.

"I have it! Here it is! The price..."

He was cut short.

"Is of no account."

"At your service." There was no hint of surprise in his throaty, hoarse whisper. The eye-glasses hanging from a cord slipped back on his nose; he lowered the book. "Both of them, Your Lordship?"

"Only the fellow."
"Only the one, then."
"It's a good likeness."
"Six hundred and fifty thousand—it's unique."
"On account of its being such a good likeness—such a stupid, fatuous face."
"At your service."
"And have it sent to the town-house."
"As you wish, Your Lordship."
A deep bow accompanied by a catarrhal wheeze.

A snap of the fingers from the doorway (one-two!) and the Newfoundland laboriously scrambles to its feet, and shaking its shaggy coat, follows his master, glossy-bright. Outside it leaps lazily into the carriage which shudders under his weight, engulfs him and his master—and is gone.

I stand benumbed with shock: I cannot speak, cannot even stammer. Cannot. And in a few moments, when the numbness should by rights be wearing off, I become aware that it is not abating at all. That I really cannot produce a sound. This makes me number than ever. An incomprehensible oppression weighs on my benumbed brain, a crystalline dimness descends upon it.

Through this glazed luminosity all I can remember is some hulking shop assistant catching my Kornelia up and slinging her over his shoulder. Kornelia lies stiff as a beam across those shoulders and if a cry for help froze on her lips, her unseeing eyes reveal nothing as they meet mine. She swings awkwardly, lumpish on her way into the stock-room.

I am swathed in rustling brown wrapping paper, tilted, laid flat and tied up with string, caught up and carried—by whom or where I do not know. In that shaking, shuddering corner (if it was that, but even the rumble of the carriage only seemed to be; it was not meant for me) I stared into that inner darkness where I was last—but could not see myself anywhere.

Translated by Eszter Molnár

Boldizsár Nagy

The Danube Dispute: Conflicting Paradigms

I. Modern vs. postmodern

The community of the handful Hungarian public international lawyers at the moment is under fire from two sides: devoted environmentalists claim that the termination in May 1992 of the 1977 Treaty on the establishment and operation of the Bős (Gabcikovo)—Nagymaros barrage system has come too late, whereas diplomats and other "realists" sometimes express disagreement with that unilateral step, one which they feel was not justifiable. What is wrong then, was it too late, too early, or is this not a legal issue at all and no legal response can therefore be adequate?

To save the reader's time, let me first propose the conclusion, as in a court judgement, and after that the justification of the dictum, for those who are willing to examine to what extent law is capable of serving as a vehicle of postmodern action on a large scale.

The thesis I suggest is the following: the dispute between Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia is a conflict between incompatible paradigms.

This can easily be summarized in the comparisons laid out on the facing page.

The Hungarian government's views represent a postmodern, not growth but preservation oriented approach. It is ready to face a loss of 30 billion forints (approximately $370 million) or more now, in order not to have the barrages, in order to save incalculable billions of forints in the future, which would have to be spent on purification, alternative drinking water resources, and on the maintenance of an enormous construction and its associated dikes, dams, power stations, weirs, locks, etc.

The Czecho-Slovak government[1] is dominated by a modernization driven and growth oriented approach. In addition, it uses the genuinely myopic argument that the project must be operated because it is already there. Politicians in Prague have repeatedly admitted that in the light of present knowledge the investment would not be started now, but since it is close to completion, it should be operated.

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	Hungary	Czecho-Slovakia
Perspective	Long term perspective	Short term perspective
Value assessment	Discount rate low: high present value of future drinking water, near natural conditions.	Discount rate high: hardly any value in the present of assets, resources to be consumed in remote future. Does not want to invest *now* for a return in fifty years.
Posterity	Care for future generations, their life supporting systems and basic natural resources.	Does not contemplate the situation of generations to come. "They should care for themselves, as we do for ourselves" mentality.
Risk-management	Adoption of the precautionary principle regulating prudent behaviour in circumstances of uncertainty: according to this principle, lack of full and final scientific proof of future damage is not an entitlement to go ahead; projects should be stopped even if there is "only" a high probability, not certainty, of damage.	Belief in the technical solution: man is master of the universe, whatever he destroys he can correct, nothing is irreversible. Mere likelihood of immense future loss is not a reason to endure a qualitatively smaller, but certain present loss.
Market economy or else	Goods with no market value (scenery, the presence of irreplaceable archeological sites, rich biodiversity) are nevertheless valuable, they deserve sacrifices, including financial ones.	Market economy dictates "reasonable market behaviour", tradeable services like energy and navigational improvement have priority over symbolic values.
Survival vs. growth	The goal is balance with nature, sustainable existence (not necessarily development in terms of growth).	The goal is modernization in industrial terms, growth, expansion, domination over nature.
Politics	There are no hidden political objectives involved in stopping the project.	Confessed and unstated political goals dominate the decision to proceed.

[1] When this article was written (mid-November, 1992) Czecho-Slovakia was the only subject of public international law. Neither a separate Czech republic nor Slovakia existed legally. Therefore throughout this paper I shall denominate the other party to the dispute as Czecho-Slovakia, being very well aware that in practice already for the last year it was Slovakia and the Slovak political leaders who shaped political and legal developments.

Can international law help? Can this dispute involving incompatible paradigms be solved by invoking a third paradigm, that of the law and the mechanism for settling legal disputes? How can these positions be reflected within international legal discourse? The following will give a brief survey of the possible Hungarian arguments.

The International Court of Justice in the Hague will involve itself in three distinct fields of international law: those of treaties, of responsibility and liability, and of environmental laws.

The essence of the case is simple. Hungary claims that it is no longer bound by the treaty of 1977 since its fulfilment would produce such environmental damages and economic losses on a scale that performance would amount to self-destruction. According to Czecho-Slovakia, the rule that treaties must be kept, *pacta sunt servanda,* prevails over any environmental or economic consideration, therefore Hungary cannot be relieved from the treaty obligations.

There is a further—at the moment more painful— aspect of the conflict, namely the unilateral diversion of both water and international navigation to Czecho-Slovak territory. This is dubbed "the provisional solution" or "variant C" by Czecho-Slovakia, implying that the barrage at Cunovo and the dikes recently completed exclusively on the Slovak side, which are for the diversion of the water and which leave almost 40 kilometers of the old Danube bed with ten per cent of its original water-flow, are merely temporary technical measures taken to realize the goals mutually adopted by the parties back in 1977. Hungary emphatically rejects this, arguing first that the 1977 treaty has been terminated, so no provisional measures may and can be taken for the execution of a non-existing treaty. Further, Hungary also claims, that even if the original agreement establishing the barrage system were in force, this provisional solution could not be seen as an execution of that treaty, since it violates many of its vital provisions and produces a fundamentally different factual and legal result than the consequence of the original treaty would have been.

II. The termination of the 1977 treaty establishing the barrage system

This treaty reflects the late Brezhnev period: an obviously irrational undertaking, based on the industrialization goals of the fifties, but only put into effect in the agonizing seventies, when symbolic monuments had to demonstrate the superiority of socialism in a period when its inferiority in the non-symbolic sphere could not be hidden any longer. It is useful to recall the turns in the way the enormous investment was justified: first it was shipping, the improvement of navigation and flood protection, then, after the first oil shock, energy was written on the banner. As the recession started to hit Central Europe and the growing number of factory shut-downs made it clear that there would not be a real increase in energy demand, proponents of the barrage system started to emphasize the complex potential of the project, referring to not only the previously mentioned elements, but environmental protection and regional development as well.

None of the justifications holds water. That, however, in itself could not have justified the termination of the treaty, since bad commitments are as valid as good ones. The reasons which did entitle Hungary to discontinue construction are the following:

A/ Treaty law arguments

1. Czecho-Slovakia was in breach of the treaty which entitled Hungary to withhold performance.

Czecho-Slovakia did not fulfill the obligations included in Articles 15 and 19 of the 1977 Treaty, according to which "the Contracting Parties ensure that the quality of the water in the Danube is not impaired as a result of the construction and operation of the dam system", and "ensure compliance with the obligations for the protection of nature arising in connection with the construction and operation of the dam system". Most of the purification plants essential for public and industrial waste water treatment on Czecho-Slovak territory were not even designed, let alone built. Without them the silt deposited in the reservoir will be heavily polluted, with anaerobic dynamics, iron and manganese mobilization, and infiltration of toxic materials which will pollute the ground water reserves of the Szigetköz and Csallóköz, islands which hold drinking water reserves for five million people. Considering that these facts imply the violation of a provision essential to the accomplishment of the object and purpose of the 1977 treaty, Hungary can invoke "a material breach of a bilateral treaty... as a ground for terminating the treaty." These are the words of the Convention on the Law of Treaties, adopted in Vienna in 1969 (henceforth, the Vienna Convention) to which both Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia are now parties, and which reflects rules of customary law. This latter point is important since, for technical reasons, the Vienna Convention does not directly apply to the 1977 treaty. It only entered into force for both states in 1987, and has no retroactive effect.

2. Fundamental change of circumstances.

This principle has a long history in international law and is also included in the Vienna Convention. According to Art. 62. par. 1 of the Convention, a fundamental change of circumstances, which has occurred with regard to those circumstances existing at the time of the conclusion of a treaty, and which was not foreseen by the parties, may be invoked if

"a) the existence of those circumstances constituted an essential basis of the consent of the parties to be bound by the treaty".

The preamble of the 1977 Treaty stated explicitly that construction of the dam system would "significantly contribute to bringing about the socialist integration of the member states of Comecon". Obviously, the changes that took place in both countries in 1989 could not be foreseen in 1977 indeed, until

summer 1989. These changes resulted in a complete turnaround of the domestic and international situation, including the dissolution of Comecon and the discarding of the idea of "socialist integration".

Radical changes in the assessment of the state of the environment, including the relative value of drinking water stocks, have also taken place. These changes made it possible and necessary to have environmental considerations become a priority, at least in Hungary.

So, it is not political changes themselves which are used as an argument for terminating the treaty because of the fundamental change of circumstances, but the disappearance of those specific conditions and goals which were mentioned in the 1977 treaty—Comecon and the strengthening of socialism.

3. General rules of international environmental law.

The treaty of 1977 is incompatible with so many rules, principles and requirements of nature conservation and environmental protection that its fulfillment would not be allowed, even if the previous violations of law or the fundamental change of circumstances did not serve as a basis for termination of the treaty.

The rules of general international law on environmental protection, which have developed since the adoption of the plans for the system, take precedence over treaty provisions which were adopted earlier or are contradictory to them. These norms have recently been expressed in a number of international documents. Just to quote one out of many: principle No. 3 of the World Charter for Nature, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1982, declares that "special protection shall be given to unique areas, to representative samples of all different types of ecosystems, and to the habitats of rare or endangered species". It also states that "man's needs can be met only by ensuring the proper functioning of natural systems", and that conservation of nature must become an integral part of the planning process. By not destroying the unique ecosystems of the Szigetköz and Csallóköz islands, the riparian states would only fulfill what is required by modern environmental law, which a fifteen year old treaty envisaging large scale nature destruction cannot be in conflict with. Both Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia are under an obligation to protect nature, non-renewable natural resources and the environment, therefore the choice is not between legality, that is the performance of the 1977 treaty, and breach of law, but between different obligations and different breaches. The 1977 treaty demands large scale nature destruction, general environmental law demands its protection. Hungary has chosen to perform the latter obligation—which emerged later in time—Czecho-Slovakia insists on performing the earlier bilateral treaty and thus on breaching general international law.

These arguments were related to the termination—not denunciation or abrogation!— of the 1977 treaty by Hungary. If these arguments do not satisfy and it is desired to insist on the performance of the treaty, then the arguments to be turned to should be based on the law of responsibility, enunciating reasons which exclude the wrongfulness of non-performance of a treaty.

B/ Law of responsibility, circumstances precluding wrongfulness

The construction and operation of the dam system causes an ecological state of necessity. The state of necessity precludes the wrongfulness of the termination.

This norm of general international law appears, first of all, in Article 33 of the Draft on State Responsibility prepared by the International Law Commission of the United Nations. According to paragraph 1 of this Article, a state can invoke the state of necessity as a ground for precluding the wrongfulness of its act if a) "the act was the only means of safeguarding an essential interest of the state against a grave and imminent peril;", and b) "the act did not seriously impair an essential interest of the State towards which the obligation existed."

For the Hungarian State, grave and imminent peril would follow from the operation of the dam system. In the commentary appended to the above-mentioned Article (to which there was no objection by the representative of Czecho-Slovakia), the International Law Commission pointed out that, "reference can be made to the state of necessity... as a ground for State conduct not in conformity with international law in cases where such conduct proves necessary by way of exception, in order to avert a serious and imminent danger which, even if not inevitable, nevertheless, a threat to a vital ecological interest". Since the environmental danger would be just as significant in Czecho-Slovakia as in Hungary, termination of the Treaty would not seriously impair an essential interest of the Czech and Slovak Republic.

III. The unilateral diversion of the Danube by Czecho-Slovakia on October 23, 1992

This step has led to a deterioration of the situation, giving ground for further arguments.

1. The diversion of the Danube violates Hungarian sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The Danube is an international river, which upon leaving the area of Bratislava becomes a border river between Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia. Thus, this section of the Danube is under the territorial jurisdiction of the two states, as regulated by a set of international treaties. Consequently, a state may not change the course of the river unilaterally depriving the other state of the control over this natural resource and strategically important constituent of its territory.

2. The diversion of the Danube violates the provisions of the treaties fixing the borderline and its character between the two countries.

According to Art. 1, par. 4 (b) of the Paris Peace Treaty, "the frontier between Hungary and Czechoslovakia is hereby restored as it existed on January 1, 1938", subject to a few minor alterations. These 1938 borders were identical with those that had been determined by the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty. According to Art. 27, par. 4 of the Trianon Peace Treaty, the border of Hungary is "le cours principal de navigation du Danube." Art 1, par. 4 (c) of the Paris Peace Treaty, as well as Art. 2, par. 3 of the later bilateral Treaty on Regulation of the Regime of State Borders of 1956 between Czechoslovakia and Hungary, uses the same expression. According to Art. 3, par. 1 of the 1956 treaty on borders, any change that would result in the alteration of the borderline would have to be by the mutual consent of both parties. Unilateral diversion alters the character of the border completely because the main course of navigation no longer correlates with the borderline, depriving Hungary of its lawful jurisdiction over a major economic lifeline.

Czecho-Slovakia's "provisional solution" infringes its bilateral Agreement with Hungary on the Management of Water-supplies of Border Waters, concluded in 1976. According to Art. 3, par. 1 of the Agreement, the two states agree that "a) ... without mutual consent they do not take any action in the management of water-supplies that would unfavourably interfere with the mutually determined conditions of the waters and, b) ... they make use of riverbeds... in such a manner that they do not cause damage to each other". According to Art. 4, par. 3, "a preceding approval is required by both parties, in accordance with their domestic legal rules for an action of management that would result in the alteration of the line or character of the State borders". Thus, clearly, any unilateral action by either Hungary or Czecho-Slovakia is unlawful.

3. The "provisional solution" violates the rules and principles of customary international law that regulate the status and utilization of transboundary environmental resources such as international rivers.

The "provisional solution" deprives Hungary of its due share of water quantity, water quality and power potential, and substantially impairs the quality and quantity of other natural resources, such as the forests of the flood area, the water table and the genetic diversity of the region, all of which form an integral unit with the watercourse. According to well established principles and rules of international environmental law, any state act affecting a transboundary resource must be in conformity with certain principles and rules of customary international law.

Without going into details or citing legal documents for all but the most important maxims, let me name some of these principles:

—States shall maintain ecosystems and related ecological processes essential for food production, health and other aspects of human survival.

—States are under a duty to ensure the survival and promote the conservation in their natural habitat of fauna and flora, in particular those which are

rare, endemic or endangered. Among others, the World Charter for Nature and the IUCN Draft Covenant on Environmental Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources provide support for the wide-spread acceptance of this principle. Studies have demonstrated that the "provisional solution" would cause the disappearance of species diversity and genetic varieties, and that eventually eighty or ninety percent of the flora and fauna would vanish.

—States shall co-operate in good faith in the implementation of the principles affecting transboundary resources.

—States shall use transboundary resources in a reasonable and equitable manner. Art. 5 of the United Nations International Law Commission's Draft on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses, which has been submitted for governments of the member states of the United Nations after its completion by the expert members of this renowned codification commission, specifically includes this principle, entitling states to use a reasonable and equitable share of the waters of an international watercourse. If conflict arises between uses of an international watercourse, the ILC Draft Art. 10 par. 2 states that it has to be resolved with reference to a great number of factors, "special regard being given to the requirements of vital human needs".

—States planning to carry out activities which may entail significant adverse effects in an area under the jurisdiction of another State shall provide that State with timely notification. Such notification shall be accompanied by available technical data and information in order to enable the notified state to evaluate the possible effects of the planned measures. Czecho-Slovakia has never provided Hungary with appropriately detailed notice, through official channels, of its planned actions. Nor has Czecho-Slovakia officially provided Hungary with the technical data and information to assess the full damage that will occur upon implementation of the "provisional solution".

—States shall take precautionary measures to anticipate, prevent or minimize damage to their transboundary resources and mitigate adverse effects.

—States are responsible under international law for a breach of an international obligation relating to the use of a natural resource and are under an obligation to cease the internationally wrongful act and re-establish the situation which would have existed if the act had not taken place. It must provide compensation for the harm which resulted from the wrongful act. Similarly, states are bound to the fundamental rule *sic utere tuo ut alienum non laedas*. This rule implies the broader duty not to cause significant harm to other riparian states in any manner, independently of fault. A state is liable for damages even if its act did not amount to an internationally recognized wrongful act, to a violation of a binding rule. The judgment of the International Court of Justice in the Corfu Channel case in 1949, the Trail Smelter arbitration award in 1941, and, most recently, Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration, incorporate this principle. The "provisional solution" violates a number of Czecho-Slovakia's international legal obligations and causes exactly that type of prohibited harm.

4. Minor issues: jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, state succession

Although both countries are parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), this is not enough to establish the Court's jurisdiction. The parties themselves have to empower the Court to decide their case. If any of the parties to a dispute has not made a unilateral declaration recognizing the Court's jurisdiction in relation to any other state accepting the same obligation (see Art 36 par. 2 of the Statute of the ICJ), and there is no treaty provision obliging the parties to submit a dispute in connection with the treaty to the ICJ, then the jurisdiction of the court has to be established on an ad hoc basis, by specific agreement of the interested states. Hungary first tried to achieve this by submitting an application on the 23rd of October 1992, hoping that Czecho-Slovakia would accept jurisdiction by responding to the substance and not simply deny jurisdiction, later signed a protocol with Czecho-Slovakia on the 28th of October 1992, in London, to negotiate a common special agreement formulating the questions the Court would be called up to answer, (*compromis*, as it is called technically).

The Court will have to decide on both legal issues raised above. If the fifteen or—together with the ad hoc judges appointed by the parties themselves—seventeen member body finds that either the termination of the 1977 treaty by Hungary or the unilateral diversion of the Danube and the main navigation channel by Czecho-Slovakia was not in conformity with international law, it will have to decide upon the consequences of the wrongfulness. Both Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia claim that they have suffered and—in case of the operation of the project—will suffer enormous material losses. The Court will be faced with an array of extremely interesting legal—and moral— questions, starting with the value of a working hour of an East European labourer in the 1970s, and ending with the present value of a glass of drinkable water in the year 2000.

Before entering on the merits, the Court will have to decide an issue without precedent within its own practice: does the submission to the jurisdiction by the federal state of Czecho-Slovakia extend to the successor states or not. If the answer is in the affirmative, then a further dilemma emerges: is it only Slovakia—where the whole project is located, and which claims to benefit from its operation— which has to participate in the procedure and bear the consequences of the sentence or should the other successor state, the Czech Republic also be held responsible and liable for injuries inflicted on Hungary before the separation? There are forceful arguments supporting both options and I do not wish to prejudge the wisdom of the Court.

5.Winding up

This wisdom of the Court will have to be almost inexhaustible considering the enormous importance of the underlying problem. These decent and respected

public international lawyers will have to reconcile the conflicting paradigms, they will have to decide on the moral and social dilemmas concerning the preferred way of our resource use. In a period of rollback against environmental thinking and practice, non-radical judges, equipped with the fairly conservative rules of a status quo protecting international law, will have to prove that long term survival, sustainable existence and preserving values, which are not tradeable on the world market, are dear to the wise men and politicians; they will have to prove that, in the words of Principle 1 of the Rio Declaration adopted in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development:

"Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature".

This is a conflict between technological systems, driven by growth-oriented industrialists whose maximum attention span is that of an election period, and the biological systems represented by humans who recognize themselves as embedded in processes covering several generations at least. Let us hope that the latter will gain a further argument by a decision of the Court. No doubt, a judgement based on the precautionary principle, favouring natural resources over nature—degrading industrialization, would be praised far beyond Europe, in all quarters of our planet where stock of drinking water, wetlands, habitats are disappearing at a frightening speed.

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János Martonyi

The EC and Central Europe

No question concerning Hungary's foreign relations and its future role has been discussed in the last year or two at such length as possible membership of the European Community. The discussion is concerned with the conditions and the required preparations and the consequences of membership of a European Community, that symbolizes the unity of Europe and which despite its crises, continues to grow in strength and size, and will soon be replaced by the European Union. This is a question that will decide the country's future, and how it is decided may well in itself change that future.

Full EC membership has become an earnest of the catch phrase "returning to Europe". This can be taken as self-evident since the Community, especially for outsiders, stands not only for what we value when we use the term European, but also for peace, prosperity, successful integration, and the absurdity of armed conflict. It is thanks to its success that the Community has become a channel of crucial importance for the process of unifying Europe, chiefly responsible for the future of Europe and just about every country in Europe outside it has made joining it a prime objective.

Full EC membership is clearly a central factor in Hungary's foreign policy aims as well, and there is a clear national consensus regarding the basic issue. The when and how, however, are the subject of debate. Unfortunately, the differing views have not yet been clearly articulated and tend to avoid details. Nevertheless, there is a growing need for the clash and articulation of different approaches and views, since this is the most important question facing Hungary at the end of the century. The future of the European Union and Hungary's role within it will determine the nation's future for a long time to come.

Thus while there seems to be agreement on full membership, as a goal, there have been, and will be, voices that, though not questioning the long-term goal, suggest alternative ways and means. It therefore makes sense to establish whether there is any possible alternative to EC membership, be it only on a theoretical or hypothetical level.

The only realistic option

Some time ago the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) appeared as an alternative on the computer screens of Hungarian trade policy think

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tanks. The latest version of that policy argues that the country should find its way to the European Community via EFTA membership rather than by entering an association agreement and gradually deepening and developing the process of association. That was an unrealistic idea in the first place, and has now become meaningless. The seven EFTA member countries have signed an accord with the EC on creating the European Economic Area, (EEA) thereby a special transitional period leading from twenty years of free trade relationship to full membership, the short-term goal of most EFTA countries. The last few months have seen an acceleration in this respect: Austria, Sweden and Finland have already applied, Norway and Switzerland can be expected to do so as well.

The Community's strategy for extension, in a stage of preparation, will very likely give priority to the EFTA members in the large pool of potential candidates for EC membership. That will probably bring forward admission for those countries that have already applied for membership; they may well successfully conclude their talks on joining the EC as early as 1994. In such circumstances, the EEA accord (still in an early phase of a rather lengthy process of ratification) will itself lose some of its importance, retaining hardly more than the function of seeing that accession, welcome all round and promising to be troublefree anyway, will be even smoother. (There are, of course, those who, reflecting on historical experience, say, *ce n'est que le provisoire qui dure*.)

It is therefore unnecessary here to rehearse the arguments concerning EFTA as it is an illusory alternative. Those countries will already be EC members when Hungary starts abolishing customs dues that is, creating free trade under the conditions of the agreement of association. Hungary has so far been unable even to reach an asymmetric free trade agreement with EFTA member countries, who seem to insist even more on protectionism in trade in agricultural products than the Community itself; the steps they take are not being influenced by the political vision necessary to rise above narrowly interpreted economic interests. Thus the EC-EFTA alternative is, owing to recent developments, less realistic today than it had ever been.

Another—purely theoretical—notion, so far not mentioned by economists, is that if the process of Hungary's joining the EC should fail completely, or become bogged down for a considerable period for outside reasons, policy-makers should cease to long for what cannot be achieved and, taking the hint from far from official American suggestions, enter into a free trade agreement with the United States. The essence of this "Israeli" model would be for Hungary to establish free trade with both the EC and the US, the world's two greatest trading powerhouses, and enjoy the advantages of doing so, while staying out of the European integration even where economics are concerned.

Naturally, remaining outside the European integration would mean that, quite apart from being squeezed out of the economic community, Hungary would be left out of the future security and defense integration as well. Participation in European integration cannot be compared with free trade even from the aspect of the economy, since free trade does not include the very

essence of integration: the implementation of a common policy and the extensive set of community rules that are to be directly applied in the member states. Thus such an alternative would mean Hungary giving up the idea of participating in the European integration and that would contradict the country's basic objectives. Yet the possibility described above cannot be completely ruled out for the future, especially if the seemingly inevitable temporary but spectacular setbacks to Hungary's efforts to join disappoint some people.

A third theoretical alternative, not mentioned so far in its purest form, is to create a kind of Central and East European integration. The energy needed to start thinking in that direction could be provided by the frustration stemming from Hungary being temporarily denied entry to Europe, even though the economic and political conditions of such an integration are absent and will continue to be absent. In their absence, this alternative is not worth considering. Another and far more intriguing question is the level current Central European efforts towards some integration should reach prior to joining the European Community, and the role such forms of cooperation will play in the process of joining the European Community (or, rather Union). This question requires close attention but this is not the place for it since what I have in mind is not an integration to replace the EC; the question is rather what strategy and tactics the countries in the East European region should employ in order to make effective their desire to join in the speediest possible way.

There is, therefore, no realistic strategic alternative to joining the European Union. It is essential for Hungary to regard all dimensions of the integration, cooperation in the economy, in politics and security, as an integral whole. No solution is feasible which means progress in only one field or another. Participation in economic integration without a political dimension is just as unacceptable, as any however new and enticingly wrapped offer for Hungary to join an exclusively political integration. Joining such a Union would determine the future of the country for centuries. It will therefore be necessary to make this the subject of a debate that will closely consider not only the economic consequences of such a step, but the political, security, institutional, legal, cultural, psychological and other consequences as well.

The starting point of such considerations, however, must be that the most important aim and aspiration is to modernize the country, bringing it up to European standards. This major national aspiration is not inspired by a lust for power, nor does it aim at territorial expansion or a growth in influence. Successful participation in the concert of nations is something to be achieved by improving economic, cultural and scientific performance.

Timing

Opinions differ both in Hungary and among EC member states as regards the necessary and possible date of joining. In Hungary, the view that "speedy and premature" joining would cause tremendous shock waves to a

Hungarian economy unprepared for the event, with the ensuing damage exceeding the advantages, is expressed ever more frequently. That anxiety is connected with the argument for greater protection for the products of Hungarian industry against foreign competition that, in other words, a more forceful market and industrial protectionism is called for.

In a mood of growing reluctance to expose the country's economy to the shock of EC membership, it was most refreshing to hear the National Association of Entrepreneurs argue that it was a grave mistake on the part of the government to apply for membership in coordination with the Visegrád Three, expressing the Association's firm belief that Hungary could, together with Austria, become an EC member within two years. The increased self-confidence of some entrepreneurs is pleasing, of course, even though the target they set is clearly illusory today. A realistic perspective for Hungary's joining the EC will unfortunately occur only much later. There is no doubt, however, that the shock of joining is stressed more than justified, as indeed, it indirectly feeds outside voices using the argument of the country's unprepared state as an excuse to postpone the EC's extension into Central Europe for as long as possible. A noteworthy development occurred in the last two cases of entry where the aspects of different levels of economic development and the candidate countries' level of preparedness were given much smaller weight, and it became clear that conditions for joining the EC are qualitative rather than quantitative. Clearly, the candidates' political and economic systems must meet certain basic qualitative requirements that are in close association with the essence of this system. The level of economic development and the quantitative indicators in connection with that level cannot be decisive by themselves.

The argument of the shock effect should not be excessively emphasized, not only because it would eventually rebound on Hungary, but also because in this form it is simply not true. By signing the agreement of association, the country has already accepted the scheduled abolishing of restrictions against the influx of foreign goods. Further steps will be taken by Hungary, by signing free trade agreements with members of EFTA and with Poland and Czecho-Slovakia. With the advance of the process of association and the implementation of those free trade agreements, the great majority of Hungary's imports will reach the market without duties or quantitative limits, irrespective of when the country may become a full Community member.

Regardless of that, however, there is indeed a danger of integration shock, caused by the obligation to adopt the full set of regulations as well as by the new freedom in services, trade and capital movement. That obligation, though, is nothing less than a guarantee of Hungary's reaching her most important goals in economic and social transformation at an accelerated rate. It is fortunate that the current European situation offers up a solution that means an inevitable acceleration of the process of modernizing these areas and also aids this by external means. At the same time, it must be remembered that, at the time of joining the EC, Hungarians will be overwhelmed only in principle and

generally by the whole system of rules already established and by the operational mechanisms of integration, in other words, by the *acquis communautaire* to be unconditionally accepted by new members. Like newcomers of old, Hungary will have a relatively long period of transition, probably longer than ever before, possibly even ten years, in which she must gradually adopt the full system of Community regulations, meaning a gradual end to temporary deregulations and deviations that the treaty of accession will permit.

Thus, as far as one can tell today, the time of Hungary's joining the EC is a dilemma not for Hungary but for the other side. The shock of integration would entail real dangers to the country only if, owing to some miracle, the doors were opened within the next two or three years. But that, alas, is unlikely. The EC's strategy of expansion, currently in preparation, will certainly not specify a date, but make it clear that the extension towards Central Europe must be separated from the relatively problem-free extension embracing EFTA. The obvious consequence is that the countries of Central Europe will not be able to join before the closing years of our century. Many would love to postpone that date to even later. Refraining from making this explicit, they count on the benevolent argument of unpreparedness being useful at any time to justify further delays. It is clear that the present discrepancy among economic development levels will not be much smaller in the year 2000; any decrease is all the less likely since, by then, average per capita GDP within an EC enlarged by EFTA-member states will be essentially higher than today. The less industrialized member states are anxious about their financial advantages (amounting to billions annually), while rich members fear a rise in the demand for financial resources allocated for this purpose. The financial support inflow to the Visegrád Three would be considerable enough even in terms of the system currently applied; thus rough calculations made so far put the annual support to be allocated to Hungary within the framework of the current mechanism at 2bn Ecus. That sum does not include resources whose flow to the less industrialized member states will be taken care of by the common budget as part of the cohesion fund.

Maastricht and Visegrád

Another question concerning the date of entry but, from the aspect of Hungary's foreign policy strategy, more crucial and intricate, is whether Hungary should construct her strategy for joining the EC on her own, determining all the steps to be taken for that purpose, attempting to become a member of the European Union by herself at the earliest possible time; or should she accept partnership in the interest group formed around at least some countries of the Central European region and, on that basis, harmonize her strategy and steps with the other countries concerned. Clearly, the other countries here concerned are the Visegrád Three (or, Four).

This is a far from simple question and ought not to be removed from the

context of the whole of Hungary's long-term national foreign policy strategy, embracing, as it does, all the country's basic aims and aspirations. A full analysis would cover the historical dimensions, for the dilemma has its origins far back in time and will stretch far ahead into the future. The problem of alone or together is ultimately related to whether or not Hungarians believe in a genuine rebirth of Central Europe and accept that, after the dissolution of the East-West division, Central Europe is truly more than what György Konrád labels as "a cultural counter-hypothesis." (Attila Melegh, 1989.) Now, with the Berlin Wall gone and "the revolution of human dignity", as István Bibó put it, successfully achieved, does Hungary profess that a genuine real community has been created which has a reason, a political and economic role and, mainly, a separate identity hidden perhaps in its linguistic, historical, religious, etc. heterogeneity? (György Gyarmati, 1989.) If we are to accept that the artificially created "Eastern Bloc", that was imposed on the region from the outside, is gone for good and that the "East-West dichotomy" (Géza Jeszenszky, 1989) was something forced and transitory, then we must accept what György Ránki said years ago, that "there are objective bases making the concept (of *Mitteleuropa*) functionally interpretable in the wider context of Europe and of the world economy". (György Gyarmati, 1989.)

Indeed, the cooperation of the Visegrád Three is simply a determined attempt to transform the cultural, historical and geographical reality of Central Europe into a political and economic reality. These countries are dependent on each other, they are doomed to the same fate and they have identical interests: economic and political cooperation between them would considerably facilitate and promote their most basic national aspirations, their modernization and the relatively speedy and harmonious fitting of their societies and economies into the European integration. It is equally important to achieve that cooperation in order to prevent a revival of traditional structures of confrontation of the period between the two world wars. In the light of growing nationalism throughout the region, that danger must not be underestimated.

It is in the vital interest of every one of these countries to seek cooperation instead of confrontation, and to ward off the latter temptation by establishing a multiform and gradually strengthening cooperation which will be capable of surviving minor and major crises, and which will increasingly embrace the economic microsphere as well as direct human relations. From the aspect of Hungary's future, this is just as important as the country's entry into the European Community. In fact, the two strategic aspects, strengthening cooperation in Central Europe, banishing the possibility of historical confrontation and joining the European integration, are not competing goals; rather, they complement and reinforce each other. European unity will understandably reject the conflicts of Central Eastern Europe but will be able to admit partners that are able and prepared to cooperate among each other as well.

Naturally, Visegrád is not the same as *Mitteleuropa*: for one thing, the borders of the latter cannot be drawn unambiguously. Some countries are already outside it, with their course taking a happier turn in the 1950s than that of

Hungary (though Hungarians cannot be blamed for that), while others are still outside it, having not yet made the value system and the actual standard embedded in the Central European idea, as represented by Visegrád, their own. The fact remains, however, that the Visegrád cooperation is the best expression of that identity without, of course, aiming at any sort of exclusivity.

The commonplace that gratitude and sympathy are not political categories is also true of international relations. Hungary would not do well to rely upon the sympathy and understanding of others in pursuing her aims. International political and economic links are as much determined by interests today as ever before, however sublime and long-term they may be. To achieve success, a policy needs to harmonize its goals to the largest possible degree, not only with its own set of standards but with those of the other party as well, while effectively making the other party aware of their mutual interests. With the aim of fully joining the European integration, this means that priority has to be given to an exploration, more thorough than ever before, of the role and importance of the Central European contribution to European integration. The point is not only that "the current geographical distribution of the Twelve is absurd both in the political and economic senses" (Ralf Dahrendorf, 1991), meaning it is absurd to speak about a unified Europe that does not include Vienna, Prague, Cracow, Bratislava or Budapest; in this specific historical situation, these countries offer a special bonus, a unique dedication to Europe, whose crucial origin lies in the almost full coincidence of their national and European aspirations. That dedication might release the extra amount of energy that is so badly needed, even at the current phase of the great work of constructing Europe.

As a result of the coincidence of national aspirations and the dedication to integration, these countries today are far more willing to accept the obligations that go with a unified Europe than many present member states of the European Community as it is now constituted.

For example, the Visegrád states would not for a moment hesitate to unquestioningly accept the principle of *finalité politique*, understanding that the alpha and omega, the root and final objective of the European integration is a politically unified Europe. That political vision was at the back of the whole undertaking and, having laid the foundations of economic integration, it will soon be time for Europe to return to the starting point and make the critical decisions needed to create a unified Europe. The Maastricht treaty pointing in that direction is still half-hearted and ambiguous, as political union has largely remained confined to intergovernmental cooperation. However, consistent decision-making on such subjects cannot be delayed too long. It must be clearly defined whether Europe wants to spend the next thousand years as a structure of sovereign national states or as a uniform structure based upon genuine community and shared sovereignty. Central Europe is simply indispensable in this parturition. Its historical experience and tragedies (interchangeable terms, indeed) impell it towards the shedding of the logic of power exercised by national states, and direct its national aspirations to the economy and culture, while maintaining the indispensable

categories of nation and national identity. And here we are, back at the determining principle of Hungarian foreign policy, the essence of her national aspirations.

Naturally, proving a dedication to Europe will not be as easy in practice, since we have dealt so far with a set of values rather than everyday realities. This is why some hard thinking must be devoted to not only what the *finalité politique* actually means to Hungary but also to the meaning of the *acquis communautaire*, that is, the acceptance by, and implanting into, Hungary's economic, legal and institutional system of the Community's system of regulations and mechanisms developed over the years. In some areas the gap is huge, though in others Hungarians are not as far behind as they are inclined to believe. They must accurately survey their present situation, the steps to be taken, the sacrifices to be made, the internal and external hurdles to be overcome, be these in their economy, legal system or even in their thinking.

If, for instance, Hungary would resolve herself to gradually adopt the "derivative right" prevailing in the European Community, she would do what the EFTA-member signatories to the accord of May 2, 1992 on creating the European Economic Region have undertaken to do. In the fields of consumer protection, social policy, environmental protection, to name just a few, Hungary is faced with a tremendous amount of work and with the covering of the ensuing costs. No delay can be brooked, since the *acquis communautaire* is widening rather than shrinking; when the time comes for Hungary's entry into the Community, it will be far more extensive than it is today, regarding economic and financial union, the creation of a common currency, uniform citizenship, a "welfare Europe", and the labour law deriving from that, etc.

The criteria for joining

All the necessary steps must be taken, all the necessary tools must be employed in order to achieve Hungary's full membership as soon as possible. The country must demonstrate her commitment to integration, her willingness to fully accept the political aims and the established structure; at the same time, she must ask to be provided with an approximate schedule for the individual steps required by the process, as well as the criteria and conditions under which the Community would want to measure the success of changes in Hungary and the extent to which she is prepared for the integration.

A detailed definition of the criteria of joining would in fact serve the interests of both parties. For the candidate it would clarify the demands that have to be met; for the Community it would supply a guarantee protecting it from flimsily-based applications for admittance by countries left outside. Naturally, if admittance is to be considered to depend exclusively on present members' unilateral discretion, that is if it is considered a unilateral act, then no such guarantee is necessary. But joining cannot be considered to be a matter for such a unilateral decision, either from the political or the legal point of view: the EC must remain open on principle to all European countries. In itself,

joining is a result of an agreement, a treaty of joining born out of bilateral negotiations. The criteria are basically linked with the essence and quality of the candidate country's political and economic structure, and thus cannot be quantified.

As to the political conditions, they are mainly linked to the commitment to Europe already mentioned, and to the set of values whose unconditional acceptance is indispensable, both to carry out the obligations arising from membership and to the operation of the Community. More is needed here than just ensuring that a candidate country adopt the known requirements of a democratic political system and constitutional state as laid down in many an international document (including as a matter of course the enforcement of human and minority rights). The main conditions include harmony between the concerned country's set of values and aspirations, and the future image of Europe that determines the shaping of the integration even today. What is needed is cooperation instead of confrontation, tolerance instead of intolerance, self-restraint and readiness for compromise instead of insistence on the enforcement of selfish interests.

The economic criteria are also relatively easy to define. The country wishing to join the community must clearly have an operable market economy, where the development of market mechanisms has reached the critical threshold that is imperative for the transnational liberation of economic factors. Private ownership will play a decisive role in that economy, all the more so as its absence would block the way to creating a lasting political democracy—the most essential of the political conditions. The country's currency must have the level of convertibility needed for the free movement of goods, services, individuals, and capital. The stress is on quality compatibility rather than on the level of economic development. These criteria must be distinguished from the expanding elements of the *acquis communautaire*. The quality conditions of admittance may remain unchanged, which provides security for both parties, but the *acquis communautaire* will evidently keep on changing, so that the country intending to join the Community will obviously have to accept and adopt whatever is the current system. The same is true for institutional and legal criteria. The legal system must therefore be able to adopt European law as concerns both the decrees to be directly employed and the principles to be implemented by the national legislatures, all to be done in a way that refrains from disrupting that legal system's integrity.

To create legal compatibility is outstandingly important, especially when one remembers that, since its birth, the EC has always regarded legislation as the chief tool for implementing the integration; indeed, the economic integration itself is built up through a delicate, finely chiselled, system of rights and duties, created by legal norms. By now Community legislation has gone far beyond economic lawmaking and is gradually embracing new fields. Again, the main demand on a candidate country is not the immediate adoption of the entire system of regulations but to make the quality of its legal system capable of integrating the laws of the European Communities.

The main strategy of Hungary's drive towards integration is to satisfy the set of criteria for the country's integration as soon as possible, preferably at an accelerated pace. In international economic relations Hungarians have advanced a fair way: almost half of Hungary's foreign trade is with EC member countries; the admittance of EFTA members will increase that proportion to two-thirds. Half of the foreign investment in Hungary also comes from the EC, but the US maintains a much higher rate in investment than in trade. Currently under elaboration, Hungary's strategy for joining must define the elements of qualitative compatibility and the means necessary to achieve it in every sphere. Placing the process of adaptation in an overall strategy and accelerating things as much as possible is the road which will lead to success in joining the European Union. That course will not be all smooth: Hungarians will debate for long among themselves as well as with outsiders. What they must do is clarify their basic objectives and agree on the main points that might serve as common denominators in their discussions.

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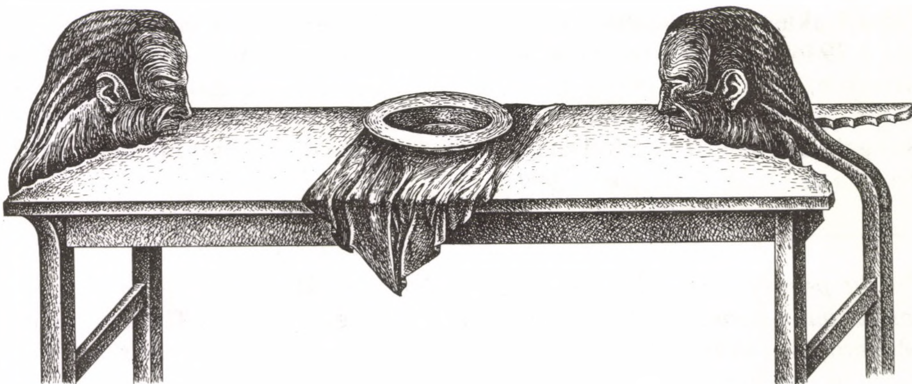

John Lukacs

Two Worlds

Hungary is my mother. America is my wife.

1990. Sometimes after dinner I walk out to the grassy slope beyond our terrace. At those moments the charm of the present is inseparable from a satisfying sense of the past, because it is good to know that nearly everything I now see is still the same landscape that the American ancestors of my children saw 50, 100, 150, 200 years ago. The sense of the future, I am afraid of it.

Will my children inherit this landscape? One hundred or 150 years ago our ancestors hoped that the railroad or the telegraph or the new highway would come close to where they were living, the sooner the better. In our time the news that a new highway or a new pipeline or a new development or a new shopping mall is coming close puts fear and loathing in our hearts.

I am not alone in this. Most of my neighbours feel the same. That is why, for the past twenty years or more, I have served on the Schuylkill Township Planning Commission. Each month my colleagues and I spend a long evening poring over the plans of subdivisions and developers that we may or may not recommend to the supervisors. All of our discussions are constrained by the technical and legal categories of definitions—matters, however, that ever so often are thick cloaks thrown over deeper personal, political divisions, divisions of differing views of the world. Most of us know how often development amounts not to opening up but to closing in, how it means the eager spreading

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of cement and the indifferent razing of the land. We know how often construction means destruction—not only of trees and meadows but of certain ways of life. "Are you against progress?", people sometimes ask me. The time has surely come to rethink the meaning of that word.

I have been living in this township and on this piece of land for thirty-seven years. But I am not a native American, I came here from my native country, Hungary, forty-four years ago, fleeing the imposition of a communist regime by the Russians. I thought then that this would last at least fifty years. But history is unpredictable. I did not know then how its dissolution would happen. That it would happen I began to see many years ago.

I have not been involved in émigré affairs or in Central European academic politics. At the same time I have kept close to a few old, trusted friends. One of them is an old priest, Monsignor Béla Varga, a leader of the prewar democratic Small Holders' Party (of which I was a youthful member forty-seven years ago). He was the last speaker of the freely elected Hungarian parliament. He fled Hungary forty-three years ago. He is now eighty-seven years old and in frail health, the chaplain of a convent in New York, where I go to see him every time I am in that city.

And now came another, unpredictable coincidence. Elections were held in Hungary this spring. The largest party would form the new government; their candidate for prime minister is the son of Monsignor Varga's ally and friend during the war, when both of them did a heroic job saving and protecting Polish refugees, escaped French prisoners of war and many Jews from the Nazis; and the candidate for the new foreign minister is a historian friend of mine. The monsignor and I followed the developments in Hungary, though not very closely. From more than four thousand miles away we wished them luck.

And then one day in April, the routine of our lives changed. Things were speeding up. I was at the Planning Commission meeting when Béla called my wife. The new, freely elected parliament would meet on the second of May. Its leaders wanted him, and me, to be there. What follows is a necessarily breathless (though perhaps not superficial) account of those days and of my thoughts, in diary form.

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April 18, Wednesday. Fairly long Planning Commission meeting. This developer (to whom I spoke on the phone yesterday) is unusually eager to push his development through. Try to pin him down on how much of the woodland he will destroy. This is not easy. Details to be attended to: Trees with a diameter exceeding six inches must be shown on his plan. Two of the building setbacks on each plot missing. Ingress and egress of plotted driveways: Penn DOT approval required. Behind these things looms the menacing shadow of Big Brother—i.e., the Valley Forge Sewer Authority—not to speak of the restive steamroller of the Fernley tract. The latter is gathering strength before the bulldozers are ready to roar.

April 19, Thursday. Béla calls from New York. Antall (the incoming prime minister), Géza (the incoming foreign minister) called from Budapest. They implored Béla to come and speak. Béla still reluctant. Doctor says he can go, provided that fatigue is kept to a minimum and all medications properly taken. He asks me to help with his speech. He says that I must come with him. Am reluctant—have millions of things to do here—but Stephanie says, "If he says so, you must." Details to be attended to: must get airline seat next to him, Hungarian visa (not easy: cannot go up to consulate in New York). Write and xerox circular letter to a few friends in Budapest. Have no idea where I'm going to stay once I'm there.
April 28, Saturday. Wakeup with a hangover. Reason: drank a bottle of champagne last night, in order to celebrate first harvest and glorious consumption of white—yes, white—asparagus spears cut last afternoon, something that I tried to grow for nineteen years in vain. (White asparagus is green asparagus, except that it must be planted much deeper. Asparagus expert told me it won't work, white asparagus is a different strain. Expert was wrong.) I talk to R. and T. about coming Supervisors' meeting on Wednesday, May 2. I'll be in Budapest then, at the first meeting of the new parliament of Hungary. Plenty of problems at both meetings. Here: Big Brother, i.e., the Sewer Authority, at it again, with its local allies who long to develop the entire township, pouring concrete over what's left of open space. There: Big Brother, i.e. the Soviet Union, largely gone, but plenty of ambitious politicians wishing to pour rhetoric over what's left of open space in Hungarian minds.
First day of historic journey. I take the train to New York, to Béla's convent apartment. Nuns stand on the steps, with tears in their eyes, waving goodbye. Limousine to America's number one concentration camp, Kennedy Airport. Thought occurs to me that I was in a sort of concentration camp in Hungary forty-six years ago. Fellow inmates preferable to mob at Kennedy.
April 29, Sunday. Arrival very moving. Bright windy morning. Béla comes slowly down the steps, leaning heavily on his cane. Government delegation on the tarmac, with flowers, also Béla's old sister. His return to his homeland after forty-three years. I keep back, with tears in my eyes. Must say that this way of arriving is agreeable. No customs, no passport examination, limousines waiting for us at the plane. Antall arranged that Béla and I will stay in a Government House. We drive into Budapest, the industrial suburbs giving way to streets lined with those old, sooty apartment buildings with their smoky, vinegary smell. We cross the Danube. Government House is high up in the Buda hills (not far from where my grandparents' villa was). Now my big job begins—fending off people from this old priest after his wearisome journey. I wave a reporter away, unsuccessfully. Turns out to be editor of a newspaper, to whom an interview was promised. So Béla sits on an uncomfortable sofa, answering stupid questions. ("What did you think when you first saw the Hungarian flag?" Plenty of Hungarian flags in the United States.) The township reporter of *The Evening Phoenix* is much more intelligent.

Staff of Government House more than helpful. They are evidently personnel

of previous communist government, probably including former secret policemen, all anxious about their jobs now. After we settle Béla down, I ask them to call a taxi for me. "Sir," they say, "there is a car and a driver and a bodyguard at your disposal here." Car at my disposal is a Lada (Russian Fiat), bodyguard a policeman in civvies for whom proper adjective is "burly". (There are clichés that are true.) Not knowing where I'll stay, I had telephoned I. to get me a hotel room, also told her that I'll come straight to her apartment. The streets leading down to the city are green and gold and all the trees in leaf. I tip the driver and tell him not to bother to come back for me. I'll just take a cab. I.'s small apartment, in which she survived more than three decades of communism, is a perfect combination of elegance and coziness (not *House and Garden* stuff). That kind of survival is what is best about Hungary and Hungarians. Later that day I meet an American diplomat. "Tell me one thing," he asks. "Why is it that every Hungarian I meet is deeply pessimistic but at the same time they enjoy life so much?" That is a very intelligent question. Finally I come up with an answer. "I can't tell you why. I can only tell you how."

Back to Government House again. Large, semi-opulent furnishings rather unbeautiful. Béla rests through the long afternoon. Telephone keeps ringing without cease. Staff keeps telling me that they will serve food and drink for us, whatever and whenever we like. After all, only a few guests in the building. When George Bush came to Budapest last July (for a single day), his staff consisted of at least five hundred people. (Is this what the Republicans mean when they say they are against Big Government?)

At night descend to town again. Dinner with I. and L. We are told about great economic distress in Hungary, but the restaurants are crowded. I fought jet lag all day and now take a sleeping pill and collapse into bed. I address a request to the former secret policeman: breakfast in my room at eight o'clock, please.

April 30, Monday. I am awakened as huge breakfast arrives on huge tray at 7:59:60. I had thrown off all my sheets and find myself naked on top of bed. (It is not always wonderful to have obsequious servants.) I dress and walk out on terrace, heavy smell of lilacs in the air. Between the trees, the roofs and towers of the city, four miles away, scintillating in the sun. Garden not too well kept. Thoughts of all of the mowing I'll have to do when I return home. Staff, who had no idea who I was when I arrived (perhaps American secret policeman, accompanying the main guest?), now have been told by someone to call me Professor. (Well, I've known many an American professor working for the CIA.) Read Hungarian newspapers, find them quite good. One cartoon worthy of the old *New Yorker*. Farms in Hungary were collectivized by communists, but through the years peasants have done rather well, everyone doing his own thing in those collectives. Cartoon shows well-dressed couple in well-furnished apartment with large TV, VCR, lots of furniture. Man reading the paper, turning with a worried face to his wife: "They are returning our land to us. What are we going to do?"

At night, dinner at apartment of my friend the incoming foreign minister. Could not send flowers to his wife, since all shops closed, this being a holiday,

the eve of May Day. (Will it remain a holiday?) Dinner party consists of many of his friends, some of them future ambassadors and ambassadresses. I drink less than usual, to E.'s considerable surprise. Am flattered to hear that many of them know me, having read my articles and books published in America and England. Does not happen in Philadelphia or Phoenixville, but perhaps no great loss. Cannot find a taxi, but walk through the warm liquid midnight air to the Intercontinental Hotel, its doorway still crowded with loud—very loud—Germans. I say something to the doorman in Hungarian and get a taxi ahead of the Germans. Great improvement, this: not so long ago it was better to speak English if you wanted to arrange something in Budapest. Suggests a rise of national self-confidence, without which most political changes turn out to be meaningless.

May 1, Tuesday. Hurried call from superintendent of Parliament Building, to look over and arrange Béla's arrival, seating and speech tomorrow. This superintendent is an excellent man. The building is splendidly refurbished. I am touched by a sense of historical continuity: the intaglioed woodwork, the 1900 lettering, the frescoes, the heavy gleaming brass ashtrays set into the windowsills of the corridor for the convenience of the honorable members. The Parliament Building has twenty-four gates. Béla will arrive at Gate Six, from where the walk is shortest and there is an elevator close to the entrance. Then we will rest in a chamber and have coffee and refreshments; and then through the high, Gothic-eaved corridors into the main chamber. Below the rostrum are the red velvet armchairs of the government ministers. Will Béla speak from there? For there is a microphone at that place. Or will he be able to mount the rostrum? Well, yes. It is only eight steps and has a strong brass railing. But there is no place there for him to sit. And now the superintendent produces a standing desktop that will be perfect. Béla can lean on it as he holds his speech in his old, lovable, trembling hands. *That* is how it will be.

This was the largest parliament building in the world when it was finally completed in 1901. Now I am playing a part in it, as I am playing a small part in the government of Schuylkill Township, which has one of the smallest township buildings in Chester County, surely bereft of intaglio, scagliola, marble, and red velvet. Now—without so wanting—I am involved in politics here, too. There are pressures on us to do this or that with the speech, to add this or that to it. The pressures involve the historical prospects of my native country, Hungary. It is surely different from my involvement in the Comprehensive Plan of Schuylkill Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania. Now I am involved in the final wording of summary judgments on previous centuries, on an entire nation's relationship with Europe and with the Russian empire, with allusions to some of the deep differences and fissures within the democratic Hungary now emerging, with suggestions heavy with meaning—not with tree callipers, roadside berms, ultimate right of way, side yard setbacks and lot averaging.

Two kinds of politics. Two very different places. Two very different occasions. And yet—ultimately the essence of these matters is the same.

First and foremost: the history and the essence of politics are a matter of words. This may sound strange in this age of pictorial presentations and numerical computerization, but so it is. In the beginning was the Word, as the Bible says, and so it is still. It is words that move us, hurt us, inspire us, depress us, because we think in words. In this historic speech a change of one word or two, the omission or addition of a single phrase, could make all the difference. It could affect not only the tone but the entire meaning of the message that this old and honorable man addresses to a nation. His words most probably will not change the course of world history. But within my lifetime there were words that did change the course of history: Hitler's words to which an entire nation rose to respond, ready to bear arms; and Churchill's words that made another nation ready to respond, to resist Hitler even when it was largely bereft of arms.

It strikes me that the future of Schuylkill township also depends on words. Not on "facts", because there is no fact in this world that exists apart from the words with which it is expressed, or thought. It is words—about zoning, about wetlands, about lot lines, about soil configurations—that decide the fate of what may be built and where, and of what may be preserved or where; it is words that a judge will use when he makes a legal ruling, deciding a case for a developer or for a township. The law consists of words.

Right now I am making a great deal of fuss because a friend wants us to change one sentence to be heard tomorrow in the parliament of Hungary. Last year I made a great deal of fuss because the consultants whom the township supervisors had employed to draft the new Comprehensive Plan had chosen to define unbuilt parcels of land in Schuylkill Township as "vacant lands". I rose up against that. "Vacant," I said, means abandoned, empty, useless. Does this mean that every single plot of land of ten acres or more in this township that is not yet covered with buildings is abandoned, empty, useless? Some people thought that I was making a mountain out of an empty lot; or that perhaps I was only speaking as a professor. No, the matter was not that of the traditions of language. It was the preservation of honesty and decency—in the Schuylkill Township building as well as in the National Assembly of Hungary in Budapest.

Words are inseparable from ideas. Communism is gone in Hungary because for many years no one believed in it, including communist party members, and now including the present leader of the Russian empire. That is why Hungary—thank God—has gone through a bloodless revolution; not because Reagan and Weinberger forced the Russians into an armament race that the latter could not financially afford. In Schuylkill Township the battle will be won once people's ideas—not merely their feelings, those are already changing—change to the extent that they recognize the outdated vision of technological progress that would make the entire world into one gigantic suburb, with endlessly sprawling shopping malls or airports.

The second essential similarity between these two places is that of the human element in politics. The main political division in Hungary now exists between two large political parties, the Hungarian Democratic Forum and the Association of Free Democrats. The literal sense of these words means noth-

ing, just as in the United States, where there are no monarchists or aristocrats, only Republicans and Democrats. The real divisions go deeper. They exist within the parties, not among them—in Hungary as well as in Schuylkill Township. There are good eggs and bad eggs in both parties. And who are the bad eggs? Well, whether in the Danube basin or in Chester County, Pennsylvania, they are the same kind of people: people who are moved mainly by envy and resentment—envy of other people who are (or who seem to be) more respectable or successful than they are, resentment of people who are (or who seem to be) better off because they seem to know more of the world. Such people exist within the majority party in Hungary, as they exist among the majority party in Chester County. They are a minority, but sometimes a *hard* minority. That is exactly what is missing in the numerical configurations of the pollsters. A hard minority may—I am not saying that it will—exert an influence beyond its numbers, let alone the quality of its component men and women, because when there is not much more than a soft majority in its way, a hard group of people or a well-organized lobby can give the public impression that it represents the popular and respectable majority. That is the danger of populist democracy in Hungary, between East and West, as well as in Schuylkill Township, between Phoenixville and Valley Forge.

In the history of Hungary, Dr. Johnson's famous phrase has been, alas, often applicable—patriotism having been the last refuge of scoundrels. In America too, to which I must add that free-enterprise patriotism is often the last resort of developers. The danger to democracy is not political extremism. It is the kind of ambition that is fueled by resentment and greed—and greed itself is a consequence rather than a cause, a consequence of a sense of fear. That fear is not really a fear of financial insecurity. It is a fear of personal inadequacy. The father of greed is vanity—in Budapest and Hungary as well as in any American small town or suburb.

May 2, Wednesday. A brilliant May morning, full of promise. I am worried about the arrangement: Has my old friend taken his pills along? Will he bear the strain of standing up so long? But all goes well, including my secondary worry: Since I am not a former member of parliament, but only his companion, will there be a seat for me in the gallery once he is escorted to the parliament floor? But then I am led to one of the six ceremonial boxes on the floor itself, each with four red velvet chairs. I sit next to Princess Walburga von Habsburg, daughter of Otto von Habsburg, who is also here. The son of the last king of Hungary, he is a well-liked figure in the country now. The princess is handsome and tells me that she has one of my books on her night table in their house in Bavaria. Before I have a chance to feel flattered, we all stand. The national anthem is played. It could not be more appropriate at this moment. (At some of the supervisors' meetings in Schuylkill Township we recite the Pledge of Allegiance, which I do not find quite appropriate there; but then here, too, an actor goes to the platform and recites a poem, "To the National Assembly", written one hundred and forty years ago, and I find his tone and his declamation not quite proper.) Finally my old friend Béla rises and slowly walks to the

rostrum. His speech lasts not more than eight minutes. They fly by. At the end is a passage that is as fitting for Hungary as it is for the United States—for my native country as well as for my adopted one. He says that the Nazis and the communists incarnated a pagan barbarism from which Hungary is now freed; "but ahead of us are perhaps the shadows of a new, technological paganism, threatening the nature of our homeland, our continent, our mother earth".

There is a standing ovation. Two other, much longer speeches follow. Then an intermission. There is a champagne reception in the presidential chambers, above the Danube. The sunlight pours in. Béla is tired. He will not stay for the rest of the long first session of parliament; he wants to go back to the house and rest. I will go with him; I say goodbye to some of my friends and acquaintances and to Walburga: *"Je vous prie de bien vouloir soumettre mes hommages à Madame vôtre mère."* I wished that my mother had lived to see this day and that my American wife were here, but that was not to be. Back in Pennsylvania dawn is now breaking. It is the second of May, the monthly supervisors' meeting. What is happening in Budapest is the celebration of the end of a long, painful chapter and the beginning of a new chapter in a nation's history. What will be discussed in Schuylkill Township is many petty matters but, after all is said, the preservation of something that means more than a few acres here and there: the preservation of a countryside, of a landscape, of a way of life, of a country.

All of the world's great newspapers are here. I give the correspondent of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* my English translation of Monsignor Varga's speech. The next day the paper prints a precise account of it. This never happens in *The New York Times* or even in the *Philadelphia Inquirer,* though it does happen sometimes in the *Evening Phoenix,* not to speak of the Schuylkill Township Civic Association's Newsletter, where all the details do count.

1991. Nine months later I am, surprisingly, in Hungary again, teaching in the university, living in a spacious rented apartment. My roots are here—and in America. This is a physical impossibility but (as with my other human phenomena) not a spiritual one. I am not a hybrid. I belong to both places. But America—more precisely, Pennsylvania—is my home now.

I write English better than I write Hungarian. I find it easier to lecture in English than in Hungarian. Now that I am here I can talk Hungarian as well as I can talk English. I read Hungarian as fast as I read English. As I read, I find that I am exceptionally sensitive to the nuances in Hungarian journalism, detecting—often without wishing to look for them—the underlying suggestions of animosities and disaffections, the opportunisms latent in so many words—the choice of every word being less an aesthetic decision than a moral one.

All day I speak and hear and listen to and read Hungarian. Then, at night, I pick up Trollope or Jane Austen from my night table. Reading *Emma* at night in Budapest is like drinking cool, pure, clear water in a crystal glass. That purity amounts to more than innocence, the rosy innocence of that wondrous English girl (I mean both Emma, and Jane Austen) of nearly two centuries ago. That English prose is full of subtleties and insights, it is elegant and modern.

Two hundred years ago it was far ahead of Eastern European prose (probably no longer true of most English prose—this is perhaps sad).
Another night I flip on Hungarian television. A 1942 movie with Fred Astaire. Against his loose-limbed elegance (and the swinging music) the silly script does not matter. Oddly, or perhaps not so oddly, I am moved by it.
28 February 1991. Bush comes on the television. I was against the Gulf War. I thought that it was none of our ("our": I can seldom use that American pronoun with ease) business; that the Near East was, and remains, a quagmire; that Bush's way of speaking is lamentable, it reflects the puerility of his thinking. But now, for once, I am moved by one of his phrases: "This war is now behind us." That simple sentence touches me. For a moment I feel very American.
One afternoon I see a Hungarian flag, on a thin long pole, flying over the northern bastion of Castle Hill, and I am moved as I think that this simple national flag has somehow prevailed. It is 1991 but it might as well be 1848. There is something so historic as to be almost eternal about it. That lone banner is not assertive or grandiloquent. I feel no exhilaration, no nationalist pride; I feel the presence of the endurance of something decent and modest and good.
31 March 1991. Dinner at the familiar apartment of X. I know most of the people but I do not quite feel at home there now.
9 April 1991. Dinner with Dervla Murphy, at the residence of the British ambassador. I know few of the people but I feel at home there because it is a very beautiful house, it once belonged to the Scitovszkys, an old Hungarian family, of a world that is now gone.

Gone, too, is that large part of the old Hungary of one thousand years that was torn off and given to other, new states after World War I. I am sensitive to the evocative power of certain place names, old American place names such as Cinnaminson, Christiana, Sumneytown, though not Wounded Knee. And now of old Hungary: Vihorlát, Görgényi havasok. Something in these names is more than music. When I read their names in print (or on a map), my imagination crystallizes. But it is not only imagination. I see those windswept, morose, lonely mountain ranges in what is now Slovakia, the other in what is now Rumanian Transylvania. Alone, mysterious, with their largely unvexed forests, with a few sparse paths trod by poor peasants and paced in the winter by hunters. So they were, still of a very old world, that other world, before 1914, they belonged to us, to the other Hungary, before I was born; but these things are within me. Forever. "A nation cannot be an object of charity"—that is, love—Simone Weil once wrote. "But a country can be such, as an environment bearing traditions which are eternal."

The apartment that I rented in Budapest in the late winter and spring of 1991 was very comfortable and well furnished but of course not beautifully, on the Pest side of the river. (I would have preferred Buda but I was fortunate in having secured this kind of apartment, after all.) It is not more than a half mile away from the sanatorium where I was born, and a quarter of a mile away from a house where my family once lived for a short time. Both buildings no longer

exist, they were destroyed by American bombs in the summer of 1944, in a neighbourhood that was otherwise largely unharmed by the war.

So often I walk through the streets here on grey winter evenings, with the streetlights spraying a thin misty halo through the pearly fog. This was once an upper-middle-class neighbourhood, with most of the houses built between 1890 and 1910, semi-palatial villas having one or two apartments on each floor, with large, high-ceilinged rooms, stuccoed or coffered ceilings, French windows, parquet floors—an atmosphere containing soupcons of pretentious elegance and a solid essence of bourgeois comfort. Some of these houses were impressive, with a limited majesty of their own, a few of them built in the then Parisian style, emulating the nouveau-riche villas and apartment houses of the belle époque, of the Bois, Auteuil, Neuilly (unlike elsewhere in Budapest, the Austro-German architecture of private houses was not ubiquitous here).

Then came 1944–45, the last dreadful year of the war, with the bombings and the protracted siege of Budapest; and soon after that, four decades of darkness—literal darkness—of the communists' rule. The once owners and occupants of these houses and apartments disappeared. They came to be occupied by new, unsure, dark-faced tenants: by newfangled functionaries of the ruling party; by Mongolian or Vietnamese embassies; by head offices of trade unions. About five years ago came another change. The communist era was fading. Some of these apartments were occupied by new families again. Unlike fifty years ago, the curbs of these streets are now lined with automobiles. The Automobile Century had not fully arrived in Budapest then; it has surely arrived now.

In that wintry fog there are not many lights casting a pleasant glow into the street from the small crystal chandeliers of those second-floor drawing rooms or family rooms. So many of the windows are dark. Perhaps ten years hence much of this will change. A new class rises on the ruins of communism in Hungary, the latter having been a foreign-imposed episode that was almost unbearably long for those who had to live through it but, really, not so long in the history of a nation.

It snowed again, and I walked through these streets to a restaurant and then back again. Now the evening was beautiful, the snow illuminated through the arcs of the streetlights and then resting on the pavements, the air metallic and clean. There was no breeze, the falling snowflakes had a quiet, unbroken quality of something silent and endless.What was missing was the contrast between the snow and the houses, between the peacefulness of the winter outside and the warm interiority inside.

I love winter because of that contrast, whether in my Pennsylvania country or in a European city. Now, in Budapest in 1991, there is little of that. A few pale curtained windows, a greyish rather than yellowish (is it the flicker of television?) light filtering through. Of the ten, twelve, fifteen French windows opening onto the streets, perhaps two or three are lit here and there, suggesting the impression of private life inside. How different from fifty or sixty years ago, with the then promise of comfort and some impressively beautiful rooms

and furnishings, once one had entered the massive front doors and found oneself in a well-lit foyer or vestibule, aware, after the snow-laden silence of the street and the chilly staircase, of the high chatter of people, or of an entirely different warm silence, the muffled breath of well-brushed rugs and tobacco-brown plush.

All I can see here and now is some kind of restricted living, a huddle under high ceilings, not much of an interior life, not even that of comfort. Yes, "privatization" will come. Some of these buildings will be vacated by the present occupants and institutions and offices; new nouveaux riches will occupy them. That has happened before. And, no matter how one may have disliked the nouveaux riches then, it behoves one to know how quickly (that also is very Hungarian) those then nouveaux riches learned so much about taste and fine things. Within one generation these palatial houses became occupied by families worthy of them. But now this will not happen again. There will be no more haute bourgeoisie—not here, and perhaps nowhere else in the world. The offices, too, will remain—indeed expand, with fluorescent tubes glaring from those high stuccoed ceilings. Computers, giant television screens pushed against the now dulled boiserie wainscoting. One kind of bureaucracy replacing another. Elegance, no. Never again.

The great, profound moral shortcoming of anti-ccommunism—that is, anti-communism from a safe distance—springs from two sources. The first is a sense of self-satisfaction: knowing that one is on the right side, on the respectable side, together with all of those right-thinking people. The other is the exaggeration of the diabolical powers and machinations of communism and communists.

The exaggeration of the powers of someone or something alien is a frequent human shortcoming. It is different from paranoia, which exaggerates the powers of someone or something that is, or that we think is, our determined opponent, someone or something that we know. Most anti-communists are not paranoid. Paranoids indulge in their fears, an indulgence that is masochistic and not particularly satisfying. Anti-communism at a safe distance is self-satisfying; it may even be turned to personal and occupational profit. Of course this is not true of people who live under communism, who are oppressed by communists or threatened by them. Their opposition to communism is admirable.

I have criticized the ideology of anti-communism often, the insidious inclination to consider it as if it were identical with patriotism. I wrote about when and how anti-communist ideology resulted in a misreading of the intentions of Soviet Russian foreign policy, or when it damaged the essential standards of traditional American institutions. I alluded once, briefly, to the sense of insecurity and inferiority that I saw among so many communists in Hungary in 1945 when, as a matter of fact, they were either in power or about to come to power. I knew that they would come to full power, which is why I left Hungary in 1946.

A year or so later the communist regime was cemented into place. Around that time, in 1948 or 1949, the then new residents, with their organizations,

institutes, consulates, and embassies, moved into these abandoned and sequestered semi-palatial villas allotted to them. They did not enter these buildings in high spirits, with the sureness of self-confidence.Three years after the war and the sordid tragedies that had befallen Budapest, these buildings were deadeningly dank, empty and cold, their walls peeling, with no sign of human presence except perhaps for a few pieces of furniture left behind. They were not like the Smolny Institute or Kseshinskaya's palace three decades earlier, swarming with excited revolutionaries. It was not like Brest-Litovsk either: these new ambassadors, ministers and council presidents were second- or third-rate former intellectuals, not peasants or workers. And they were not alone. Unlike the revolutionary communists of the past, they did not bring their own personnel. They were made dependent on a staff assigned to them by the real masters of power, the bosses of the secret police. Those janitors, mechanics, drivers, waiters, telephonists, and secretaries were often of working-class or peasant origins, culled from volunteers coming forth from the dregs of the proletariat, satisfied with the stroke of fortune that had come to them, instinctively aware of their power over their present superiors. They were—often with the kind of contempt with which a crude servant watches a weak master—watching the latter as they were sitting and shuffling along beneath those cold high ceilings.

That new ruling class: the men and women whom Americans (including the CIA) saw as idealist fanatics, committed to a world-revolutionary ideal, to be combated with fire and poison, "the communist totalitarian international revolutionaries of the world". At most, they were ephemeral beneficiaries of power, but not for long. They knew that. Their positions, their dwellings, their titles and their perquisites depended on whom they could not hope ever to control. They knew something else too—another contribution to their sense of inferiority. They knew (without, of course, ever saying so) that everything that was Russian and Soviet and communist was second rate. That is why, even around 1950, in the peak years of untrammeled Stalinism and the iron curtain, the high moments of self-satisfaction in their social lives occurred not when they were invited as guests to another communist embassy reception, say a Bulgarian or even a Soviet one, but when they were allowed to appear at a "Western" one: not American or British, of course, but perhaps a French one; say, a reception given to a fellow-travelling Paris intellectual or filmmaker. They knew that everything in the West was better and richer. They did not for a moment doubt that life (or an assignment) in Moscow or Peking was not preferable to Paris or Brussels, though they hoped (well, perhaps some of them) that sooner or later the communist part of the world might reach those Western standards or even improve them—once, say, France would become communist; but I think that deep down they knew that would never happen.

Those thoughts and ambitions and tastes—of an ephemeral new class of communist bureaucrats, in their urban compounds, run-down and fear-ridden—those evenings in those villas in the 1950s! There will be no Balzac to describe them, and not only because of the decline of literature. There is more

to this than my imagination, or the fragments one now knows about life among the communist high officialdom at that time. Now it is 1991. Almost every day I pass the Albanian embassy as I go to the Andrássy Avenue subway station. The building is locked tight, with one Peugeot at the curb with its diplomatic license plate, covered with dirty snow, looking as abandoned as most of that embassy building behind its forbidding, heavy iron railings. Now there is hardly anyone in sight except for the occasional presence of a couple of unshaven men squatting behind the fence, stubbing out their cigarettes, talking in an unintelligible language, with their sharp suspicious eyes, their smoky, gap-toothed, stubbled, half-feral faces.

April 1991. A three-day trip to northeastern Hungary with S. and Dervla. I rent a car, a Lada, the cheapest available. Made in the bowels of Russia in a giant factory planned and constructed by Fiat engineers in the early 1960s, when even Khrushchev had to consent to the mass production of private cars. (He had been against that originally, having seen traffic jams in the United States—had *that* in this Automobile Century, been one of the reasons for his fall?) This brand-new Lada is about forty years behind Western standards, impractical (the ignition requires poking under the wheel with your *left* hand), but the frame and steel are much heavier than those of Japan-made cars. (Perhaps that was the key to the success of Russian tanks during World War II: primitive but solid and heavy.)

The Hungarian countryside is better kept than ever before. This was already so twenty years ago, under the communists, when the human reality (this family is in charge of *this* field, that yard is *yours*) was more important than the official categories of collective farming. Now, in Eger, in the beautiful narrow streets beneath the old fortress walls, every second house is being restored, repainted, refurbished.This is the essence of real hope for Hungary, this kind of private ownership and enterprise, that is: enterprise for the purpose of ownership (as is the case of so many Americans who work on their own houses) and not the reverse (as is the case of developers). I can imagine living here when getting old, a cozy existence, ambling in a big sheepskin coat on clear cold evenings on my way to a tavern; expecting in the morning guests from far away and knowing that I can drive once in a while to Budapest or Vienna, or fly to Kandersteg or Bruges from there; and walking in the town cemetery once in a while, not too deep in thought.

We drive on to Sárospatak. We have an extra two hours, so we drive across the mountains—they are very lonely on this cold April afternoon—to Lillafüred, to the Palace Hotel, where I spent five fantastic days and nights in January 1944. We stop there in the chilly spring twilight. The hotel is fairly intact. The Russians used it as a military hospital during the last months of the war and for some years thereafter. Then it became an official resort for trade unionists. It is still that, but the ownership is now in question, and the hotel takes guests again. It is smaller than I had remembered it—as is everything else from one's youth. The dining room, now empty, with its fake-medieval carvings, is the same. My heart twitches only when I see that curve along the first-floor corridor whereto

I hurried down night after night on the back stairs to the room of a woman I was madly in love with then.

There is an exhibit of largely yellowed photographs of the opening of the Palace Hotel in 1927, and guests from the early 1930s. I am surprised how incredibly far away this seems now. The photographs evoke a past, people whose names I knew and recognize very well, but—unlike in other places of the world—none of this is recoverable here. In so many other places, with so many other people, fragments of the past are still alive. Here the past is dead.

In Sárospatak we find a good small inn, originally a convent in the seventeenth century. The Rákóczi-Windischgraetz castle next morning, made into an excellent museum (Lajos Windischgraetz, that dubious prince, had turned it over to my mother and stepfather for a week, their honeymoon in 1932; surely it could not have been the entire castle). Then we drive and stop and find a muddy lane, three miles out of town, leading to the country house where I spent a, perhaps magical, summer at the age of ten, in 1934. Well, I find the house. I walk on its empty porch. Someone must live in one of its back rooms. But it is a *dead* house.

On the way up, tramping through the mud, I find and talk to a family of workers in the vineyards. In this part of the vineyard the vines are held by wires strung up between concrete posts. (Farther uphill they are still trained on wooden poles.) What they tell me about the conditions, the advantages and disadvantages, of "private" ownership and belonging to the "collective" only confirm how these categories are full of holes; that reality hardly corresponds to these definitions; that ownership, possession, income and profit have now thick and uneven layers of different meanings, and that it will be a long time before these things are newly defined and accepted by those whose lives depend on them. Ten minutes with these workers confirms again my basic optimism about my native people: that they have risen in intelligence and self-confidence; that they are a people with great, perhaps potentially very great, talents.

Next day, after a dreadful and dreary lunch at Nyíregyháza (where I find Krúdy's birthplace and have S. photograph me there), we stop along a ditch of the two-lane highway going east. Dervla and I take down her bicycle from the roof of the car. She tells us to leave, since it will take her at least half an hour to mount her panniers astride the back wheels. She will cross into Rumania at night along a dirt track, avoiding a frontier post, skirting the paved roads. If the Rumanian police or soldiers catch her, she will show them a letter (translated into Rumanian) from her (and before her, Byron's) publisher John Murray, on London office stationery, with a big rubber stamp on it (the latter is very important in Eastern Europe). What is even more risky, she carries in her rucksack the Hungarian videotape I got in Budapest, a two-hour tape showing the Rumanian mob attacking the Magyars in Marosvásárhely, from a sad and bloody two days of incidents. It is extremely dangerous to travel with such a videotape in Rumania. But she stuck a label on the cassette that now reads *La Traviata*.

Yet this farsighted and admirable Dervla is not altogether inclined to favor the Magyar side in Transylvania. Only one of her explanations makes sense to me: she says that, being Irish, she has a natural inclination to at least understand and at best sympathize with the underdog—that is, with the people who are often being looked down upon. She says that in some ways the Magyars are the way the English have been, and the Rumanians the Irish. But, Dervla, I say: the Rumanians have ruled the bloody place for more than seventy years now, and they suppress the Magyars! She says that there are two sides to this; the Magyar complaints are often imprecise and exaggerated (perhaps true?); and she finds something about Hungarians, even in Budapest, that she does not quite like. They are unfriendly. Or: less friendly than are Rumanians. I cannot see this, which is why I cannot agree with her. Yet she is so observant, so perceptive, so intelligent and so honest that I am disturbed: there must be *something* in what she says. But I do not know what, and how much.

Hospitality in Europe, especially in Eastern Europe, and in Hungary. In Eastern Europe people are exceptionally hospitable to foreign visitors. There is an oriental element in this. They want to impress those visitors; and—in most cases not quite consciously—they think that they might benefit from this kind of hearty (and it is hearty; nothing false about it) hospitality, sometime, somehow. At the same time, they will invite you only when they think they can (and must) offer you substantial hospitality. (Of course there is a reason for their anxiety: their cramped apartments and living quarters.) This is now a handicap for foreigners. To come over for a drink, to take potluck with us—that is very American, missing here (but also in Western Europe). That is a pity, since there are few coffeehouses, clubs and taverns where one can otherwise get together in a convivial fashion.

One thing that I miss now: a well-appointed American bar in an American city, downtown, with a serried array of twinkling bottles, plenteous and decorative with the glimmer of dark wood and pleasant lights, around six o'clock in the evening, waiting to meet someone there before dinner—one of the moments of mundane American life at its best, rich and easygoing as the alcohol lifts one's spirits higher, though that is merely incidental.

Budapest has an immense problem that would require literally billions of dollars to fix. The city (especially on the Pest side) rose quickly, it grew out of the earth in an extraordinary burst of energy, with the result that an overwhelming majority of its houses were built almost exactly one hundred years ago, and are now in need of the most essential repairs. And this is Europe where space is limited. Unlike in a fast-growing American city, these houses were not abandoned or allowed to become slums in one generation after their first dwellers. People have been living in them, crowded, anxious and jealous to preserve their homes through decades. Had I speculated about their future fifty years ago I would have imagined that by 1990 or 2000 vast tracts of these *Mietkasernen* would, indeed should, be torn down and a new city of sunlit modernity, replete with glass surfaces, would or should arise. Not now. That is no longer desirable. They must be rebuilt, carefully, made livable and enduring, so that one hundred

years from now people and tourists will say: "How beautiful this all is, this late-nineteenth-century city!" (This is one of those things that I find to be conceivable as well as imaginable. (I fear it won't happen, except here and there.)

On the Köröndd, the Rond-Point of Budapest. Those magnificent—ugly but magnificent—1890 palaces of apartment houses, with their Wilhelmine-German towers. In one of them, in April 1940, I was at a party of young people, one of the *jours* anxious mothers gave for their daughters, inviting boys and girls from their dancing schools. Now the gigantic iron railings are rusty, the weeds are rank and high in the courtyards, it is almost like ruins of the Altstadt in Dresden I saw six years ago. But there are a few lights in the windows, so people are living in them.

The neighbouring, lower-class streets have more life, with young people and older people, the latter with grim, hard-bitten mouths and faces, not so different from the past, except perhaps for the poison-sweet ubiquitous smell of diesel fumes in that otherwise thin and dry continental, eastern air.

What is well preserved in this city is very beautiful, because of the dedication of people in charge of it. The Museum of Fine Arts, for example. That, too, looked monumental to me fifty years ago. Its interior spaces and its facade are still impressively large, but now I see and know that its size and proportions are near-perfect, and smaller.

May 1991. Even if my home and my family were not in Pennsylvania, I do not think that I could live happily in Budapest (except perhaps in the event of the immense luck of finding a small apartment on Castle Hill with Biedermeier furniture and one large French window over the Castle Walk, facing west. Even then, only for part of the year. The reason is politics. I would become (I already am) too deeply involved, upset, with the stupidities and the demagoguery and the opportunism of political jostling. I see how, step by step, the television news and other programmes are tightened more and more, their tone changed degree by small degree by the nationalists, mostly of the governing party. Most people may not notice this, since the selection of what is and what is not shown on television is a hidden and technical manipulative process, difficult to pin down.

Is my telephone being tapped now? I do not find it impossible.

But this native people of mine are a very talented people. In the long run they were not damaged by the last fifty years. Of course this is an immense generalization, without accounting for their suffering and their damages, physical and mental and spiritual. However: just as Gorbachev and Co. have already proved better than Kerensky and Co. in 1917, in Hungary, too, Imre Nagy, the once communist peasant, martyr and hero of the 1956 rising, was braver and more manly than Admiral Horthy, the once aide-de-camp of Franz Joseph, the Regent of Hungary from 1920 to 1944. I have often (and at the risk of unpopularity) defended Horthy. But when in 1944 he was forced by the SS and the local National Socialists to abdicate, he signed that paper. (The life of his son was threatened, though not his.) In 1958 Imre Nagy went to the gallows, when not only his life but his private freedom would have been spared by a single signature or statement that he refused to give.

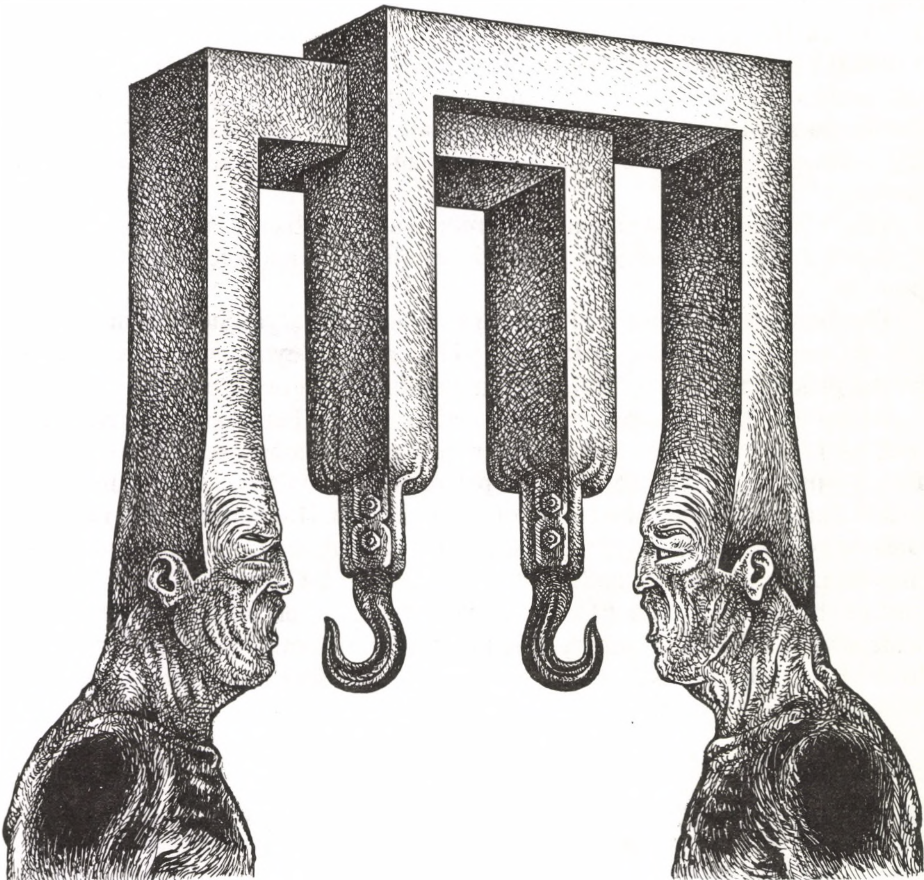
I am not an admirer of athletes as they are interviewed on television; but as I watch some Hungarian soccer players answering a reporter, I find that they are intelligent and fairly modest ; they express themselves so much better than American sports figures before the camera, spitting out a few inept phrases while chewing a gum.

My worst Hungarian students (those who do not do the readings and who fudge the answers in their written examination) write better than my best American ones. Here the reason is simple: despite their evident deterioration, the Hungarian high schools still require more work and higher standards than American ones. Still, hordes of young and even middle-aged Hungarians chew gum, masticating without cease. The worst habits of the "free world" are extant and spreading. The once most elegant street, Váci utca, is now a semi-oriental bazaar.

I had planned, carefully and expressly, a Reconstruction—more than a Remembrance—of Things Past. Circa 1943, when I was a student at the university, I would occasionally stride through that street of the Inner City, meeting my beautiful mother at Gerbeaud's, she fresh from her weekly hairdresser's appointment at Femina's (that hairdressing salon still exists, in the same place), and then sitting with her and her friends for a short half hour before riding home on the bus. I told S. and L. about my plan, but somehow the arrangement did not work. I abandoned it. However, instead, I asked S. to wait for me at a café in Váci Street. We'll meet there after I finish my class at the university a few hundred yards away, and then go to dinner. We do this once or twice, and the knowledge that I am walking down that street to meet her at a café fills me with an ineffably melancholy sense of pleasure. One's life is a pilgrimage, not a work of art (which is why some of the most intelligent aesthetes and hedonists so often mess up their lives). Still, once in a while God allows (and inspires) one to add a small bit of *pentimento* to one's life: an overlay (rather than a reconstruction) of something that is beautiful, sad and nostalgic.

But I cannot end here. There was this episode, a precious little memorable resurrection of a fragment from my past, an achievement with a psychic, if not altogether spiritual, purpose. But getting there was different. I do not mean the obvious difference between myself at twenty and at sixty-seven. I mean: traversing the same street, Váci utca, then and now. I must not overemphasize or sentimentalize the smartness in 1943. Yet, it was a smart place, with well-dressed men and women in the midst of Europe in the midst of the horrible Second World War, with all kinds of people in its espresso bars, and "a fevered undercurrent of social strivings and snubbings." (It had even then a Central rather than a Western European look.) Some of this has remained (or rather, it prevails, again and again): the façades of some of the buildings, a few superficially elegant shopfronts of new boutiques, the same florist's shop, and two good bookstores, though not the wonderful ones where I spent my (and my father's) money nearly half a century ago. But the people in the street now consist of unkempt tourists padding amidst sinister groups of moneychangers

and other half-criminals, hardly disturbed by a few ill-dressed policemen. Both sides of the street are lined by a chain of poor women and a few men from Transylvania, or God knows where, holding up their wares for the tourists: pieces of sheepskin, gaudily embroidered tablecloths and vests. A semi-oriental bazaar this once smartest street in the Inner City has become. The café-bar whereto I hurry for my rendezvous with my pretty cheerful wife is neither pretty nor cheerful, full of dubious people and groups of tourists sprawling on the low and uncomfortable modern settees. But then, there is no longer anything very Eastern about this: soon all Europe, all of the Western world, will be like this too.



Ignác Romsics

Edvard Beneš and the Czechoslovak-Hungarian Border

Provisions of the Trianon Peace Treaty relating to the Czechoslovak-Hungarian border left more than three quarters of a million Hungarians on the Slovak side. (According to the 1910 Hungarian census the number of Hungarians concerned was: 1,066,000; the Czechoslovak census of 1921 recorded 761,000 Hungarians. No more than 200,000 Slovaks remained in Hungary. Hungarian statistics recorded 142,000 in 1920 and 105,000 in 1930. Count Pál Teleki, the Hungarian prime minister, estimated their number in 1921 at about 180,000.) In addition, while the Hungarians of Slovakia and the Carpathian Ukraine lived in an ethnically and linguistically compact area along the border, the Slovaks of Hungary mostly lived in scattered villages, about half of which lay a long way from the Slovak-Hungarian border, in the southeast of the country. [1]

This Czechoslovak-Hungarian border was established as a compromise between the Czech and Slovak politicians in exile and the victorious great powers.

The demands for Hungarian territories which Masaryk, Stefanik and Beneš himself, expressed between 1915 and 1917 went well beyond what was accorded by the peace conference. The maps, memoranda and other propaganda materials issued by the Czechoslovak National Council in Paris—written, compiled and, as far as the maps were concerned, commissioned mainly by Edvard Beneš—placed the desirable frontier between Czechoslovakia and Hungary 10 to 30 kilometres further south than the final version. Hungarian towns like Vác, Balassagyarmat, Salgótarján, Miskolc, and Sátoraljaújhely were to be part of Slovakia, Beneš and his colleagues proposed. Sub-Carpathia was also to be part of the newly founded Czechoslovak state, and an 80 to 120 kilometres wide strip in Western Hungary extending from Pozsony/Bratislava/Pressburg to the River Mura/Hurje, (the so-called Slav corridor) was to be partly under Slovak, and partly under South Slav control.[2]

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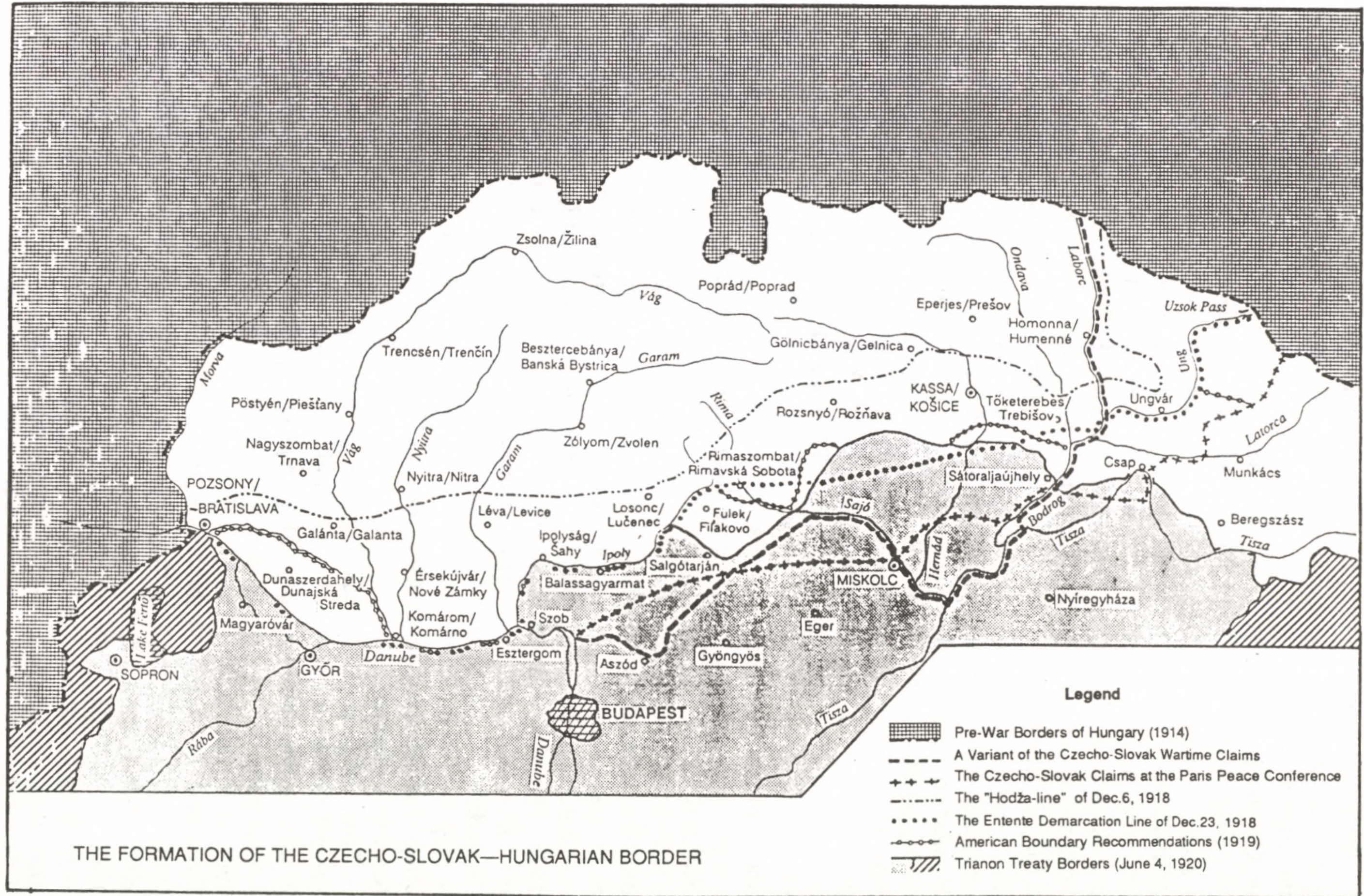
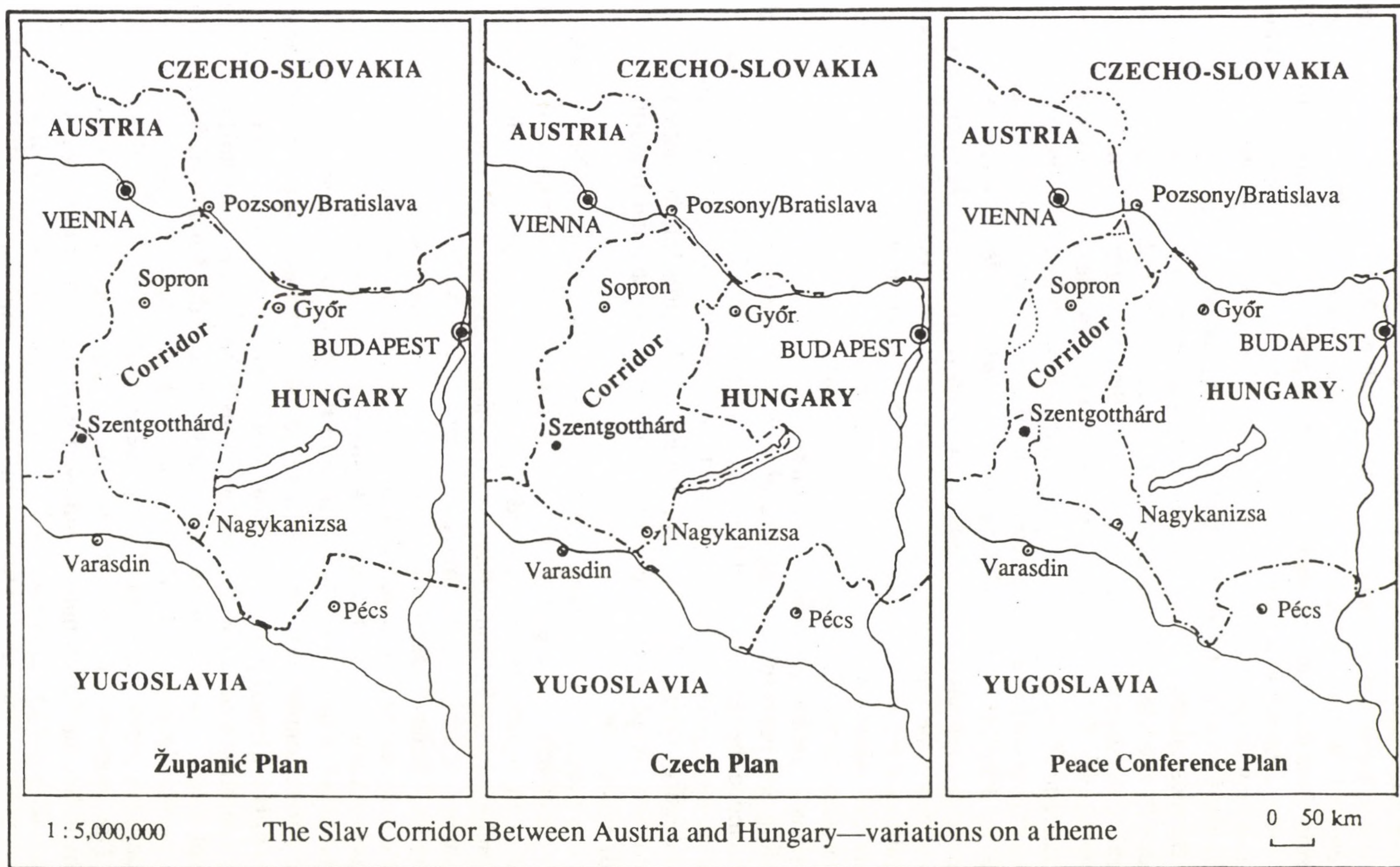


THE FORMATION OF THE CZECHO-SLOVAK—HUNGARIAN BORDER

The ethnic composition of the Slovak, Sub-Carpathian, and Western Hungarian territories claimed was naturally still more complicated than that of those territories finally granted to Czechoslovakia in 1919. Should the demands of Czechoslovakia have been fully acceded to, the ratio of ethnic Slavs in Slovakia would have been far smaller than 50 per cent according to 1921 Czechoslovak data, or less than 40 per cent according to the Hungarian census of 1910. In the Western Hungarian counties of Moson, Sopron, Vas and Zala the ratio of Slovaks and Croats was about 6 per cent in 1920 (of an overall population of 1,136,000, 65,000 were Croats and 1,127 were Slovaks).[3] It should be borne in mind that the main argument of Benes as regards the positioning of a Slovak-Hungarian frontier was the principle of ethnic justice, whereas his claims on Austrian and German territories rested on historical bases. The argument was obviously based on a very liberal interpretation of available Hungarian figures and even on their occasional replacement with unfounded and exaggerated estimates. Let me give a few examples. The area Beneš claimed from Hungary as part of Slovakia reached from Pozsony/Bratislava/Pressburg to the River Ung in the east, and to the line of Vác, Miskolc, Tokaj and Záhony in the south. The area amounted to 59,000 square kilometres, with a population of about three and a half million. According to the Hungarian census of 1910, about one million were Magyars, so the number of Slovaks could not possibly exceed two million. However a document compiled by the Czechoslovak National Council in Paris spoke of 2,300,000 Slovaks and 500,000 Magyars resident on the same territory. This document also claimed that the number of Slovaks remaining in Hungary would be 400,000, nearly three times as many as the figure adduced by Hungarian statistics and more than twice as many as an estimate found acceptable by the Hungarian Prime Minister Pál Teleki in 1921. The Slav corridor in Western Hungary exemplified a still more liberal treatment of facts. Where Hungarian statistics contained a figure of 66,000 Slavs, Beneš referred to "almost 200,000" Croats and Slovaks.[4] What is more, a map issued by the Paris Council, *"Carte ethnographique de l'Europe"*, alleged an outright Slovak and Southern Slav majority on the West-Hungarian territories claimed.[5]

True, ethnicity in censuses and other kinds of statistics were invariably subject to the national bias of the administration in question and they still are, at least in this part of Europe. This helps to explain the significant differences between the data of the Hungarian census of 1910 and censuses taken by the successor states after 1920. There was, however, no such difference between the actual situation and the results of the 1910 Hungarian census as Beneš supposed; this is shown by the censuses taken by Austria and Czechoslovakia after 1920. One may therefore assume that Beneš's claim was a piece of deliberate propaganda, based on the long-established psychological device, that if something is repeated again and again, and with sufficient emphasis, it will ultimately be believed, however untrue it may be.

For that matter, Beneš did not refrain from distorting history in his overemphasizing kinship between Czechs and Slovaks or that between Slovaks and



The Slav Corridor Between Austria and Hungary—variations on a theme

Ruthenes, while concealing or minimizing differences. The difference between Czechs and Slovaks was next to nothing, he said, Slovakia had once been part of the Czechoslovak state, "They share the same language and history, and there are simply no problems in religious and political life".[6] The Ruthenes, the argument went, "were close relatives of the Slovaks, lived under similar conditions, and were bound to them by so many ties that their union with the Republic of Czechoslovakia would pose no problem at all".[7]

Besides ethnic justice, another often repeated argument was security. In order to prevent German expansion towards the Balkans, the Allies must weaken Austria and Hungary, and strengthen the future Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. This was one of the basic ideas in the well-known *Detruisez l'Autriche-Hongrie,* issued in 1916, and in English in 1917. The same idea is also expounded in a volume containing the territorial claims of Czechoslovakia in detail *(Les revendications territoriales de la République Tchéco-Slovaque),* especially as regards the Slav corridor. "If the Hungarians are set apart from the Germans, and the latter cannot use them as instruments to establish their rule in Central Europe, this means that the basis for a new political system in the region has been created: the reconciliation and co-operation of the Czechoslovakians, the Yugoslavs and the democratic Hungarians is the basic condition of these three nations becoming the basis of a lasting and peaceful new organization there." Beneš, who had only recently demanded the destruction of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy on the basis of the national principle, referred now to a higher interest than the principle of nationality, saying that "the application of the principle of nationality can never be complete and there always will remain national minorities in the individual states". [8]

The need to set up natural frontiers was another argument for the Czechoslovak claims, as were also considerations of trade and transport. These were the main arguments for the need to set the frontier along the stretch of the Danube between Pozsony/Bratislava and Párkány/Sturovo. "Slovakia has natural frontiers all around; it is obviously essential that the Danube be her southern frontier," Beneš himself wrote.[9] Where this argument was out of place, as in the case of the territories east of Párkány (the zone between Vác and Tokaj that was eventually left to Hungary), the proposed annexation of which to Slovakia was called "a most obvious violation of the principle of nationality" even by the Paris committee, Beneš called for punishment and reparations for "centuries of Hungarian oppression". "Our claim for this territory is a claim for a kind of reparation that has long been due to us", the detailed Czechoslovak document states.[10] The Hungarian nation has been "the butcher of Slovaks, the Serbs, the Croats, and the Rumanians... and there has never been a worse and crueller oppressor in history", states Beneš in *Detruisez l'Autriche-Hongrie.*[11]

The counterbalance to the "Hungarian oppressors" was, however, not the Slovak but the Czech nation, endowed with the best of qualities. This nation "has achieved the greatest possible development in the Modern Age and in recent times, from intellectual, social and economic aspects alike", and have

achieved “the first place among all Slavonic peoples”.[12] The purpose of idealizing the Czech nation was to make the other nations believe that the new state would guarantee all nationals their rights which they had not obtained from the Austro-Hungarian Empire or from Hungary. The Slovaks would acquire the status of a partner nation, the Ruthenes full territorial autonomy, and the Germans and the Hungarians would be given extensive minority rights. Thus, besides ethnic and strategic aspects, as well as geographic, economic and transport considerations, reparation for past wrongs and the political maturity of the Czech nation enabling it to manage a state, the promise of an exemplary treatment of the minority question was what Beneš and his colleagues mostly referred to.[13]

During the early years of the war, it was Russia alone that supported the attempts of the Czechoslovak National Council to found a state. France and, especially, England still wished to maintain the Habsburg Empire while transforming its inner structure. This was why the memorandum of the Allies of January 10, 1917, in which they stated their war aims at the request of President Wilson, declared only the liberation of the Italians, the Slavs and the Czechoslovaks from foreign rule and did not mention the destruction of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, or support for the attempts by its nations to form independent states. The Fourteen Points of President Wilson of January 8, 1918 contained basically the same ideas, though in a rather ambiguous form. The standpoint of the Allies changed only in the spring of 1918, after the Peace of Brest-Litovsk between Germany and Soviet-Russia and the failure of Austro-Hungarian attempts to obtain a separate peace. From then on, not only France but also England and the United States supported the formation of small states in Eastern Europe, including a separate state for the Czechs and Slovaks.[14] There was, however, no full agreement between the Allies and the Czech politicians in exile even after that. It was only Paris that approved the proposed frontiers of the not yet existing Czechoslovak state going beyond ethnic and linguistic boundaries. Rome, London and, especially, Washington protested against the excessive and unjustifiable claims. At the end of 1918, the Peace Preparation Committee (Inquiry) of the United States proposed a frontier between Czechoslovakia and Hungary that was to be 10 to 20 kilometres further north than the one actually to be sanctioned in Trianon later on, and much further north than the frontier proposed by Beneš. The American proposal left to Hungary the Grosse Schütt Island (Csallóköz), the district of Fülek (Filakovo) in Central Slovakia, and the northern part of the area called Bodrogköz (Királyhelmes/Královsky Chlumec and its neighbourhood) in Eastern Slovakia. The American committee were prepared to accept the annexation of Sub-Carpathia to Czechoslovakia with extensive autonomy rights.[15] They did not, however, in any way support the idea of a Slav corridor. This, they said, “would obviously be in direct contravention of nationalistic ideals”.[16] The British proposal, prepared by Seton-Watson and his colleagues, stood closer to the American view than that of Beneš. The British maps still treated ethnically Magyar zones north of the Trianon border such as the island

of Csallóköz/Grosse Schütt as areas with a mixed or uncertain population whose status was to be decided by the peace conference after thorough preliminary investigation on the spot. [17]

Preliminary suggestions made by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs as to the Hungarian frontier are not known. The Italian views at the peace conference were, however, certainly closer to the American ones and indeed, at times, favoured Hungary even more.

Reconciliation of the Czechoslovak demands and the views of the Great Powers was the task of the peace conference or, rather, its expert committees. Beneš presented his ideas on the frontier that he expressed earlier in his writings during the war, and in the materials submitted by the Czechoslovak National Council to the Council of Ten on February 5, 1919. His arguments in the latter displayed the same features as his earlier writings: eclectic and incoherent reasoning, arbitrary treatment of statistical data and, if necessary, even deliberate deception. Let me mention one example in support of this harsh description. When Lloyd George and Sidney Sonnino interrupted his address and asked about the ethnic composition of the Danube-riparian zone, especially that of Pozsony/Bratislava/Pressburg, Beneš replied without hesitation that *"Presbourg est une ville entièrement slovaque"*, that Pozsony was completely Slovak.[18] (In fact, even the Czechoslovak census of 1921 established that Slovaks made up 39 per cent of the population; according to the Hungarian census of 1910 they accounted for fewer than one third of the inhabitants).

The plenary hearing of Beneš was followed by hard work in the committees. The status of Sub-Carpathia was decided first. On February 27, 1919, the Czechoslovak Committee of the conference accepted the American proposal as to the annexation of the territory to Czechoslovakia with extensive autonomy. Only the Italian delegate mentioned the possibility of leaving Sub-Carpathia with Hungary, which would create a chance for co-operation between Poland, Hungary and Rumania. The parties were also quick to arrive at a consensus to reject the Slav corridor, not even the French delegate supporting the idea. The definition of the actual frontier between Slovakia and Hungary proved much more difficult. The Czechoslovak claims were supported mainly by the French and, to a lesser extent, by the English. The Italians and the Americans stood apart. The so-called Trianon border between Slovakia and Hungary was declared on March 8, 1919, after severe debates in committee. This frontier remained in place until the autumn of 1938, and was restored with minor modifications after the Second World War. It did not accede to the Czechoslovak demand for the Börzsöny Hills between the River Ipoly and the Danube Bend, for Salgótarján and the surrounding coal fields (i.e. the northern spur of the Mátra), for Miskolc and its neighbourhood, Sátoraljaújhely and the Bodrogköz region. However, it did leave to Czechoslovakia zones along the border (the Csallóköz/Grosse Schütt) that were marked on the British maps as ethnically mixed or uncertain territories.[19]

The decision made by the expert committee of the peace conference left

Beneš dissatisfied and prompted him to make use of connections, primarily with the French general staff, to fight for a more favourable solution. Developments in Hungary, that is the proclamation of a Soviet Republic in Hungary offered him a good opportunity, and he was quick to refer to it in his memorandum of March 26 addressed to Clemenceau and his foreign minister Pichon. Czechoslovakia was a lonely island facing the Bolshevik tide coming from the east, he wrote, against which she can defend herself only if granted proper frontiers. In spite of these energetic attempts and the support of French government circles, Beneš's intervention did not achieve anything. The Council of Foreign Ministers accepted the proposal of the Czecho-Slovak Committee without any modification on March 8, and the Council of Four did so on March 12. After that the Slovak-Hungarian frontier underwent only a single insignificant adjustment, on June 11, when the Council of Foreign Ministers awarded Ipolyság/Sahy with its railway junction to Czechoslovakia. Thus this intervention by Beneš cannot be called completely futile after all.[20]

The Slovak-Hungarian border thus established in the Spring of 1919 was made known by Clemenceau's memorandum of June, 1919, and the politically-minded in Hungary reacted to it with deep bitterness. They saw in it the failure of the much mentioned ethnic or national principle. There were, however, differences of opinion as regards the substance of the opposition to the frontier. Many demanded full restoration of the *status quo,* but there were others—especially members of the democratic opposition to the Horthy regime—who could have been conciliated by the recovery of the border zone inhibited mainly by ethnic Hungarians. Certain Hungarian historians and sections of public opinion mention from time to time that the new democratic Czechoslovak state was at that time prepared to establish friendly relations with Hungary and to modify the frontier along ethnic lines. This, they think, was frustrated only because the reactionary leaders of Hungary, who cherished the ideal of the kingdom of the lands of the crown of St Stephen and were thus unable to arrive at a reasonable compromise.

The idea of a compromise based on mutual concessions was, however, not quite alien to the conservative Hungarian leading elite. To my mind, the man who did everything to prevent even the slightest modification of the frontier was not Count Teleki nor Count Bethlen but Edvard Beneš.

The possibility of agreeing on a more acceptable frontier occurred as early as late 1918. The initiative was taken by Milan Hodža, formerly a Slovak member of the Hungarian Parliament and, at that time, the Budapest envoy of the new Czechoslovak state. On December 6, 1918, he agreed with Albert Bartha, the Hungarian Minister of War, on a demarcation line that would have left all the Magyar population along what was to be the Trianon border in Hungary. It was therefore natural that the agreement caused great uneasiness in Prague, though obviously no definitive border was determined. Prime Minister Kramar disavowed his envoy at once and ordered Beneš to take immediate counter-measures. The foreign minister did his best to persuade the Allies to

define a demarcation line more advantageous to the Czechoslovak state; these efforts were crowned with success. The new demarcation line, declared on December 23, 1918, followed the Danube in the west, and only the central and eastern section of the frontier ran a few kilometres north of the actual frontier established in the Spring of 1919.[21]

In April, 1919, that is after the decision of the committee of experts of the peace conference, it was President Masaryk who thought it desirable to establish a frontier that was more just from the ethnic point of view. To the proposal of General Smuts, who stopped over in Prague on his way from Budapest to Paris, he replied that "he would prefer to waive all claims to this Magyar territory" north of the Danube "and withdraw the Czech frontier to the north, so as to leave all this ethnologically Magyar territory to Hungary". As a compensation he would ask for the establishment of a small bridge-head opposite Pozsony/Bratislava south of the Danube. Masaryk's own notes, found in the presidential archives in Prague and published a few years ago by Václav Král, also confirm Smuts' report. Masaryk wrote that "should the Entente grant us the Danube line as far as the Ipoly, we would start negotiations with the Hungarians on returning the other excessive Magyar territories".[22]

The peace conference—specifically the Council of Foreign Ministers and the Czechoslovak Committee—would have been ready to discuss the Slovak-Hungarian frontier line anew and to make certain modifications in the first days of May, 1919, i.e. before the final decision was taken. It was again due to Beneš that this did not happen; he fought not for ethnically sound frontiers but for those borders he held to be the most advantageous for Czechoslovakia. Jules Laroche, a French delegate, interpreted the opinion of the Czechoslovak foreign minister at the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers on May 3 as follows: "General Smuts had seriously misunderstood what he (i.e. Masaryk) had said". Masaryk only wanted to say that "certain parties in Bohemia held the view that the Island of Grosse Schütt might be exchanged for a small enclave opposite Pressburg. President Masaryk himself, however, did not support that proposal." Beneš added that Czechoslovakia needed the Grosse Schütt in order to secure navigation on the Danube and that a delegation of the inhabitants of the island had also been to Prague to demand the annexation of the territory by Czechoslovakia for economic reasons. After these interventions, the Czechoslovak committee decided to make the March proposal definitive on May; the Council of Foreign Ministers did so on May 8, and the Council of Four on May 11.[23]

In the spring and summer of 1921, when the peace treaty was already signed but not yet ratified, the possibility of reconsidering the Czechoslovak-Hungarian frontier emerged anew in bilateral talks between the two countries. According to the memoirs of Miklós Bánffy, the Hungarian foreign minister, the Hungarian delegation asked for a frontier somewhat to the south of the line that was established in the autumn of 1938, that is for an ethnic border justified even by the Czechoslovak census of 1921.[24] Beneš, the leader of the Czechoslovak delegation was, however, ready to discuss the possible return only of a much

smaller area, the district of Komárom/Komarno and Losonc/Lucenec. The Hungarian prime minister, Count Bethlen and his foreign minister thought that rewarding such a minimal concession by voluntarily signing away other former Hungarian territories in a bilateral treaty would have been a grave mistake. The documents of the Franco-Hungarian talks of 1920 reveal that some of the Hungarian leaders, that is Counts Bethlen, Teleki and Bánffy, would have been prepared to renounce Pozsony/ Bratislava/Pressburg and its neighbourhood as well as the district of Nyitra/Nitra and the border district of Eastern Slovakia at the most. They, however, absolutely insisted on Hungary retaining the Grosse Schütt, the Little Hungarian Plain, the counties of Hont and Nógrád. (That is, the Ipoly region and the district of Losonc/Lucenec.) Beneš announced in Marienbad that he was not willing to accept this demand. The laconic memoirs of the Hungarian foreign minister are a primary source for the supposition that the Czechoslovak-Hungarian compromise failed because of the rigidity and inflexibility of the Hungarian party. The truth is the opposite, that no agreement could have been arrived at, even if the Hungarian delegation had accepted Beneš's proposal as a basis for discussion. Essentially Beneš had made his counterproposal knowing in advance that the Hungarians would refuse it. Should they accept it, he said to the British minister to Prague about his actual standpoint, "I will be forced to meet it with a direct refusal". [25] In other words, Edvard Beneš did not regard conceding a single square meter to Hungary as either possible or admissible.

One might think that frontier revision remained unmentioned after this at least until the thirties. But this was not the case. It remained continually in the forefront of attention and it was President Masaryk who played a crucial role here. As far as we know now, he expressed an opinion in public four times between 1922 and 1929 on the possibility of redrawing the Slovak-Hungarian frontier. In 1922 his views appeared in *Nouvelle Europe*, in 1923 in *Budapesti Hirlap*, in 1928 in the *Sunday Times*, and in 1929 in the *Neue Freie Presse*. [26] There was good reason why it cannot be coincidental that Masaryk spoke of this so frequently nor can it be journalistic exaggeration that he did that so explicitly. Nor did he air his thoughts only in the press; he also used political channels. The British minister to Prague reported on one of his similar statements in the spring of 1929; he "would have been prepared... to restore to Hungary a triangle of territory on the frontier near Bratislava, which is inhabited almost exclusively by Hungarians, and Hungary would have returned to Czechoslovakia a number of Slovaks not resident in Hungary". [27] It is therefore highly probable that Masaryk really wished to achieve a reconciliation with Hungary and considered minor corrections of the frontier conceivable.

Nevertheless, the declarations and statements of the President had no practical consequence at all. Every single one of them was followed by a disclaimer by Beneš, just as we have already seen in the case of the mission of General Smuts in 1919. Beneš either stated that the President had not spoken of the frontiers at all or that his words had been misread or intentionally minister-

preted. This peculiar "division of labour" between the President and the foreign minister had become everyday practice by the late twenties, and there was not a diplomat who would have attributed any significance to it. C. Howard-Smith, who was in charge of Central European affairs at the Foreign Office in London dismissed one of the recent statements of Masaryk and the subsequent disclaimer of Beneš in 1929: "This is the kind of thing which is continually happening and which irritates the Hungarians, perhaps not unnaturally. President Masaryk and Dr Beneš are for ever saying that they would welcome an arrangement with the Hungarians, but the latter always draws back or qualifies his statement before any conversations begin. The Hungarians therefore consider him a hypocrite."[28] A few months later the British minister to Prague added: "Every time that Beneš speaks of Hungary he always shows that, in spite of his officially expressed desire to conciliate them, he really at the back of his mind would like to humiliate them on every possible occasion (...) He has ... always said that a permanent peace with Hungary is impossible, that Hungary will never be conciliated, and when he says this he appears to say it with some relish as though it were in the ordinary nature of things."[29]

Edvard Beneš stuck to his anti-revisionist standpoint right up to 1938–39, that is to the end of the Republic of Czechoslovakia. However, he seems to have reconsidered and revised his views during his second exile. In June 1940 he declared that "nothing that has been imposed upon us since Munich do we consider to be valid in law ... This does not mean that we desire as our war aim a mere return to the *status quo* of September, 1938 (...) We wish to agree on our frontiers with our neighbours in a friendly fashion. (...) Changes in detail are possible."[30] In a policy-making article, written in 1942, he discussed his ideas of post-war Europe and there, too, found minor correction of the frontiers possible: "Perhaps in certain cases it will be possible, by local alterations in the frontiers, to diminish somewhat the minority population in the individual states."[31] Other members of the Czechoslovak government in exile, for example Jan Masaryk, son of the founder of the state, or Ladislav Feierabend, minister of finance, made similar statements.[32] Having taken these statements seriously, the American diplomats working on the peace terms thought it possible right up to the spring or summer of 1945 to alter the Slovak-Hungarian frontier after the war by a peaceful agreement between the two parties. They considered the return to Hungary of the Grosse Schütt and part of the Little Plains justified and desirable as a minimum, and that of a few districts in Eastern and Central Slovakia as a maximum. They thought of the same regions they had been willing to leave with Hungary in 1919.[33] It, however, became obvious very soon that the former statements of Beneš and his colleagues had not been made out of the open-mindedness of a statesman, but could be more correctly called insincere and empty promises that they thought advisable to repeat as long as their exile lasted. Once back in Prague, they promptly abandoned their former views on the revision of the frontier and on autonomy for the national minorities, and could only think of expelling the Hungarian population from their country. They did so despite the fact that, after 1945, the Hungarian leadership no longer consisted of reactionary noblemen but, for a short period, of declared democrats.

NOTES

1. Elekes Dezső: *Hazánk, népünk, szomszédaink* (Our country, our people and our neighbours). Budapest, 1941, pp. 85-133. Cf. Kocsis Károly—Kocsisné Hódosi Eszter: *Magyarok a határainkon túl* (Magyars outside Hungary). Budapest, 1991 and Kővágó László: *Nemzetiségek a mai Magyarországon* (National minorities in present-day Hungary). Budapest, 1981.
2. The sources and full titles of the material discussed:
   - National Archives, Washington (henceforth: NA) RG 256. Inquiry. Doc. 5. Abstract of the Czechoslovak Pamphlets
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László András Magyar

Rough Justice

The Moral Dilemma of a 16th Century Hostage-Taking

In the year 1567 an apothecary, Caspar Pfreund, from Wittenberg, was visiting Leipzig on the occasion of the oriental fair. On a Wednesday he was loitering in front of a pharmacist's stall when a certain student, named Georg Goldstein, son of an innkeeper from Leipzig, stepped up to him and told him that his godfather, Master Schönberg of Wittenberg, having broken his thigh, sends his compliments and begs Master Pfreund to hurry to him without delay as he would seek his advice. The apothecary, commiserating over the plight of Master Schönberg, at once set off with the student. Georg Goldstein led him to Nicol Street, to a house which his long deceased father had bought. Upon entering the house the apothecary imagined he heard groans and cries of pain from above and hurried upstairs forthwith. There, however, he found no godfather, but three other students; Alesius, a doctor's son from Leipzig, Zacharias Strademan, the son of a furrier, and Mathusalem Töpfer, the son of a Naumburg jeweller. All three were masked, so the apothecary did not recognize any one of them. The students set upon him directly, gagged and held him fast. He took a piece of chalk from his pocket and wrote on the floor that, ask of him what they will, only take the gag out of his mouth so that he can talk to them.

When he was safely trussed and bound, they laid the accusation against him that he, as mayor of Wittenberg, had permitted certain illegalities in return for a consideration. They said that the hour of retribution had come, demanded 3,600 guldens of him, and warned him he would be a dead man if he did not pay.

The apothecary pleaded for mercy in vain, the students were not moved to pity, but continued to demand the money. They went through the unfortunate man's pockets and found forty gold rings on him, which they pocketed at once, and relieved him of his half-gulden as well. They locked him up in a deep cellar, pushing a table against its door. They then laid the table with boiled and roast meats, beer and wine brought from a nearby stall and there made merry. They had victuals taken down to their prisoner in the cellar, and sent Georg Goldstein to keep him company so he should not have to drink alone. They instructed the student to use gentle persuasion to give them the money they

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demanded. But the apothecary showed a perverse obstinacy and incessantly complained of the indignities and injuries he had been made to suffer.

Before daybreak the creaking of a four-wheeler could be heard. Upon hearing this Goldstein said:

"Do you know what this creaking signifies, Master Pfreund? This is the carriage in which you, after being slain, will be taken in a barrel to a place where you will never be found. Therefore I entreat you to promise them the sum they demand, unless you are resolved to die."

Upon hearing this the poor wretch lost his head and his courage. As there seemed to be no other way out of the situation, he decided he would promise to pay the vast sum they demanded. He gave his oath and put it down in writing that, as soon as they let him go back to his lodgings, he would pay them six hundred guldens, and would pay the remaining three thousand in instalments on his next three visits to the Leipzig fair, and would never tell a soul of what had happened to the end of his days. When he had taken the oath, and the deed was signed, they gave him back his rings so that their absence should not arouse suspicion and finally, putting a hood over his head, Goldstein led him out of the house to a forsaken back alley and left him at the corner before the sun had risen.

As soon as the apothecary was alone again and had rid himself of the hood, he hurried to his lodgings in the cobblers' alley, to Doctor Brembach's house, who at that time was the mayor of Leipzig. Upon seeing him, his host asked him where he had spent the previous night, for it was not his custom to stay out all night, he had left no word that he would be late, and no servant had brought tidings of him. The apothecary remined as silent as the tomb, the only words he uttered were a plea to the mayor to be so kind as to lend him six hundred guldens from his own purse or from the town council's funds, as he would be in great need of the sum at noon. This request greatly astounded Doctor Brembach. What on earth could Master Pfreund want with such a large sum and at so short a notice, when his credit was good with every merchant of the city, and any piece of merchandise in Leipzig his for the asking at the mere mention of his name? As he did not keep such a large sum at home, he accompanied his friend to the council-house to secure him a loan. When the council had assembled, he again asked the apothecary where he had been the previous night and what he wanted the six hundred guldens for at such short notice, for, though they would of course willingly give him the money, caution must prevail and, as the whole affair seemed rather suspicious, they must ask him to tell, of his own accord, what happened to him the previous night. Still the apothecary remained silent, and in the end disclosed only that he had sworn to tell no one where he had been.

The Prince-Elector of Saxony, August, who was then leading the captive Prince of Gotha through Leipizig, learned of his subject's case. The Prince Elector sent his own pastor—an office performed at the time by Doctor Pfeffinger, the superintendent of Leipzig—to Master Pfreund and entrusted him with the task of prevailing upon the apothecary to reveal where he had been and what he needed the money for. However, not even these distin-

guished persons could get the apothecary to speak. The elector then warned him that he would have him taken to Dresden for interrogation. The apothecary understood that he would in all certainty be put to torture in Dresden and so consented to have Doctor Pfeffinger release him from his oath, take his sin upon himself and account for it on the Day of Judgement. With that, the mystery was solved.

At noon, when Georg Goldstein went to pick up the six hundred guldens, two town constables were waiting for him in the doorway opposite Doctor Brembach's house, caught him in the act of taking the money, arrested him, and committed him to the custody of the council. In the meantime, his accomplices roamed the streets looking for their friend, for they had no idea what could have become of him. When they saw him taken prisoner they all three jumped into a carriage they had had waiting as a precaution, and drove out of the city.

On the following Friday, Goldstein was beheaded in the market-place following the judgement of the Prince-Elector. Not long after, Alesius was also arrested; but being the son of a respected doctor, he was sentenced to ninety years' imprisonment. Strademan became the abbot of a Catholic monastery, and a gentleman from the Szepesség had Mathusalem hanged for alchemy in Hungary.

As for the apothecary, he lived for only two years following the incident. He kept telling his son in Merseburg how much the breaking of his oath troubled his soul, and that he had better have paid that terrible sum to those wicked students and kept the secret to the end of his days than to have broken the oath he made verbally and in writing, upon the urging of Doctor Pfeffinger and the threats of the Saxon Elector.

It must be said that though the apothecary remained a rich and honourable man, he did not have much pleasure in life from that moment on, and could not keep down anything he ate.

Based on P. P. Nitzschka: *Historische Blütenlust*. Frankfurt—Leipzig, 1685, pp. 15-22.

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Though this story of a crime may not be bloody enough for the contemporary reader, nor contain enough in the way of surprises, it does have its points of interest. It deals with violence disguised as the dispensing of justice, in other words with terrorism. Even in its details it reminds us of acts of terrorism today. What is the story? Four students abduct a representative of the ruling class in the name of social justice, blackmail him with threats of murder, then, trusting that the victim, as a man of high principles, will not violate the moral law, attempt to fleece him.

The delinquents are also typical. They are students, of "good" families, who probably have no need to resort to such methods to make money.

The order of events is also characteristic. The robbers singled out their

victim long before the actual kidnapping took place (as the precision of the preparations indicates); they abduct him under circumstances unlikely to raise suspicion, lure him to a deserted house without difficulty, owing to his honest and upright character. The perpetrators wear masks and use physical and psychological threats. The gang profess to be motivated by the highest moral considerations, but are obviously simply greedy for money. They disport themselves most ostentatiously in order to plunge their victim into despair, to prepare him psychologically. They begin by threatening him, then change tactics: they split up, one of them pretends to be the "good guy", who does not side with the others so as to insinuate himself into the apothecary's confidence. The scheme pays off: the prisoner gives in, extortion has proved effective.

The method used is rather odd; cinema-goers would probably boo if it featured in a contemporary film. All that the abductors demand of their victim is an oath, given verbally and in writing; once it is given, they feel safe. But he could report them to the police! One would like to cry out. He does not. Why doesn't he?

There are two possible solutions.

One is that the accusation made against Pfreund may not have been unfounded, that the apothecary may in fact have abused his authority. For this reason, he remains silent; if he informs against his assailants, his own sins will be brought to light. However, this solution can be dismissed on the grounds that, a) at the end, when the gang's designs are thwarted and one of its members apprehended, nothing pointing to Pfreund's culpability comes to light; b) if the gang had really wanted to blackmail him, there was no need to abduct him, a simple blackmailing note would have sufficed; c) there would have been no point in going to such lenghts to secure the oath of a man known to be guilty of a breach of trust, for such a man would never abide by his oath; d) the apothecary's qualms of conscience over breaking his oath do not offer grounds for such a supposition.

The second solution is that the apothecary did not inform against his assailants because he had given his word. This may seem somewhat incredible in this day and age, but this was a time when people died for their beliefs by the thousands. There were many who could have saved themselves from death by torture with a single word, yet chose to die rather than sully their honour. This was the age of Saint Thomas More and Servetus. On the other hand, we must keep in mind that the apothecary's social function depended on his good reputation; if he perjured himself he would have had to suffer not just the eternal fire but the scorn of his fellow-citizens. Society in those days was more closed than today, it had a better hold over its members, exerting pressure on them that was also internalized. Incidentally, the whole course of the kidnapping indicates that the gang had selected Pfreund because they were sure that he, as a typical respector of law and order, would show due regard for the moral constraints of the said order and would not inform against them.

The kidnappers assumed, then, that their victim would abide by those rules of society by whose violation they made their living. This is characteristic of

terrorism. In a terrorist state (founded on illegal violence) terrorism cannot exist, for it cannot rely on it being the sole violator of laws. Terrorism does however flourish in places where society can only oppose its illegalities and immorality with its own ineffectual legality. Terrorists who take hostages are quite certain that the blackmailed community cannot abandon the hostages to their fate, in consequence of the community's own laws and moral order. If this were not true, if a state were to allow hostages to be blown up alongside those who took them hostage, there would be no point in taking hostages.

The apothecary is set free and tries to keep his word. His abnormal behaviour, however, draws attention to himself and arouses suspicion. The kidnappers committed a blunder there. The reason why they picked on the apothecary was that he was proper and correct in his behaviour. They should have taken care not to force him into any situation where his conduct would deviate from the normal (staying out all night, finding himself suddenly in need of money). Failing to consider all this was what, in the end, caused their downfall.

The apothecary's dilemma is as follows. Which should he choose, loss of honour or loss of money? He does not hesitate in choosing the latter (as he did not hesitate in choosing to live when his money or his life were at stake). In other words, honour (the respect of society) is more important to him than money (individul interest).

The council's dilemma is as follows: it cannot demand one of its members to violate his oath, for that would mean breaking its own rules. At the same time, the council is disquietened by seeing normal, "orderly" people behaving in an abnormal, "disorderly" way; because of the unknown, hidden sin, "disorder" threatens. The council represents, indeed is, society. And what does society do in such a situation? It turns to state power for help.

What should the state do? For what is at stake here is no trivial matter. The state must make a choice between instigating the violation of an oath (a crime against morality) and tolerating disorder (a crime against order). The grave question is whether the state can resort to illegal (or at least immoral) means to oppose violation of the law?

The apothecary finds himself in a quandary again: his honour is now threatened from both sides. On the one hand, by the violation of his oath, on the other by creating and concealing disorder. He cannot make a choice. Luckily Doctor Pfeffinger, the man of compromise arrives.

Pfeffinger realizes that what the apothecary really fears is not eternal hell-fire, nor the loss of his honour either way. The apothecary is afraid of responsibility, for finally it is he who must decide whether one can violate one's own principles if one's interests demand that one do so. It is he who must assume the responsibility for the choice between order and morality.

So, Doctor Pfeffinger finally assumes responsibility, not for the violation of an oath but for the decision; it is he who will be accountable on the Day of Judgement. (Fortunately, Protestant theology affords an opportunity for so doing.) As the apothecary still shows reluctance, the threat of torture tips the scales in a more effective, if not the better, way.

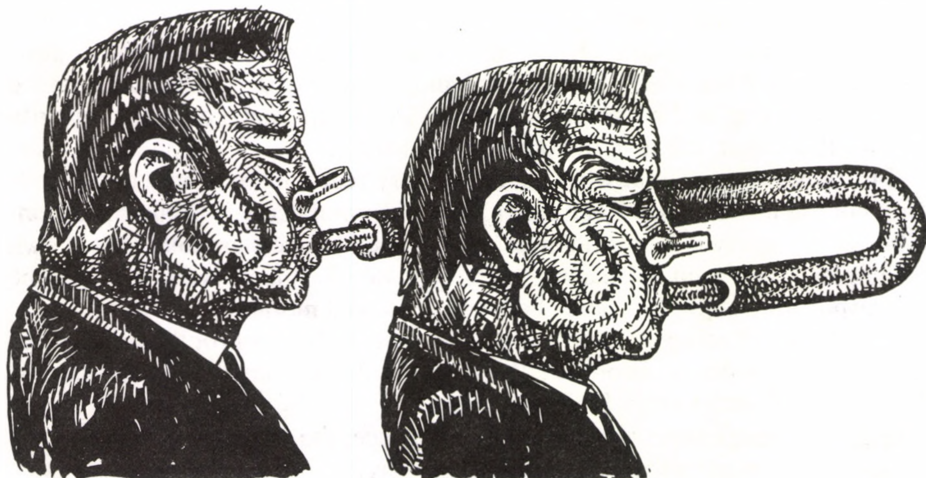
The rest follows the pattern of a simple crime story. The punishments are cruel, but after all, the good-for-nothing perpetrators put the state in such a quandary! One loses his head, the other is hanged—serves him right for coming to Hungary—and the biggest scoundrel of them all becomes a Catholic priest—a quite understandable ranking, if we consider that Nitzschka, the chronicler, was a Protestant minister. And there is one who, owing to some string-pulling, gets off with a paltry ninety years.

The miserable apothecary's conscience is not appeased by the practical and the theologically admissible compromise. As a consequence of his doubt *pace* the theologically admissible compromise, he suffers from a chronic gastric ulcer, as the final silly sentence of the chronicle attests.

The solution is somewhat peculiar. The final decision of the state was that order is more important than the enjoinment of morality. This morality may be sacrificed for the sake of order, especially if the solution is a delicate compromise, albeit slightly tarred by a threat. The latter, nevertheless, apparently leaves morality untouched and in its proper place (apparently only, as the ulcer attests).

There's a place for everything, when everything's in its place.

The kidnappers calculated badly. Society did not respect the rules of the game according to which they played. To be sure, if the state proves no better than they, terrorists will be disappointed. Or will the state be risking an ulcer too if it enters into such games?



Györgyi Kocsis

The Uncertain State of Privatization

"Erzsébet Fehér, chief executive officer of Pannonplast, and Keun Sun Choi, President of Lucky Ltd, whose activities range from chemicals to gene technology, have signed an agreement on the establishment of a Hungarian-Korean joint venture to be called Pannon-Lucky Plastic Processing PLC, which will be capitalized at $14m." "The Hungarian holding in Budalakk-Hearing Paint Manufacturing Ltd has been bought by a French company. Total, the world's eighth largest oil group, has obtained 60 per cent of the company, and the German Hearing paint factory holds the remaining 40 per cent." "If the talks between Reorg Rt and Oxford Trading of the US are successfully completed within a month, and the Atlanta-based US company presents the necessary financial documents, the Eger-Mátravidéki Wine Complex will pass into the hands of American buyers within 30 days." "ETL Consulting Company, based in Miskolc, has bought the briquet works of Várpalota for 185m forints. The company, staffed by 170, is in process of liquidation." "Mercury Holding, owned by a private entrepreneur, Tibor Kerezsi (33), has bought 85,44 per cent of Monimpex, a wine trading company capitalized at 1,5bn forints." "The 1,570 employees of the Herend Porcelain Factory, which has an annual turnover of 1,8bn forints and is considered part of the national heritage, have bought 65 per cent of the company's shares at above face value. The employees did not have to compete for the company's shares and will be given a preferential loan by the Central European Investment Bank."

These are just a few random examples of recent privatizations. The casual observer, who comes upon items of this kind in the press almost daily, will probably be surprised at the criticism voiced by economists and politicians, who blame the government for slow progress and hitches in the privatization process. It is difficult to object to the argument frequently put forward by government circles, that "the world's fastest privatization is taking place in Hungary", since there is precious little to compare it to. The degree of nationalization and centralization of the economy, and the absence of the institutions of a market economy, which were characteristic of Eastern Europe until the change of regime, were unprecedented elsewhere. Consequently, it is not fair

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to compare the Hungarian privatization process either with that in South America or the privatization of large nationalized industries in Western Europe.

In principle, comparison with the achievements of the former socialist countries in the same boat seems feasible. Yet deeper analysis will reveal the shortcomings of this approach. All of these countries started from a radically differing background. For example, the former GDR was handed a "turnkey" capitalist pattern, with all its drawbacks and advantages. Poland has been struggling with a financial crisis much deeper than Hungary's for over ten years. The successor states of Yugoslavia are preoccupied with their own identity, and even Czecho-Slovakia, which seems to be the obvious one to compare Hungary with, has chosen an entirely different path of privatization, whose outcome it is far too early to judge. (And, of course, political events in Czecho-Slovakia have led to the splitting up of the country.)

But history does not care much for "fair comparisons", and posterity will probably judge the Hungarian privatiztion process by the degree to which it has helped the county to become competitive internationally. Unfortunately, there is not much to boast about in this respect, since the de-nationalization of the economy is taking place more slowly than the deterioration of the performance of businesses that are still owned by the state.

A panel of experts headed by Tamás Szabó, Minister without Portfolio responsible for privatization, which is drafting a government programme for the renewal of the privatization process, is also unhappy with the level of de-nationalization of the economy. "Since the establishment of the State Property Agency two and a half years ago, 8.3 per cent of former state property has passed into the hands of private investors (giving the SPA an income of 85bn forints). If privatization continues at this rate, it seems unlikely that the economic policy objective of reducing state ownership to under 50 per cent by 1994, can be achieved." The privatizations of the past two years have contributed little to the emergence of a Hungarian property owning middle-class, government experts claim. There is only a loose connection between the sale of state property and the processes of economic restructuring. The official conclusion is that far-reaching changes are required in the methods of effecting privatization, to make it equal to its historic importance and the requirements of economic transition.

But this apparently obvious conclusion conceals a host of uncertainties. For one thing, it is by no means clear what is understood by the term "the requirements of economic transition". Daily political disputes show how interpretations can differ according to place and time and to the political affiliation of the persons making them. Almost all the "big questions" of privatization are being discussed all the time. These are whether privatization should take place strictly on a market basis, through sales, based on asset valuation, or whether state property should also be passed on to new owners free of charge, or at a nominal price; whether preference should be given to financially strong, but foreign, multinationals, which are also in possession of new technologies, over domestic investors of slender capital and little know-how; to what extent

privatization and the stimulation of competition can and should be connected; how large the share of the employees can be in a privatized company; whether greater revenues for the state from privatization or the survival of the privatized company should enjoy priority; whether ailing companies should be "improved" before being privatized so that they will fetch a better price; how can the tightrope be walked between a centrally-steered and consequently slow privatization and decentralized techniques which inevitably permit carpet-baggery. The question of questions is of course what if any kind of property the state should hold onto in the long run.

Experience shows that the majority of questions daily debated by economists and politicians almost "solve themselves". In other instances, life itself tests the practical feasibility of theoretical options. FIDESZ's (the Young Democrats' Party) economic adviser László Urbán, who has recently quit the Board of Directors of the SPA, has pinpointed the inconsistency between the government's proclaimed preference for market-type privatization, and the practice in the past two years of free distribution of state property. "Of state property of 2,000bn forints book value, local governments received 300bn forints worth, the social security administration another 300bn forints worth, the holders of compensation coupons 100bn forints, and the beneficiaries of employee participation discount schemes are also given about 100 bn forints worth of state property. Supposing that 300bn forints worth of state property will have to be liquidated before privatization, allowing 100bn forints for the costs of privatization, including the state's obligation to make good previous environmental damage, and considering that 500bn forints worth of property is meant to stay in state ownership in the long run, one can realistically reckon on

THE ROLE OF FOREIGN CAPITAL
Foreign capital involved in privatization transactions (bn forints)

	1991 Dec.31	1992 June 30	1992 July 31
buy-out, capital contribution in kind, conversion and property protection, together	56.68	72.64	81.43
Foreign ownership in new businesses a=JVs, b=all companies, as percentage of capital			
in restructured firms	per cent	per cent	per cent
a)	40.76	40.78	40.7
b)	8.26	2.83	2.83
in new subsidiaries of companies			
a)	42.14	43.89	43.89
b)	32.42	34.82	34.46

Source: *Privinfo* (1992/10)

privatization revenues of 200bn forints at most", the opposition economist said. "Even that income is subject to the sale of the remaining state property at book value, of which there is little chance, in view of the condition Hungarian firms are in." The market principle will probably and inevitably disappear into the realm of theory anyway. Now that profitable companies have been sold, what is left are mainly firms which are, for some reason, or another, unsellable.

The vehicle-maker Ikarus, for example, is a mammoth deprived of its markets and heavily indebted, others are small and medium-size concerns on the brink of bankruptcy, unable to offer any attractive features to potential investors either in the way of markets, advanced technologies or size. The most obvious answer would be the sale of these firms to the management and staff, it being their particular interest to keep the enterprise going and thus their jobs, and possibly also to domestic entrepreneurs. However, these potential investors are plagued by a chronic lack of capital. Gábor Slosár, the deputy executive director of the SPA, admitted that a decentralized privatization of small and medium-sized concerns has made little progress over the past year or more, with only 22 of the 414 firms on offer actually sold.

The State Property Agency is clearly trying to shift the emphasis towards methods of privatization which involve preferential treatment, like the ESOP (Employees' Shared Ownership Programme), which has taken the form of legislation, or the Leasing and ESOP scheme, which is currently under preparation, or else privatization with the involvement of credit coupons. Although these methods have been rarely employed in practice, the double need for accelerated privatization and for the speedy creation of a property-owning middle-class—an aim more and more pointedly pursued by various politicians—despite the scarcity of domestic capital will inevitably soon lead to the government's extending preferential treatment to such an extent that privatization will be tantamount to the free distribution of state property.

Obviously this type of privatization offers no guarantee for the survival of the companies concerned, since what the majority of them most need is an injection of capital which, in the given circumstances, it is difficult, if not downright impossible, to obtain. But it seems almost certain that "unclaimed" firms will quickly fail, and the end is once again an odd sort of privatization, called liquidation. In all likelihood, the most exciting "game" in the Hungarian privatization process will be the pursuit race of preferential privatizations and windings-up. The odds are rather high that carpet-baggers will make their best deals in connection with firms privatized by being wound up.

Many observers believe that 1992 will be the peak year for privatization in Hungary, at least in terms of revenue obtained. Indeed, the SPA fulfilled its target of 50bn forints for the year by the middle of the summer. Observers consider it rather likely that the plan of setting up the State Asset Handling Company (AVRT) also played a powerful role. The staff of the SPA is paid in keeping with the Agency's income, and it was in their best interest to produce the highest possible revenue before a competing organization starts to operate.

The law establishing this new state ownership organization—the State Asset

Handling Company—came into force on August 28th. A government order issued at the same time listed property to be kept in state ownership in the long term. With the advent of the new organization, two bodies are now in charge of managing state property to be operated as businesses. State property that can be privatized in full comes under the authority of the State Property Agency, and state property which will be privatized to a limited extent only will be managed by the State Asset Handling Company. (Separate legislation on exchequer property, which is currently being prepared, will address the question of non-business state property.) In contrast to the SPA, which remains an exchequer-financed organization, the SAHC operates as a private one-person limited company, with ownership rights exercised by a minister. But in fact the SAHC exercises similar rights to the SPA over the firms that come under its authority. This means, that apart from the appointed percentage of the companies under its control, which will remain in state ownership, the SAHC may sell or lease its firms or restructure them for future privatization.

The relevant government order lists 157 firms which may be privatized in part only; between 25 and 50 per cent of their shares will remain permanently in state ownership. The ownership rights over the smaller, public service part of these state-held companies will be exercised by the competent ministries. Their majority was, however, handed over to the SPA. The non-privatizable assets of these companies will be incorporated as the equity of the SAHC, while the privatizable part of their assets will be considered its non-equity capital. Critics of this legislation argue that this will trigger an unprecedented

SALE OF STATE PROPERTY AND PRIVATIZATION REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

Privatization revenues and expenditures (accumulated within the year)

	1991*** Dec.31	1992 June 30	1992 July31
a) sale	30.44	37.10	45.30
b) dividend, yield	0.94	3.50	4.00
c) revenues, total (a+b)	30.38	40.60	49.30

***Because of delays in bank transfers, only this sum is shown on the accounts of the SPA. A further 8.7bn forints was carried over to 1992.

Income from privatized state property (accumulated within the year)

Total	30.44	37.10	45.30
- of that			
sold for forints (cash)	4.82	6.70	7.37
sold for forints (E+P credit)	1.01	4.00	4.42
sold for hard currency	24.61	26.40	33.51
sold for compensation coupons	—	—	—

Source: *Privinfo* (1992/10)

Stronger foreign investment in Eastern Europe and CIS

Foreign investment in Eastern Europe and the former USSR is increasing despite instability in the region. The latest issue of the *East European Investment Magazine*, published on Monday August 31, 1992, surveyed acquisitions, joint ventures and greenfield investments in the first quarter of this year and the last quarter of 1991 in all of the now 27 countries of Eastern Europe and the ex-USSR. (Foreign investments in Eastern Germany, since it was part of the former East Bloc, have been included.)

The number of deals has soared. The last quarter of 1991 saw a total of 146 transactions in the region. "This result was no small feat for a region that still carries high investment risks and, arguably, an even higher perception of risk," commented Mark Dixon, editor of the magazine.

This result has been achieved against a backdrop of social, political and economic turbulance in the region.

American investors have once again taken the top place. Their unrivalled position as the leading investor nation was shown in both the number and value of their transactions.

Commenting on the investing countries, Mr Dixon said: "Without Americans, Germans, Italians, French and British, you could almost hear a pin drop in Eastern Europe, such would be the investment silence."

Even so, many other investing countries were identified—including even a few fellow East European countries whose companies somehow found the resources to invest in other countries of the region.

There was something good in the statistics for almost everyone. Russia got the largest number of deals, Hungary the largest number of greenfield investments, the CSFR the top deal value. Among the major target nations, only Poland found itself with little to celebrate, although its 13 deals carried a respectable disclosed value of over $500 million.

It was already becoming apparent in the last quarter of 1991 that Hungary, with its population of 11 million, could not indefinitely hold out against Russia as an investment location with 140 million people.

This broadening of investor interest beyond Hungary has been under way since the collapse of communism throughout the region, but it took six months for the impact to be felt in actual investment flows. Throughout this interval, many investors continued to view Hungary as the most appetizing investment target. In the old days before the Berlin Wall was breached—tiny Hungary took more than half of all investment in the region.

THE INVESTORS: FIRST QUARTER 1992

Investment activity in the 27 countries of Eastern Europe, Eastern Germany and the ex-USSR

Investor nations ranked	Number of deals: Acquisitions	Number of deals: Joint ventures	Number of deals: Greenfield investments	Number of deals: Total	Disclosed Value ($ million): Acquisitions	Disclosed Value ($ million): Joint ventures	Disclosed Value ($ million): Greenfield investments	Disclosed Value ($ million): Total
United States	9.5	38.5	18.5	66.5	58.3	784.0	281.4	1123.7
Italy	4.5	12.0	5.0	21.5	96.7	71.2	103.3	271.2
Germany	5.5	6.5	9.0	21.0	90.4	685.4	—	775.8
France	5.0	9.0	5.0	19.0	82.3	244.1	132.4	458.8
United Kingdom	7.0	3.5	—	10.5	78.2	28.4	—	106.6
Sweden	1.0	6.8	1.0	8.8	—	56.1	—	56.1
Japan	0.5	3.0	5.0	8.5	—	0.3	—	0.3
Finland	—	7.4	1.0	8.4	—	0.1	—	0.1
Austria	4.0	1.0	2.0	7.0	163.7	27.7	—	191.4
Canada	—	6.0	—	6.0	—	40.7	—	40.7
Netherlands	2.5	2.0	—	4.5	55.0	35.6	—	90.6
Switzerland	1.0	1.5	1.0	3.5	47.8	—	—	47.8
Denmark	2.0	1.0	—	3.0	0.6	—	—	0.6
Hungary	—	1.5	1.0	2.5	—	—	—	—
South Africa	1.0	—	1.0	2.0	109.4	—	—	109.4
Luxemburg	1.0	—	—	1.0	178.3	—	—	178.3
Spain	—	—	1.0	1.0	—	—	6.3	6.3
Belgium	1.0	—	—	1.0	—	—	—	—
Greece	—	1.0	—	1.0	—	—	—	—
Hong Kong	—	1.0	—	1.0	—	—	—	—
India	—	—	1.0	1.0	—	—	—	—
Libya	—	—	1.0	1.0	—	—	—	—
South Korea	—	1.0	—	1.0	—	—	—	—
Ukraine	—	1.0	—	1.0	—	—	—	—
Russia	0,5	—	—	0.5	59.8	—	—	59.8
Israel	—	—	0.5	0.5	—	—	50.7	50.7
Norway	—	0.3	—	0.3	—	—	—	—
Europe (misc.)	3.0	—	—	3.0	66.0	—	—	66.0
Total	49.0	104.0	53.10	206.0	1086.3	1973.5	574.1	3633.9

Source: *East European Investment Magazine*, New York

RUSSIA IS MOST POPULAR TARGET:

First quarter 1992

Investment activity in the 27 countries of Eastern Europe, Eastern Germany and ex-USSSR

Target nations ranked	Number of deals: Acquisitions	Number of deals: Joint ventures	Number of deals: Greenfield investments	Number of deals: Total	Disclosed value ($millions): Acquisitions	Disclosed value ($millions): Joint ventures	Disclosed value ($millions): Greenfield investments	Disclosed value ($millions): Total
Russia	1	50	11	62	12.8	668.0	51.1	731.9
Hungary	15	12	15	42	273.4	41.6	217.3	532.3
CSFR	17	13	9	39	346.7	605.7	—	952.4
Eastern Germany	13	1	5	19	406.7	—	270.5	677.2
Poland	2	3	8	13	16	460.5	35.2	511.7
Ukraine	—	6	2	8	—	160.0	—	160.0
Estonia	—	6	1	7	—	0.1	—	0.1
Kazakhstan	—	3	1	4	—	—	—	—
Slovenia	1	2	—	3	30.7	—	—	30.7
Lithuania	—	2	—	2	—	0.1	—	0.1
Latvia	—	2	—	2	—	—	—	—
Uzbekistan	—	1	—	1	—	37.5	—	37.5
Belarus	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—
Bulgaria	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—
Rumania	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—
Serbia Montenegro	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—
Total	49	104	53	206	1086.3	1973.5	574.1	3633.9

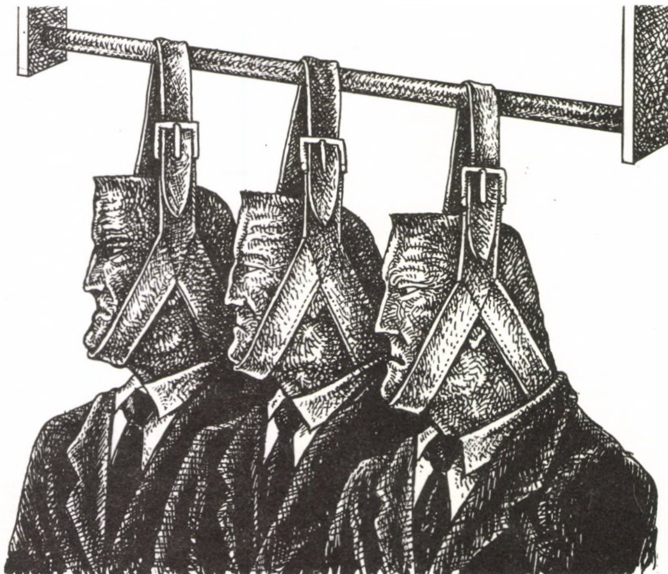
Source: *East European Investment Magazine*, New York.

degree of centralization of state property. The criticism seems to be well-founded, especially since the firms which come under the authority of the SAHC, although few in number, represent the country's core industries. According to some estimates, the new organization will be in charge of half of the state assets to be operated as a business. It will control such mammoths as the Electricity Board, the Hungarian State Railways (MÁV) and the Hungarian Oil and Gas Company (MOL Rt).

Thirty-six organizations, mainly prisons and defence industries, the National Textbook Publishing Company, the Games of Fortune Co., the Hungarian Post Office and MÁV, (Hungarian Railways) will remain 100 per cent state-owned. The state intends to retain 50 per cent plus one share in Malév, the airline, the energy company MOL Rt, the regional water works, some three dozen state farms, 25 per cent in a number of large industrial companies including the Danube Iron Works, Hungalu, Rába, Ikarus, TVK, BVK, six pharmaceutical works, and in most of the banks.

Most probably several foreign firms will have to continue privatization talks with the SAHC which they began with the SPA, now that the new organization is in operation. The government order obviously intends to do away with uncertainties still surrounding the Hungarian privatization process, by clearly specifying saleable and non-saleable state property. But the age of uncertainty is not yet over. Legislation on the privatization of state property gives the government opportunity to modify the list which specifies the state's stake in any firm.

In fact, the obligation on the part of the government to revise the list of firms slated for privatization every other year, is spelled out in the same legislation.



Ronald Savitt

Privatization and the Consumer

The discussion of privatization and the market economy has been lively in the recent past in Hungary and continues with great spirit.[1] The analyses have focused on traditional issues from economics, political science and sociology, but with rare exception have dealt with what can be termed "managerial concerns" in both the context of the firm and the consumer.

Privatization is one part of a complex of activities usually discussed as transformation. Of itself it will affect the development of a market economy, though private ownership should not be regarded as synonymous with a market economy. It is fair to suggest that in Hungary great reliance has been put on privatization in terms of being both the means and the ends of the transformation process. This is understandable, since it is one of the more tangible elements of transition and one which is required as the cornerstone of a market economy. The creation of a market economy takes a great deal of time; it is an ongoing process in which variations in the amount and importance of private ownership take place in and among the economies which have a market component. It will not happen quickly in Central and Eastern Europe, largely because the process is evolutionary rather than revolutionary; even if it were the latter, we simply are not in the possession of the methodologies necessary to direct its progress.[2]

Although private ownership is an important part of the development of a market economy, it is only one part of a complex process. It may not be popular to say so but, I must state that private ownership in itself does not ensure the effective and efficient operation of a market economy, nor does it ensure economic development.

Privatization and management

Successes in moving state organizations from the public to the private sector in Hungary have been significant though it is reasonable to suggest that the various measures probably do more to cloud the issue than to clarify it. Whether we look at the number of organizations, their contribution to gross domestic product, the number of employees now in the private sector or any one of other indices, it is clear that substantial progress in this part of the process is visible. Moving from state ownership to private ownership, however, does not mean that a market economy has been created or that the economy is on a growth path.

Let me say in general that the change in ownership in no way guarantees that the new organization will be in any better condition to operate in the evolving market than the ownership pattern that proceeded it. First, in some cases past management has now taken over as owner-

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manager without any sign of improvement in the abilities to manage the new organization. In some ways the new enterprise may be worse off in the short run, in so far as it may lack access to both sources of finance and markets.[3] How management skills become developed is a critical part of the privatization process. Some derive from the entrepreneurial nature of the population, though these, as well as those brought in by foreign firms, take time to reach the level necessary to operate in a market economy.

A market economy, regardless of the proportion of privately owned to state owned business firms, depends on relatively intense competition among them. The structure of most of industry in Central and Eastern Europe continues to be characterized by very large organizations, and while some progress has been made, much more must be done before the critical elements of a competitive environment are present.[4] It is reasonable to feel concern about those instances of privatization in which the old state monopoly has been reconceived but has not been restructured.

Transformation in this context has two distinct meanings. The first concerns the degree to which the bases for competition are present in an industry. There is no magical number of firms required to make industries competitive, in the sense of reacting to the wishes of consumers by providing choice and readjusting offerings as market conditions require. As far as I am concerned, too much attention in Hungary and elsewhere has been given to changes of ownership rather than the development of a competitive environment. There are important exceptions, especially with regard to the entry of foreign firms, either through new investments or joint ventures with Hungarian firms. These provide the basis of competition, as long as the industry does not return to a single or substantially dominant firm situation.

I do not want to address what is the correct balance of domestic versus foreign ownership and management except to the degree that, whatever takes place, a significant degree of competition must be developed and maintained. Clearly, managerial abilities and the ability to offer better goods and services in an open market will determine this balance. No economy will ever see domestic firms alone dominating a large proportion of all of its industries.

The second meaning of transformation deals with the development of entrepreneurial and managerial attitudes which include market orientation. This concept recognizes the importance of the consumer, it is the driving force in the market. Satisfying the consumer becomes the most important function of the organiztion. Making this happen even in western markets has not been easy, and many of the world's most important firms have not developed such attitudes. Much of recent economic history is dominated by the need of the firm to serve the consumer. While Hungary is moving in this direction at a faster rate than some of the economies in the region, it still has a long way to go. Once again this is an issue of process rather than performance.

It is difficult to estimate how long it will take managers to adopt this philosophy. Some western firms, such as Burger King, Dairy Queen and MacDonalds, bring this with them and will affect others both in and out of catering. Foreign competition should discipline the newly privatized firms in the long run if they are able to stay in the market.

Some of this requires the adoption of new values throughout the organization. It begins with an understanding that a firm has only two inextricably intertwined assets—its work force and its customers. In the absence of either, there is nothing regardless of what technological materials it may control. Too much of privatization—to help assess values for establishing selling prices— has focused on tradi-

tional physical assets rather than those that I suggest. What we are unfortunately seeing in Hungary and elsewhere is the American performance approach, rather than one based on process.

Consumers and the market economy

Those of us who have grown up in a market economy have developed our consumer behaviour to the point that it becomes second nature to us. What is at the centre of this is a socilization process in which consumers learn at a very young age "...how the marketplace works, how to earn and spend money, types of marketing strategies, and alterntive brands that are available for sale."[5]

The consumer has a key role to play in the development of a market economy and economic development. Privatization attempts to provide "sellers" with the means of creating a market. But a market requires both sellers and buyers. Little attention is directed at developing consumers to take their responsibilities in the process. An implicit assumption is that if business is private, it will affect buyers by providing choice through competition. This is only partially true. As I have argued above, it is not certain how quickly competition will come to dominate markets. Even if there are two firms in competition with one another, the conditions of the past do not guarantee that they will be competitive in such a way as to prompt consumers to demand market efficiency. "In a market society the consumer is the ultimate formulator of the pattern of economic activity."[6]

The early conditions of transformation do not place the consumer in the most advantageous position. Unemployment, inflation, and market disruptions do not encourage the development of positive market behaviour. Consumers simply do not have an opportunity to insist on the rules of the game; shortages demand extensive search, inflation requires cutting back on purchases, and unemployment affects the ability to consume.

Business firms and state organizations can and do take advantage of the lack of strength in consumers; they exploit needs with poor merchandise, they charge unreasonable prices, and they can in general exploit the generally shapeless mass of consumers. While such practices are not unknown in the United States, Great Britain or Germany, consumers have a tacit understanding of their roles in affecting such behaviour, and those markets are governed by legislation permitting action to be taken against sellers who abuse their position.

Customers become managers of their assets; they not only make judgements about the various products and services that they are offered but also provide information about what they want. They learn the appropriate behaviour as a result of sellers' policies who use "customer service" programmes as well as through the education system and public service programmes. "Consumers may take their complaints to manufacturers or retailers, pressuring them to recall or rebuild substandard products, provide relevant and understandable information about product use, and issue guarantees or warranties that substantiate producer's committments to their products"[7]

What the future may bring

It is simplistic to expect firms, whose management does not fully understand the ideas that govern a market economy, to look at the development of consumers as an integral part of their behaviour, especially in the early periods of transformation. Their understanding of the market economy is making it in the short run rather than the process of satisfying consumer needs. They are simply not market oriented. Building long term relationships

in a market setting, in which shortages exist, in which competition has not begun, and in which consumer sovereignty is not known or understood, does not create profits. It is not that these firms are evil or anything of the sort; it is simply that they exploit short run economic conditions.

This comes down to the following question: Who speaks for the Hungarian consumer in the period of transformation? Newly privatized firms and old state enterprises may, to the extent that they recognize their need to compete for the custom of consumers. Given the nature of privatization, especially the lack of emerging competitive conditions, this may not occur with the necessary speed, bearing in mind that consumers as employees are unable to earn appropriate wages and develop spending power to allocate in markets, it may be doubly difficult for consumers to play their appropriate role.

The role of the government will probably be limited in this area, since there are so many conflicting pressures. Clearly, the development of a fair system in which contracts will be kept and grievances are attended to is required. Some government legislation and regulation is also necessary, though Hungary, as other countries in the region, has good reason to limit the role of the government in the market. Education will take some time and effort.

We must look beyond the success rate to measure the impact of privatization on the creation of a market economy. Market economies function because there is a continual tension between sellers and buyers in the market as a result of both sides understanding their roles. While consumers never have equal power in confronting sellers, they provide a significant force which affects change. Private ownership in itself does not guarantee a market orientation, though it is much more likely to happen with private ownership in a competitive setting. What is missing in the current privatization programmes for state owned organizations is a similar set of activities focused on "privatizing" the consumer.

NOTES

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3. S. Pásztor, "Being Hidden (The Privatization of ÁPISZ)", *Acta Oeconomica,* 43(3-4), Budapest 1991, pp. 297-314.

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6. R. Heilbroner. *The Making of Economic Society*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962, p. 67.

7. L. Price, L. F. Feick, and R. A. Highie, "Information Sensitive Consumers and Market Information", *The Journal of Consumer Affairs,* 21 (Winter 1987), p. 329.

Péter Esterházy

Post-Modern Barbarism, or a Europe without Qualities

All that was Whole is shattered, wrote Endre Ady early this century. I have the feeling that all we have been doing since then is marking time, whiling time away with wars, with cold, with heat, with the erecting and collapse of that shed of lies called socialism, to stand now where early 20th century scepticism stood, disenchanted with liberalism, dependent on liberalism (what else could it have depended upon?) In the meanwhile, however, a century has come and gone and—to put a fine point to it—quite a few things have happened. We can raise the same questions under worse conditions, in a more difficult situation (the fact that we are able to raise these questions at all no longer affords us particular pleasure in itself). The world is less and less innocent. We have grasped that we are living a continuous scandal, in a new barbarism. *Du musst dein Leben ändern,* said someone near of Duino. Don't you thou me, we are not on familiar terms, we answer, without insolence or annoyance, peacefully and quietly.

The intelligentsia of so-called Central Europe has discredited itself. That's not what we expected of ourselves. If we glance into a looking glass of five or ten years ago, we see ourselves strutting about like peacocks, patting ourselves on the back, praising our moral integrity, our inner reserves, that great human warmth which we have preserved in spite of so many reverses, and it was quite clear that only the "system", the Russians, the communists stood in the way of our far-reaching plans, our country-building longings... Little Snow-White's step-mother had a better looking glass. You are fair, you are fairer than the sun, but... We did not hear the but.

And what is there now? Yugoslavia. It is at once a verb, a noun, an adjective. Yugoslav, Yugoslavs, Yugoslaving. Every kind of shame is justified. Where is that fantastic Central-European spirituality? There should be at least something to show, even half a line, in Slovene, or in Croatian, or Serbian, or Hungarian.

Péter Esterházy's *works to appear in English translation in 1993 are* Down the Danube, *Grove Weidenfeld, New York, and* Helping Verbs of the Heart, *Quartet Books, London.*

Who are you? runs the question; am I supposed to answer, Hungarian?

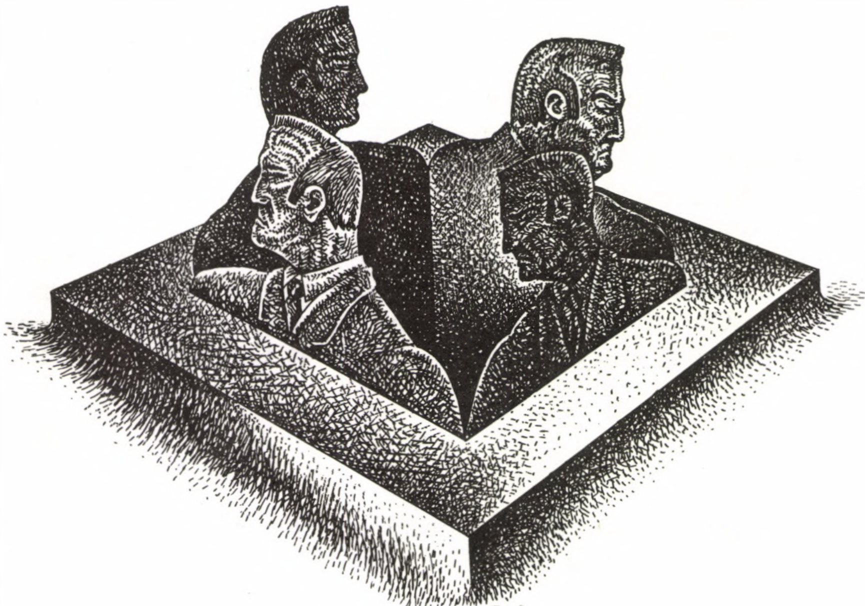
How pitiful that would sound, how pitiful, how inadequate, how miserable only to be Hungarian, or Slovene, or Serbian! Is not literature meant to speak of our being a thousand different kinds of things, at times creating even this diversity? If literature gives up this purpose, this duty, it renounces all claim to legitimacy. I am Hungarian. I am Slovene. I am Serbian. You do not need literature for sentences like that. A bureaucrat will do, and a rubber stamp. A border guard. An army.

There is nothing in our heads. Our heads are empty. This empty head is Europe today. We have caught up with the Civilized West, in that we now look around as perplexed as they. They are in a functioning world with a relatively assertive self-awareness, we in our accustomed non-functioning one (to which we are unable to accustom ourselves), perpetually bombarding the questionable self with questions.

It is not unreasonable of us to be wary of great visions about society, we've had more than our share of them; we've burnt our fingers (this century was the burn, the burning). But we have no experience, no idea of what a Europe without dreams can be like—there has always been some kind of dream in Europe, from the beginning of time; in effect, this, the unbroken dream, is the sine qua non of Europe. This is the new situation.

We have picked up the thread where Musil let go: the man without qualities seeking his identity.

(*Vilenica, September 1992*)



István Váncsa

The Swiss Army Knife

I bought myself a Swiss Army knife — a little expensive, but worth it, because a Swiss Army knife is good for all purposes: it has five different kinds of screwdriver, as well as a ruler (metric and English), tweezers, magnifying glass, ballpoint pen, ivory toothpick, pliers, and even a couple of kinds of knives (though one wouldn't be too surprised to see they eventually forgot to put them in). You can do anything with a Swiss Army knife, from cutting wire to cleaning fish to peeling oranges (it has the right tool for every job), but you can also use it to take apart a computer (and put it together again so that it works), cut a lock, saw a door in two (I need not mention that there are separate saws for metal and wood), fix the coffee machine, the frame of your eyeglasses, the television and the blender, drill a hole or carve a notch in a board. Of course, nobody really wants to do all these things with their Swiss Army knife; I for one have no desire to drill a hole or carve a notch, though I appreciate the possibility of executing any of these tasks should my gentlemanly desire so dictate.

Besides, the thing about the Swiss Army knife is not that it contains all these tools, but that they all actually work.

I tried out the wood saw, and determined that wood can be sawed with it, as well as metal with the metal saw. The little knife is like a scalpel, and can be used as one. Its scissors are sharp, cutting everything one normally cuts with scissors, and the ballpoint pen, though tiny, writes.

The Swiss Army knife can be described with one word: perfect. But since nothing is perfect, the Swiss Army knife's existence is thoroughly improbable.

Try to imagine a world built like a Swiss Army knife.

Everything would work in such a world: the car mechanic repairman would fix my car, the surgeon wouldn't leave half-read pornographic novels in my belly, freedom would mean freedom, period, the word "politician" wouldn't conjure up the image of a lunkhead or a raving lunatic, but of a person who practices not theoretical physics or dog-training or art dealing, but politics, and is obviously an expert in the field, because if he or she weren't, they would give it up and become a pearl diver.

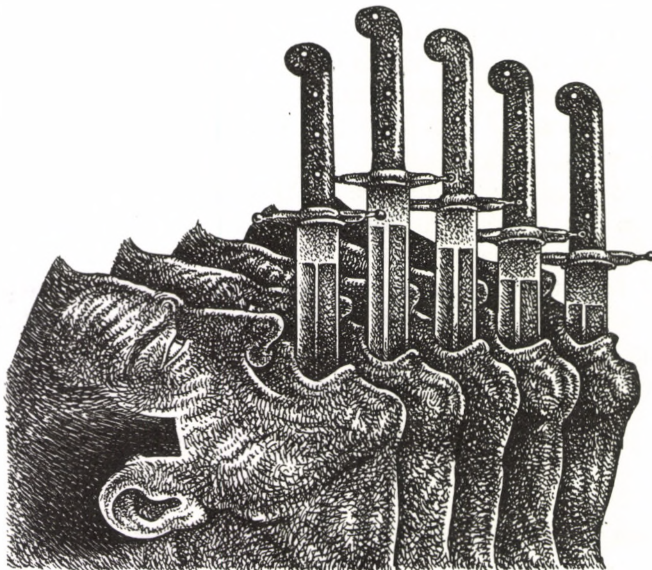
The object I refer to as the Swiss Army knife would be unknown in such a world.

István Váncsa *is a cultural journalist and deputy editor of* Élet és Irodalom, *a Budapest literary weekly.*

For the Swiss Army knife is necessary because the world is imperfect, and anything that can break, does, while the only things that cannot break are busted to begin with—though such a thing usually has no problem getting more broken—because things are not what they claim to be, because soft drink bottles can't be opened, and the nearly new revolving chair on which I am sitting at the moment has already collapsed under me three times (just as, by the way, the computer would already have fallen apart had I not repaired it in time with the Swiss Army knife, because it was only half-assembled at the factory), because all around me—around us—is accumulating the worthless trash of postindustrial societies, since what's really good I can't afford, and even what seems perfect is subject to Murphy's Law (which is reminiscent of one of Buddha's last utterances, that whatever has arisen will also pass).

Murphy's Laws exude an unmistakeable Buddhist air.

For me at least, the Swiss Army knife is not a set of tools but an object for meditation, testifying that one must be ever-prepared, for this unravelling, unpredictable and absurd world may collapse on his head at any moment. For the time being I still have a job and a roof over my head, there is peace and I am suffering nothing, not even a toothache, but one tiny jolt and the whole thing will collapse: my place of work could go bust, a missile fired from who knows where could wipe my house away, leaving me under the open sky, and it may be that I myself will extract my upper left third incisor with the pliers in the Swiss Army knife, and put its chisel to use if I need to whittle myself a hut somewhere, since you have to go on living—I can't just fall on my sword because I don't have a sword, just a Swiss Army knife, which is a little too short for the job.



János M. Rainer

Imre Nagy: Tragedy and Triumph

Peter Unwin: *Voice in the Wilderness. Imre Nagy and the Hungarian Revolution*. London, MacDonald, 1991. 262 pp.

Few figures in 20th century Hungarian history are better known than Imre Nagy, Prime Minister in the 1956 Revolution, who was later executed. Nagy, of stocky build and schoolmasterly mien, wearing a pince-nez, made the front pages and television screens of the world on four different occasions. First in 1953, when he, as leader of what he himself called the "new era", first attempted to reform the Stalinist regime; next in October 1956, when he became the head of government of the Revolution; then again in June 1958, when he was executed; and finally, in June 1989, when he was ceremoniously re-buried, an event that both ended an era and opened a new age of political change in East-Central Europe.

Imre Nagy was thus one of the few in Hungarian history to achieve international fame; furthermore, his life was mysterious, dramatic and tragic all at once. It therefore comes as a surprise that Peter Unwin's biography of Imre Nagy is only the third published so far. None of the biographers live in Hungary. Soon after the suppression of the Revolution, two books were written on Imre Nagy by Hungarian exiles in the west. In 1959, a summary biography, written by Miklós Molnár and László Nagy, was published in French under the title *Imre Nagy: Reformer or Revolutionary?* It was issued in Hungarian two years later by a Brussels-based institution, the "Imre Nagy Institute of Political Sciences". Tibor Méray's book on Imre Nagy was, again, initially published in languages other than Hungarian; the most popular of these was the English-language version, *Thirteen Days That Shook the Kremlin*, which came out in 1959. After several *samizdat* versions, it was finally published legally in Hungary in 1989, around the time of Imre Nagy's re-burial.

Why was it that in 1989, the year when Imre Nagy, thirty years after his death, once again became a central figure in Hungarian politics, his biography was written by a foreigner? To put it in a different way, why did a British diplomatist write a book on Imre Nagy in 1988–1989?

The second is probably easier to answer. Peter Unwin, the author of the book, found himself posted to Budapest in 1958, only one month after Nagy's execution. His first stay in Hungary lasted three years. (His second child was baptized at the Budapest Embassy of the United States by Cardinal József Mindszenty who had found refuge there.) Between 1983 and

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1986 he was the British Ambassador in Budapest. His commitment to Hungary went beyond his professional duties. In the introduction he describes his interest in the Imre Nagy affair as an "obsession". Obsession, in this sense, aptly describes his feelings for Hungary and the Hungarian people.

It is not for the present reviewer to explain why the first biography of Imre Nagy after the great political transformation was not written in Hungary. Quite clearly Hungarian historians cannot ignore the challenge presented by the emergence of new sources; they will have to interpret the political and moral heritage of Imre Nagy from the specific Hungarian point of view, and to do this— paradoxically— presents fewer problems to a foreign observer. What for Peter Unwin was a most fitting occasion to carry out a long-cherished project means the dilemma of compulsory up-to-dateness or the lack of historical perspective to a Hungarian author.

Peter Unwin is not a professional historian, nor is he Hungarian. For this reason, he had no need to study new sources in great detail. His knowledge and handling of information available in 1989 is impressive; he even uses oral history sources. Thoroughly familiar with the language and the country, as well as having sound political understanding, Unwin presents with great authority the historical background to Nagy's life and also the developments of the years that followed his death. Although he pays much attention to historical events in general—especially after 1945—I feel that it is always Imre Nagy who is at the centre of his interest. The account of the politician's search for a place and role in society is mostly based on secondary sources. The author's personal admiration and sympathy for Imre Nagy, together with his reliance on Nagy's friends and family in gathering information, is evident from his portrayal of the man behind the public figure. All this, however, is always kept under the close control of objectivity; in Unwin's case it follows naturally from his temperament. This is a case where a British diplomatist, accustomed to analysing events, indulges in discussing his favourite subject.

His familiarity with his subject, and his qualities as a writer, prevent Unwin from presenting an apology for a hero. His attitude towards Nagy is critical, especially in discussing his role in history and international politics and in describing the events of the 1956 Revolution. Interestingly enough, Unwin's criticism concerns not only Nagy's hesitation, and his drifting with the tide of events which eventually swept him away (a criticism which has repeatedly been made), but also his theoretical views and practical moves, that often challenged the realities of international politics (thus Hungary's leaving the Warsaw Pact and trying to acquire the status of neutrality). The characteristic realism of the British, and their aversion to altering the existing balance of power, are perhaps responsible for Unwin's restrained criticism.

English speaking readers will obtain an essentially correct picture of both Imre Nagy and Hungarian history between 1945 and the 1956 Revolution. There are, however, a few crucial points which—in my opinion—are not really presented in a balanced way and which cannot be justified on the grounds of an author's freedom of interpretation. This is all the more noticeable since Unwin is otherwise remarkably successful in cross-checking information from different sources and, despite his above mentioned "obsession", he is able to preserve his objectivity.

A relevant point is Nagy's exile in the 1930s, and his alleged employment by the Soviet secret police as an informer or agent. Similar rumours had circulated earlier, and were mentioned in the unpublished Imre Nagy biography

written by the historian Miklós Szabó in the 1980s, but much the same was suggested in György Konrád's novel *A cinkos* (The Accomplice) which included a character modelled on Nagy. Such rumours, not confined to Imre Nagy, had their origins largely in the obscure past of the communist exiles returning from Moscow, and also in the general suspicion which people in Hungary entertained regarding the Moscovites. In Imre Nagy's case, weight was added to this suspicion by the fact that he had escaped all the purges, in spite of his many conflicts with the Communist Party, including less well known clashes in the 1920s and the late 1940s, and his public confrontations with Rákosi in 1953 and after 1955.

It was in 1989, precisely around the time of Nagy's re-burial, that the old allegations concerning his past record as an undercover agent of the GPU under the code-name "Sz-122 alias Volodia" were resurrected by Károly Grósz, then General Secretary of the Communist Party. Grósz even mentioned "original" Soviet sources purporting to support the accusation. (Somehow these "sources" were never published.) Unwin dutifully reports all the relevant information; he lists the versions, which ranged from credible or relatively credible stories to outright fabrications. He also refers to views and counter-views, and adds his own opinion. (I personally believe that, like any other exile, Nagy, too, must have had some dealings with the security forces, but was never actually recruited.)

In view of such methodological qualities, it is difficult to understand how Unwin could practically ignore that opposition within the Party which formed around Nagy in 1955. Without their support Nagy could never have become the historical figure he is remembered as today: a statesman defending national interests, who after an initial hesitation joined the Revolution and paid the supreme penalty for it. How is it possible that the same Unwin, who is able to illustrate so vividly the complex character of Imre Nagy—a man full of hesitations, stubbornly following the party line and entertaining vain illusions, whose loyalty was rewarded by dastardly attacks—fails to see that it was precisely these Communist Party dissidents who helped him get over all his hesitations and apprehensions. Without grasping the role of this group with such prominent figures among them as Géza Losonczy, Sándor Haraszti, Miklós Vásárhelyi, Szilárd Ujhelyi, Miklós Gimes and Ferenc Donáth, it is impossible to understand the most important decision in Nagy's life: the transformation that took place between the 23rd and the 28th of October, 1956.

Initially, Nagy did not approve of the popular uprising, though his disapproval was neither unqualified nor enormously Stalinist. As was always the case, a true Bolshevik politician was terrified by the real people, to whom so many rhetorical references were made. It was these friends who literally mediated between the revolutionary people and their standard-bearer and Prime Minister to be. These men are in fact hardly mentioned in Unwin's biography. Their emergence and composition certainly deserves more attention, precisely because their fate was so closely bound up with his. Some of them are first mentioned only in connection with the events of the morning of the 23rd of October, when they had a meeting with the Prime Minister.

In my view, the reasons for this one-sidedness must be sought on several levels. To start with, Unwin's sympathy is engaged by the lonely figure of the brooding hero and this side-tracks him. On the other hand, Unwin might have over-identified, primarily through his conversations with family members, with Imre Nagy's contemporary opinion on the group, which paradoxically enough (or perhaps naturally?)was not one of unequivocal approval. True he thought

highly of them, and appreciated their standing by him in the difficult times after he was ousted from power in 1955. On the other hand, too, he was often annoyed by their radical approach (radical by the standards of the time); their call for firmer action, the pressure they exerted on him to take more decisive steps, to make up his mind, irritated him, despite the soundness of their political judgement, which he was prepared to admit even at the time, and which he most certainly admitted in retrospect.

Mention must also be made of the one-sided approach to János Kádár: a man whose role in Imre Nagy's life has to be confronted.

Even given the sources that have recently been made available in Hungary, it cannot be said that Kádár's role in the reprisals and in the political management of the Imre Nagy trial can be satisfactorily determined. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that his responsibility is greater than suggested by Unwin. On the evidence of the surviving minutes of Politbureau meetings, it appears certain that in February 1958, during the early days of the Nagy trial, Kádár received a Soviet request not to hold the trial just then, pointing out that it would adversely effect the current foreign policy goals of the Soviet Union. In his speech at the Politbureau meeting, Kádár mentioned the possible postponement of the trial (and of the death sentences that directly and inevitably followed from the charges) and the "influencing" (otherwise the directing) of the courts of justice to pass milder sentences, as possible alternatives. Knowing full well that the Politbureau had never before voted against his proposals, Kádár firmly warned against the second alternative. One day we might even know whether the Soviet "request" also contained a suggested solution. It is certain that nobody in Moscow raised a voice to save Nagy's life. What is equally certain, however, is that Kádár was never the puppet he is made out to be in Unwin's book—though admittedly Unwin does not put it quite as directly as this. Kádár's dependence on the Soviets was reciprocal, in matters especially important to him—for example, in preventing Rákosi's return to Hungary—Kádár took a firm stand in dealing with the Moscow leadership from the start. He could act firmly, and get results. In Imre Nagy's case he chose to do nothing.

Unwin cites a 1898 discussion he had in Budapest with the late György Aczél—by then retired but from 1956 on Kádár's closest associate and powerful supreme authority in the ideological and cultural fields, a Politbureau member until his retirement. According to Aczél, Kádár spent his last days weeping from remorse. This is new information. Others claim, on 16 June, the day Nagy and his associates were re-buried, Kádár wanted to leave his hospital bed to attend the ceremony. Incidentally, Kádár died the very day the Supreme Court annulled Nagy's sentence for high treason and declared him innocent.

It is not familiarity with the latest sources that I miss, but a weighing up of the evidence, of which I spoke in general, and the lack of which I also mentioned in connection with particular points. In its later stages the Kádár regime—liberal in comparison with the other eastern-block countries—impressed a number of frank and honest western observers. It must be pointed out, as Unwin does in his book, that a considerable proportion of Kádár's reform policies first appeared in an embryonic state in Imre Nagy's "new era" policy. But the road to the Kádár reforms led through times of unrestrained reprisals and terror.

Peter Unwin does not end his book with 1958, the year of the execution. He follows up Nagy's "heritage" up to his rehabilitation as the Prime Minister of the Revolution, his re-burial, and the country's return to democracy: events

which themselves amount to a revolution. Unwin's conclusions in this respect cannot be disputed: although Imre Nagy was unable to carry out his reforms, and his faith in a socialism with a human face did not prove viable, the love of man and nation manifest in this faith, together with his courage when it mattered, have survived him. In a democratic and free Hungary this ensures that he will be well-remembered by the nation, more than most people could have hoped for in the age and the environment in which he lived. Her Majesty's Ambassador has served this country well in helping us to preserve this memory, for which—*pace* any criticism here made—he deserves our gratitude.

András Bozóki

Catching the Fleeting Moment

The Transition in Eastern Europe through Western Eyes

Judy Batt: *East Central Europe from Reform to Transformation.* London, Pinter Publishers, 1991,129 pp; Roger East: *Revolution in Eastern Europe.* London, Pinter Publishers, 1992, 193 pp; Timothy Garton Ash: *The Magic Lantern. The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Prague.* New York, Random House, 1990, 156 pp; Charles Gati: *The Bloc that Failed.* Bloomington—Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1990, 245 pp.; Misha Glenny: *The Rebirth of History. Eastern Europe in the Age of Democracy.* London, Penguin, 1990, 245 pp; Michael G. Roskin: *The Rebirth of East Europe.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J. Prentice Hall, 1991, 208 pp; David Selbourne: *Death of the Dark Hero. Eastern Europe 1987-90.* London, Jonathan Cape, 1990, 247 pp.; Rudolf L. Tőkés: *From Post-Communism to Democracy. Politics, Parties and the 1990 Elections in Hungary.* Bonn, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 1990, 80 pp.

Has enough time passed to allow us to understand the nature of the post-communist changes in Eastern Central Europe? Can a history of the extraordinary events of 1989 be written, and if so, is what we experienced ourselves recognizable in it?

In a sense, the most important change in the twentieth century was the rapid disintegration of the communist regimes that had seemed as firm as a rock. The great experiment began in 1917 with the Revolution in Russia, and ended in December 1991 with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Teleological systems have disappeared from the stage of history—let us hope for good. All that has followed since—the euphoria and the disillusionment, the passivity, attempts to overturn past wrongs, liberalism and populism, democracy and nationalism—is, to some extent, *déja vu*.

The Ice Age is over; the agents on the political stage have emerged from a hibernation that had lasted for many decades. Yet it is not possible for things to continue where they left off in pre-communist times. Decades of communist rule thoroughly changed the political atmosphere of East-Central European societies and the relationship to politics of their citizens. The property-owning class disappeared—as indeed did private property. The seeds of a market economy appeared in Hungary in the 1970s only as a spin-off of economic reforms. Thus the politi-

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cal developments of 1989 showed both elements of renewal, and of restoration: the introduction of democracy in a region where such ways had never enjoyed a long run being an example of the first, and the restoration of capitalist property relations an example of the latter.

Since 1989 the number of works dealing with the transition to democracy has swollen to enormous proportions. It has almost become a separate discipline located where sociology, history and political science march on each other. It is sometimes ironically called TDology (TD standing for Transition to Democracy). After studying transition to democracy in Southern Europe, East Asia and Latin America, attention is now concentrated on the same processes in post-communist East Central Europe. The bulging periodical literature shows just how fashionable the subject is.

Books have now followed articles. What they have in common is their anxiety not to be left behind by events. Writing contemporary history is always difficult: a certain distance has to be maintained between the author and the events taking place before the witness's eyes. Authors can never be sure that their hasty conclusions will stand the test of time, even whether they will still be valid by the following year.

Instead of analysing processes, some books simply attempt to capture the fleeting moment. *The Magic Lantern*, by Timothy Garton Ash, is one of the best of this kind. Earlier he had closely studied developments in Poland—see his *Solidarity: the Polish Revolution*—and East Germany. In the 1980s he devoted much attention to the dissidents in Eastern Central Europe.This made it possible for him to write about the 1989 changes as a recognized authority on an area he knew well.

The Magic Lantern is impressive and entertaining reading. Writing of this quality is only possible for someone who is so well-informed that he can in fact afford not to analyse when it is still impossible to do so.

The book shows, however, that Garton Ash is not as sure in his judgement regarding Hungary as he is regarding the other countries. This is especially evident in his discussion of the tripartite negotiations of the summer of 1989, of which he notes: "These talks lasted just over three months, a month longer than Poland's. However, that included a month's time out in August, partly because the talks had reached a stalemate, but perhaps also because it was, well, holiday time." (p. 57) In fact, the negotiations lasted all through the summer without interruption, with the single exception of Sub-committee 2; here negotiations over the Political Parties Act were indeed suspended for a month because of an impossible ultimatum by György Fejti, who headed the MSZMP (Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party) negotiators.

On the tripartite negotiations concerning the election of the President of the Republic, Garton Ash comments: "There was an understanding that the job would probably go to Imre Pozsgay. But [...] the Free Democrats, the Young Democrats, and the Independent Trade Unions broke that consensus before the ink was dry." (pp. 57-58) What, in fact, happened was that the organizations of the Opposition Round Table had originally reached a consensus that the election of the President of the Republic should not precede the Parliamentary elections, since the outcome of the former might influence the results of the latter. It was the Christian-Conservatives, rather than the Liberal-Radical organizations, which broke the consensus in July, after holding informal talks with Imre Pozsgay, the leader of the Reform Communists. The SZDSZ (Free Democrats), the FIDESZ (Young Democrats), and the Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions refused to sign the agreement of September 18th precisely

because 1) they did not wish to go back on their earlier agreement and, 2) they did not accept that the documents concluding the negotiations should be signed without first coming to an agreement on a number of important issues (such as Communist Party property and the Workers' Militia). But these opposition groups did not wish to jeopardize the agreements already reached, so the strange decision not to sign the pact, yet effectively to allow other organizations to do so by not exercising a veto, was taken.

Nevertheless, these small errors of fact—their evaluation is controversial even among Hungarian political scientists—do not deduct from the qualities of *The Magic Lantern*. The chapter discussing Hungarian changes concentrates on the symbolic act of breaking with the past: the burial of Imre Nagy in June 1989. Garton Ash beautifully captures the mood of this particular moment. Indeeed this has a place among the very best books on the post-communist changes.

The late Misha Glenny's *The Rebirth of History* is somewhat more controversial. The author challenges Francis Fukuyama's theory, argued in *The End of History*, that with the fall of the teleological regimes history has come—in a certain sense—to an end. Glenny is right to maintain that, for the people in the region, history is suddenly springing to life, rather than coming to an end. After the collapse of communism, a multitude of unsettled and dormant conflicts have surfaced. For example, people grew up in the Kádár era without being aware of anti-Semitism, or the conflict between the "urban" and the "folk" school of writers, or of aggressive nationalism. These young people are now amazed to see that, with the arrival of free speech, these problems do emerge: problems that they knew of only from history books.

The Rebirth of History is an amalgam of a personal account of events and middle-brow political science. In view of the latter aspect, the addition of notes would have been helpful. As it is, some of what he has to say remains unsubstantiated. At one point he writes "Hungary's new constitution insists that the government should rule in the name of *all* Hungarians, including those living outside its borders. Thus, according to Hungarian law, the government now has the right to intervene in the affairs of neighbouring countries in defence of the Hungarian minority." (pp. 10-11) The fact is that the Hungarian government has no authority to consider itself the government of the subjects of other sovereign states, and thus its "intervention" cannot, according to Hungarian law, go beyond the defence of human rights, which is the duty of all governments ever since the Helsinki Convention was signed. The Hungarian government has no more rights in respect of Rumania or Slovakia, than the German government in respect of Bohemia, or the British government in respect of the Republic of Ireland.

Much else that Glenny says is debatable. To give just one more example: "Already in some areas in Poland it is possible to observe an extraordinary migration from cities to the countryside, a reversal of what happened in the 1950s, as recently unemployed Poles search desperately for ways of making a living. This bizarre phenomenon is also likely to emerge in Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria." (pp.16-17) I do not know on what grounds Glenny bases this. It is certainly not true of Hungary. At the time Glenny's book was published, the unemployment rate in Hungary was far below five per cent, and although the Smallholders Party predicted a massive migration from the towns to the rural areas as a result of its own reprivatization plan, neither the plan nor the migration came into being. Today, when the unemployment rate in Hungary exceeds ten per cent, it is still much easier to find work in large cities

than in villages. The growth of unemployment is forcing the jobless to move from villages to towns, rather than the other way round.

Misha Glenny appears prejudiced in a number of ways, but, unlike Timothy Garton Ash, who sympathizes with the democratic forces against the old order, Glenny presents some countries in a better light than others. To illustrate the backward conditions that exist in Hungary, he points to "urban" v. "folk" antagonism as an underlying feature, which might be true for the intelligentsia, but in no way applies to the man in the street. The decisive majority of Hungarians are left cold or indeed annoyed by ideological thinking. The rift between the MDF (Democratic Forum) and SZDSZ was one between the elite of these parties, the ideological implications of which filtered through Hungarian society from the top downwards, and failed to seriously effect the man in the street. Glenny quite rightly points out that, during the transition, this division was given greater emphasis than it actually deserved (without also mentioning how much this over-emphasis contributed to the emergence of a competitive multi-party system); nevertheless, it is true that overall support for the ideological parties has significantly declined since then. It seems that Hungarians are on the side of pragmatic politics that might solve their everyday problems.

Glenny's book, which contains outstanding chapters on Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania, presents a biased and one-sided view of the Hungarian situation. Although I have no intention of defending Hungarian nationalism, Glenny does not stand on firm ground when he objects to Hungarians using the Hungarian name, Kassa, for Kosice in Slovakia. On the same grounds the French, too, are guilty of nationalism for referring to London as Londres, or the English for referring to Firenze as Florence. What is Bratislava in Slovak is Pressburg in German, and Pozsony in Hungarian.

In its structure, David Selbourne's *Death of a Dark Hero* resembles Garton Ash's book. Rather than claiming to write a comprehensive account, Selbourne picks on certain moments of the post-communist changes in the East Central European countries, which he regards as historic. Instead of 1989, he begins the story in 1987. This allows him to contrast 1987 with 1989, the revolutionary year. Selbourne realizes that the winds of change first reached the region in 1987, after Gorbachev declared his commitment to *glasnost* and *perestroika* in January 1987.

An interesting aspect of Selbourne's account is that he concentrates not on the moments which were judged to be crucially important in retrospect, but on the events that led up to them. The agony of the Zhivkov regime unfolds in the snapshots of the Bulgarian situation in April 1989. From the long list of dates important in the Hungarian transition, the author picks on January 10, 1989, the date when the Association Act was passed in Parliament, rather than June 1989, the date when Imre Nagy was reburied. His choice is not entirely unjustified. By January 1989 the first stage in the formation of political parties had ended. By then the MDF, FIDESZ, SZDSZ, the Smallholders Party, and the Social Democratic Party had all appeared on the political scene. This was the month when reformers within the Communist Party mounted a decisive attack on the conservatives led by Károly Grósz, the General Secretary. The first step was the passing of a liberal Association Act, followed by the political re-evaluation of 1956, and then by the recognition of the multi-party system in February.

Selbourne and Garton Ash thus differ in their approach to understanding and describing the Hungarian transition. The erosion within the political elite and the political breakthrough of the reformists are emphasized by Selbourne, while Garton Ash stresses the acceptance of the

opposition by society at large, the moment of the moral victory of the opposition. For Garton Ash the symbolic figures in the transition are Árpád Göncz and Viktor Orbán, in Selbourne's view they are Kálmán Kulcsár, Minister of Justice in the reform-communist Németh government, and Imre Pozsgay. Whatever we might think of them now, one thing must certainly be acknowledged: they all played their part in making the Hungarian transition a success.

Hungarian-born authors living in the west are another category. They are able to combine the advantages of speaking the language and of Hungarian connections with a familiarity with western (and especially American) political sciences.

Charles Gati's book on the history and collapse of the Soviet bloc bears the title *The Bloc that Failed*, Rudolf Tőkés concentrates on the Hungarian transition in his brief *From Post-Communism to Democracy*. Gati has written for university students and provides a first class summary of the history of the Soviet bloc from Stalin to Gorbachev. The distinct virtue of the book is due, however, to the simple fact that it was written in 1989-90. When the author began he had no way of knowing that by the time he finished, the subject of his study would no longer exist. It is a tribute to Gati's competence that, instead of flinching from the unusual challenge, he decided to race with the events. He could have stopped in 1988, in which case we would have been given a sound historical summary. But Gati chose to go on and write the third part, the one on the "age of the revolutionary changes", and by doing so he took on the job of writing contemporary history without the necessary historical perspective. Three years after the events, the unevenness of the third part is beginning to show; certain events which seemed important at the time, such as the establishment of the Pentagonale, are today of only marginal interest in the shadow of spreading nationalism and the current civil war in former Yugoslavia.

Another aspect of the political transition was chosen by Rudolf Tőkés, who conducted a micro-analysis with respect to a single event in one country. Taking the Hungarian elections of 1990 as his starting point, he examines the dynamics of the political changes. The author was even quicker than the Hungarian changes: the second round of the elections took place on April 8, 1990, and three weeks later, on May 8, the book was completed.

Tőkés marks the Party Conference of May 1988 as the beginning of the Hungarian political changes; that was when János Kádár and his close associates were ousted from office by the young technocrats of the party elite. I am inclined to place the beginning at a still earlier date: September 1987, when the first opposition meeting at Lakitelek was held and the MDF was founded. This was the first occasion that oppositional groups, previously limiting their activity to drafting underground programmes, decided to come out into the open and face a wider audience. The meetings in the Budapest Jurta Theatre took place in early 1988 with several thousand participants, and oppositional groups, FIDESZ and the Network of Free Initiatives, were organized before the Communist Party's conference. Therefore, the demand for a change was first made by the public, rather than by the political leadership. Save for this difference of judgement and a few smaller factual errors—for example, the Christian Democratic People's Party was founded in March 1989, and not in late 1988—Tőkés provides an accurate and sound analysis. Anyone who wishes to learn about the emergence of political parties, the recruitment of the new political elite, and the history of the first free elections in Hungary, will find *From Post-Communism to Democracy* useful.

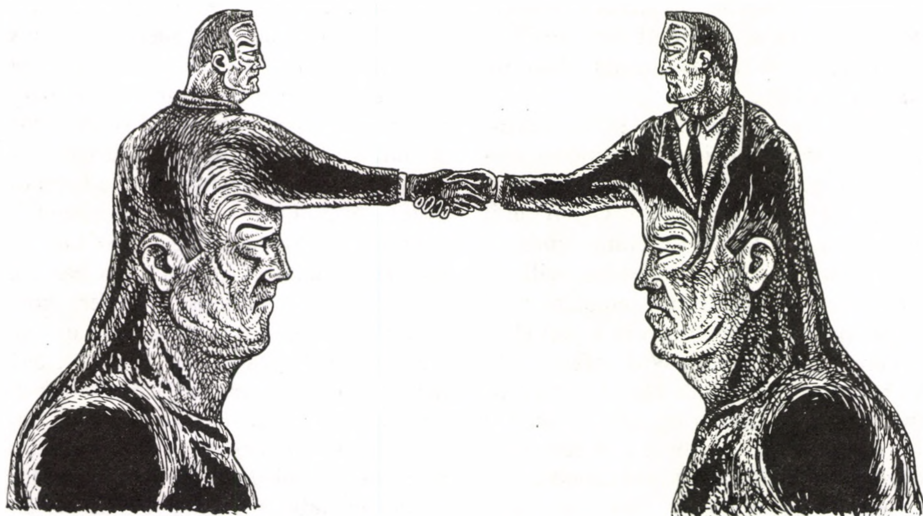
"The general scenario for negotiating a pact is fairly clear: it is a situation in which conflicting or competing groups are interdependent, in that they neither do without each other if they are to satisfy their respective, divergent interests"—Judy Batt quotes Tőkés's definition in her *East Central Europe from Reform to Transformation* (p.28), the first comparative analysis of the post-communist transition in Poland, Czecho-Slovakia and Hungary. Her decision to compare these three countries is justified, since the northern countries of the former Soviet bloc (along with Slovenia and perhaps Croatia) are in a different position to the post-communist states of South East Europe. The former have had democratic traditions, as well as a bourgeoisie, and there were also oppositional groups challenging Soviet-type rule. The main political forces in these countries countered communism with democracy, not with anti-communism. In these countries highly-qualified professional people opposed the communist leadership, and reformers within the Communist Party were also present—although this is truer of Hungary and Poland than of Czecho-Slovakia. Perhaps this explains why the political transition in these countries was peaceful; the agents of political change negotiated the schedule of the transition at conference tables, rather than by shooting it out.

The greatest question is, however, whether these positive traditions will prove strong enough to survive the painful test of economic change. Or, to put it another way, whether the commitment to democracy in these countries will be strong enough to resist the temptations of populism and nationalism in a period of general pauperization. With reference to Dahrendorf, Judy Batt herself mentions the limited manoeuvring space available for simultaneous political and economic changes. Commendably, she concentrates on economic problems. However, lacking the necessary data, she is unable to perform a thorough analysis of the subject: she approaches the economic problems primarily from the angle of politics, rather than from that of society. As a result, and perhaps contrary to her intentions, she ends up with a book, which provides a political history of the region. In this category, however, hers is the best "TDological" analysis published so far on the development of these three post-communist countries. At the end of her book Judy Batt, who apparently shares the post-1989 optimism of western observers, predicts the economic prosperity of these three countries: "Certainly the possibility of failure cannot be discounted, but it is surely too early for conclusive judgements on this account. As yet, the evidence does not seem to me sufficient to persuade me to abandon my own conviction that Poland, Hungary, and Czecho-Slovakia will continue to develop politically along democratic paths, and economically towards open market systems." We all hope she is right.

By 1992 the first accounts of the East-Central European changes were published; eminently usable as textbooks, these books first of all impress a reader with the wealth of data and practical information presented. Michael G. Roskin's *The Rebirth of East Europe* is a brief documentary history, giving a summary view of the past one hundred years of the countries of the region. This introductory text will be indispensable to students of history or political science, interested in the region. Likewise, Roger East's *Revolutions in Eastern Europe* also has the potentials of a textbook; it differs from Roskin's work in that it concentrates on the historical changes of 1989-90, and that in addition to listing the parties, electoral systems and leading political figures in a reference-book manner, it also presents a detailed chronology of events. (Unfortunately, a number of factual er-

rors have slipped in, thus *Social Contract*, a brief programme drafted by the Hungarian democratic opposition was actually published in the summer of 1987, and not in 1986.) Nevertheless, Roger East's text has already been included in the reading lists of universities in Hungary. It offers sound guidance to those so young that even the 1989 political transition is history to them.

What was it then that really happened in East Central Europe in 1989-90? According to Garton Ash it was a *refolution,* a curious mixture of reforms and revolution. Glenny and Roskin described it as a rebirth, East regards it as a revolution, Tőkés thinks of it as a negotiated revolution, Gati refers to it as revolutionary change, Judy Batt prefers the term transformation and Selbourne uses reformation. The terminology is varied and—with the exception of Garton Ash and Judy Batt—remains largely undefined. A deeper understanding of the process requires more time. The books presented here make a significant contribution to this process.



Bálint Sárosi

Bartók's Classification for Hungarian Folk Songs

Magyar Népdalok. Egyetemes Gyűjtemény
(Hungarian Folk Songs—The Complete Collection). Edited (between 1934 and 1940) by Béla Bartók as commissioned by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Volume I. (Division I Nos. 1416.) Prepared for publication by Sándor Kovács and Ferenc Sebő. Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1991, 1142 pp, 24 illustrations.

Ethnomusicology accounted for the major part of Bartók's work. In 1904 he started to collect Hungarian folk songs; he extended the scope of his field work to Slovak folk music in 1906, and after 1909 to Rumanian folk songs. He went on to collect Arab music in North Africa (1913) and folk music in Turkey (1936); in addition, he transcribed on paper and prepared for publication a large collection of South Slav folk music. Bartók did all in his power to ensure scholarly publication for the fruits of his field work, but Fortune was not on his side, and most of what he collected was only published after his death. His collection of Serbo-Croat folk songs was published in 1951; two volumes of a planned three-volume Slovak collection came out in 1959 and 1970; the great majority of his Rumanian collection appeared first in 1967; and the Turkish collection (in two versions) in 1976. The third volume of the Slovak collection still awaits publication.

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Bartók never planned the separate publication of his own Hungarian field work. All he regarded as important for the presentation of Hungarian folk music was incorporated in his studies, most notably in his *Hungarian Folk Music*. All the music he collected, together with all the other collections of Hungarian folk songs, became part of the central archive conceived and set up by Kodály and Bartók at the beginning of the century. This was to be published as an integral whole. Up until the beginning of the Second World War, the central archive existed in duplicate; the aim being to allow Bartók and Kodály to work independently on the classification of the tunes. That is how the Kodály taxonomy came to exist in parallel with Bartók's; the latter was completed by the time Bartók left for the United States, in 1940 and it has not been altered since. It was only recently that this body of music of which Bartók had completed the musical editing, finally started to be published. A detailed account of the preliminaries and preparations immediately preceding the publication is given in the first volume of a series of publications produced by the Bartók Archives of the Institute of Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Why is it necessary to publish the Hungarian folk songs in Bartók's taxonomy when the same songs will all be included in *A magyar népzene tára—Corpus musicae popularis hungaricae*, based on the material of the Kodály classification? A brief answer is given by László Somfai in his introduction to the Bartók volume: Bartók's taxonomy is in itself a chapter in ethnomusicology; besides, "posterity has the right to study the 'classic' repertory of Hungarian folk music in its original and authentic form—the form that it was known in to Bartók and the other great composers of the first generation of new Hungarian music." In his introductory essay on the problems and principles of the work done in preparation for the publication of the series, Sándor Kovács writes: "There is no other work by Bartók (his own compositions included), the completion and final formulation of which took up so much of his time, as this did; there is no other work by him, the modifications and improvements of which could be studied in so many different phases, or occasionally even step by step, as in this case."

Bartók and Kodály first sketched a draft plan of a complete collection of Hungarian folk songs in 1913. In this text, drafted by Kodály, the principles of editing were discussed in considerable detail. The collection was to be encyclopaedic, but in the sense that "with the related songs placed next to one another, the main types should show up clearly." For this purpose, the system of a Finnish ethnomusicologist, Ilmari Krohn was adopted "with certain modifications". These were summed up by Kodály: "We have transposed every song to make the closing note of each tune g_1. Since the tunes, with insignificant exceptions, all had four lines, we had to take into account the closing notes of the first three lines. The second line was the most important of the three—it here marked the half way—the end of the period. All those songs which had their second line ending on the same note were put in the same group. Next, further sub-groups were formed in each group, first according to the closing note of the first line, and then, according to the closing note of the third line." Still more sub-groups were formed according to the length—otherwise the rhythm—of the melodic lines, rather than on the basis of the melody. "Each group began with the song with the shortest lines, followed by the songs with successively longer lines." The final classification within the small sub-groups formed in such a way was based on the ambitus of each song. Within the system, the sequence always proceeds from bottom up, from the low to the high numbers. As an illustration, *Röpülj páva*, the famous folk song that provided the theme for two Kodály compositions—the *Peacock Variations* and a piece for male choir—was accounted for in the system as follows—cadenza: 7 b3 b3; the number of syllables within one line: 6 (being the same for all four lines, it is written out only once); extent: VII-8 (that is to say, spanning from the note below the closing note right up to the octave of the closing note). (For the score of the song, see No. 75 in the volume).

As opposed to Kodály's system which primarily concentrated on the melody, Bartók's arrangement was primarily based on the rhythm. In *Hungarian Folk Music*, published in Hungary in 1924, with an English edition (London, 1931), Bartók separates from the start the rather distinctive "old-style" and "new-style" songs from the stylistically heterogeneous "mixed category" (in his notation, division A, B, and C), leaving the division of the songs on the basis of the line ending note one stage later, after their division according to the number of syllables—that is the rhythm.

In the final version of Bartók's system (completed in 1939-40), some of the "mixed category", Division C, was merged into Division A. (As a result, Di-

vision A was split into A I and A II; this split is, in fact, indicated by the title of the book.) The non-architectonic songs with four lines of the same number of syllables to a stanza were thus transferred to the enlarged Division A—mostly, but not exclusively, old-style melodies. Division B, consisting of the new-style melodies with their four lines forming an architectonic structure, remained unaltered. The remaining part of division C was made up by songs which either had heterometric lines (of an unequal number of syllables), or non-architectonic structure, or any number of lines to a stanza other than four. Within this global division, the songs continued to be classified according to the number of syllables in a particular line and some other more elaborate rhythmical characteristics. The closing notes and the compass of the songs were taken into account only at the next level. Bartók gave the same identification code to a family of tunes or a group of variations, with the variations listed in alphabetical order. But, as the introductory essay points out, Bartók, in evaluating the variations, regarded the match between the melodies as more important than the match between their respective number of syllables..."

Through the structure of his system, Bartók wanted to illustrate the formation of the types and styles of Hungarian folk songs. He believed that the best way to document the various stages of development was by grouping the songs according to the number of syllables they had in one line, as well as by considering other rhythmical characteristics. Bartók's original table of rhythms which formed the basis of his system is reproduced in the first volume in facsimile. The table, consisting of approximately eighty autograph pages, itself amounts to a unique and impressive scholarly achievement. However, it also illustrates the complexity of the system. In his essay, Sándor Kovács points out that Kodály learnt about the final form and the relative complexity of Bartók's system only after the completion of the system and Bartók's departure to the United States. In 1941, in a letter written to Béla Bartók in English (since it was taken in an unsealed envelope by his son Péter Bartók), Kodály stated his reservations and critical comments; however, the two had no further opportunity to discuss these points or to reach a solution acceptable to both. Kodály's letter reads: "You did a great work in ritmics [sic]. But your system A B C in the new form, although more logical, is hardly more able as a frame of edition. The division is made from heterogeneous points of views: style, metrical, formal. It is too complicated and difficult." Elsewhere in the letter we learn that Kodály was not satisfied with his own system either: "So we did not fulfill we engaged us: instead of one, but good Collection we made two, both incomplete and unready."

In the same letter Kodály also admitted that in years past he had not worked hard enough on editing the collection ("I was not very busy"). This is easily explained, especially when we compare his workload to Bartók's. Between 1934 and 1940 Bartók was relieved of his teaching duties at the Academy of Music. Instead, for three afternoons a week—his normal working hours—he transcribed folk songs, revised his earlier transcriptions, but above all, classified the collected material. By comparison, Kodály spent most of his time—time that remained after teaching and seeing to his other obligations—on public collections, supervising the copying of old folk song manuscripts and comparing them to the originals. Of the two, it was Kodály who was more willing to let the other choose what he liked doing most, all in the interest of "the great and fathomless work" (Bartók enjoyed the work of taxonomy; beside folk songs, in his younger days, he had classified beetles.)

Bartók left behind his system in a completely finished form, with the final code allocated to each entry. After the war, the collection of folk songs for the yet unpublished central archive could recommence. Considering that the study of folk music was conducted under Kodály's direction, it was only natural that the Bartók system was left untouched, and all further acquisitions were added to Kodály's open system, arranged in a catalogue format.

Bartók's collection contains 13,500 melodies. By the mid-sixties, the rapidly growing Kodály collection amounted to roughly 100,000 entries. (Of course, this huge quantity does not imply an increase of this order in new finds—although they were in fact quite large in number—rather, the purpose of the new additions was the confirmation and the geographical extension of the existing entries.) The first five volumes of *Magyar népzene tára—Corpus musicae popularis hungaricae*—the only volumes published before Kodály's death in 1967—contains such mostly non-stanzaic items whose order was determined by the folk customs to which they were linked. Their publication in the present arrangement was therefore called for irrespective of the work done by Bartók. Up till now, only two volumes of the envisaged great series containing the stanzaic melodies have appeared. In the first half of the sixties, when these volumes were prepared for publication, the demand for a system emerged which, in addition to being able to guide the readers through the folk songs, could also provide clues to the interconnection between types and styles—something Bartók had in mind when he created his own system. That was when Kodály accepted Pál Járdányi's proposal concerning the line of melody as a principle of arrangement. In volumes VI and VII of *A magyar népzene tára*, the type of changes in the melody line came to form the first step in the classification process, as it were as complimentary to the order based on the closing notes. It appears, however, that by the consistent (rigid) application of a single principle—whether it be rhythm or melody—one would never be able to produce a taxonomy that could adequately reflect the multiplicity of types and styles, themselves the results of many factors. (A recent acclaimed publication *A magyar népdaltípusok katalógusa*—The Catalogue of the Types of Hungarian Folk Songs I, 1988—by László Dobszay and Janka Szendrei shows that the—not strictly evolutionary but in some sense historical—classification of types and styles is only possible as a result of an item by item examination, with due attention paid to the specific conditions prevailing at the time of their origin.)

However, the method used in the last volumes of *A magyar népzene tára* still did not appear to satisfy expectations—nor did it prove better than Bartók's system, for that matter. The appearance of the successive volumes has also slowed down considerably. (Volume VI was published in 1973, Volume VII in 1983.) Apart from more serious considerations, this last factor alone could have been sufficient to make the editors contemplate recourse to the Bartók order which was ready for publication. Finally, the decision to publish the Bartók version was made in 1979 by József Ujfalussy, the Director of the Institute of Musicology, and himself a leading Bartók scholar.

The fine introductory study and the facsimile of Bartók's rhythm tables (together with a few autograph transcriptions) take up hardly more than one-tenth of the nearly 1150-page volume. Of the remainder, there are, first of all, the songs. As the title discloses, *Division A I. Nos 1-416* includes those few songs which have five-syllable lines, together with those consisting of six- and seven-syllable lines. The great majority of numbers refer to groups of variations of various sizes, rather than to a single song. Since it is a

critical edition—the guiding principles of which are described in the introductory essay in quite some detail—the editors preparing the manuscript for publication made no changes in the text. Whenever it was necessary and possible, they added their own notes. Those who are acquainted with the earlier editions of Hungarian folk song collections will relatively frequently come upon familiar tunes. This is because previous editions of Hungarian folk songs also took their material from the classic collections. The purpose of this publication was however, not the individual songs it contains, but a scholarly presentation of a major item of Bartók's posthumous papers. Another consideration justifying publication was to provide readers with the same view of Hungarian folk music that was available to Bartók, Kodály and their contemporaries during the years of revolutionary renewal in twentieth-century music. This was the musical material which influenced them as composers, and which, through its quality and composition, made its first—and ever since the deepest—impression on the audience.

The book makes it quite clear that what Bartók in Division A considered archaic, or even "primaeval" tunes, were indeed such tunes although he did permit a number of songs having nothing to do with the old style to slip through his filter. It is a sympathetic attitude—one in line with accepted scholarly practices—that Bartók resisted the temptation to manipulate the data. He treated all entries as equal, never relegating "less valuable" pieces to footnotes. As a result, some of the songs which had been published earlier are put in a new light. In Bartók's taxonomy there is a strict scientific order, without a hierarchy of more representative and less representative items. All entries—old or new, perfect or flawed,—are put in their place within the system in compliance with its rules. The very first tune is an insignificant and solitary item. It is also an exception in the sense that, judging by her name (Dr Landerné, the wife of Dr Lander), the woman contributing the song must have come from the educated classes, although we know that both Bartók and Kodály (the latter had collected this particular piece) laid down the strict rule that non-peasant sources must be avoided. At the beginning of the book we find a couplet version among the tunes recalling mediaeval Europe with their small compass and mostly *volta* rhythm. (In the notes Bartók even published its original under No 12.) The whole of the large group of variants under No 27 (from *a* to *v*) can also be found in the corresponding volume of *A magyar népzene tára*, mostly as wedding songs. However the huge number of stanzas—186 of them altogether!—is only given here, under 27i by Kodály, who transcribed them in County Nyitra (today in Slovakia) in connection with a single melody version. In general, the more deeply rooted songs had version-groupings, even in Bartók's relatively small collection. By contrast, songs which for some reason are unrelated to these usually stand alone. The source of songs Nos 36, 112, and 113 is not Hungarian but a Gypsy in Hungary—in the case of the first two, the collector László Lajtha even recorded that the source is a "Hungarian Gypsy of the Calvinist faith". The collection includes several beggars' songs (32a, 100a), and a parody of a lament (65a)—it necessarily follows from the function of these latter songs that they belong to the archaic layer of folk music; the placement of the last of these in Division A I was due merely to its unique stanzaic form. There are also "school songs" (43a and b), occasionally even some folksy songs of older or more recent origin (256, 390, 391, 399), as well as other songs completely alien to the old peasant tradition, e.g., *Kutya, kutya, tarka* (165ab) and *Szeretnék szántani* (188ab).

The small compass of the songs that were included in Volume I followed al-

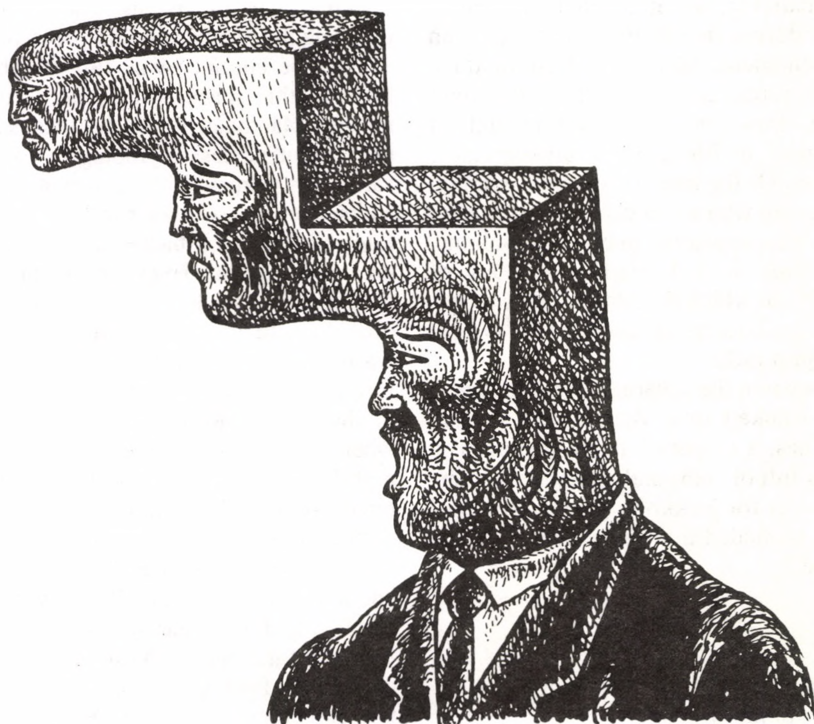
most naturally from a particular feature of the Bartók system, namely that it begins with songs whose lines contain the smallest number of syllables. Songs with a small number of syllables and of a small compass—and not necessarily a pentatonic scale—did, indeed, turn up in regions of a more archaic culture: in the county of Somogy, in south-western Hungary, in Hungarian-speaking islands in the Nyitra region, in the north-west of pre-Trianon Hungary, in certain areas of the Székelyföld in Transylvania, and especially in Moldavia, which was never part of Hungary. Some of the songs were recorded in a particularly oramented form. By far the greatest number of such minutely detailed items were transcribed by Bartók. He collected 2834 Hungarian songs. (By comparison, Kodály collected 3546.) However, as the book also indicates, most of the songs collected by others (Béla Vikár, Vilmos Seemayer, Pál Péter Domokos, etc.) were transcribed by Bartók. Once again, readers may admire the fine detail of Bartók's transcriptions, right down to barely audible sounds, with special regard to their rhythmic accuracy. (See, for example, No. 297a, where the impressively detailed transcription of a Moldavian ballad is accompanied by a sketch of an easier version; see also 30h, 198st, etc.) The transcription of the famous *Fly, Peacock* (No 75) also deserves a separate mention. The same song, from the same source, and in Bartók's transcription, has already been included in two important publications: it was listed in the Examples compiled by Lajos Vargyas, of Kodály's book *Hungarian Folk Music* under No 1.; it was also the first melody representing "Type IX" songs in volume VI of *Corpus*. The Vargyas compilation published the second stanza of 75a of this volume with seven minor modifications. (In fairness to Vargyas, it should be mentioned that Examples was not meant to be a critical edition.) By contrast, volume VI of the *Corpus* was—as the Introduction emphatically pointed out—a critical edition. In view of this claim, it is somewhat surprising to find on page 367 a sketchy score of *Fly, Peacock,* with Bartók's name given as the transcriber. At the end of the book, hidden among the notes, is version 75b, the less ornamented version of Bartók's transcriptions and not 75a, Bartók's transcription of the original gramophone recording—a small consolation. It should be mentioned in passing that Bartók, who carefully annotated the variations (melodies he considered as belonging to the same type) with the same number, classified one of the Type IX songs (No 421) of the former system as No 24, which is a long way from No 75. Admittedly he, too, could make mistakes (thus he failed to recognize that Nos 396 and 401 are essentially the same tune). Nevertheless, anyone who sets about replacing Bartók's system with a better one with regard to classification and, especially, transcription, might find the challenge a tall order. That is a further reason for welcoming the publication of the first volume of the Bartók edition of folk songs.

A volume such as this is hardly the appropriate place to describe the culture—or in some cases, the cultures—of a region, of which the songs form a part. Nevertheless, the inclusion of roughly two dozen photographs showing people in the fields was a sensible idea. Regardless of the ceremonious poses for the camera, these are true snapshots of the tough life led by these "folk-singing" peasants.

Hungarian publications on folk music seldom boast ample and sound indices. One of the strongest features of this book is the apparatus. Mostly we consult a reference book such as this in a hurry. Ferenc Sebő, who relied on computers when preparing these indices, made sure that all the information could be accessed quickly and with ease. He starts with the most important. The code numbers of the types are listed, in the order of this publi-

cation, to which these songs belong (in the Archives of the Institute of Musicology.) A reverse index follows, the number of the types, in ascending order, in which the manuscripts of the songs can be found. Although the index of the rhythmical order is identical with the corresponding section of the rhythmical table published in facsimile at the beginning of the book, it still proves to be useful, as the facsimile strains the eye, indeed occasionally the figures are completely blurred. In addition to the usual indices—line ending notes, first lines, place-names—there are separate indices for the medium of the source-material (phonograph cylinders, records, nineteenth-century printed material), the collectors, and the informants.

The only thing the Hungarian readers will be likely to miss is a glossary of obsolete or ununderstandable words and expressions found in the songs. Although in some cases the collectors' notes (most notably Sándor Veress's) contain helpful comments, in the majority of the cases the readers are left to their own devices. The editors should perhaps consider getting expert help from a linguist for the preparation of such notes for future volumes. Apparently, even the singers themselves were occasionally unable to explain the meaning of certain expressions. For readers, on the other hand, it would be reassuring to be told that the meaning of some of these terms were not clear even to the collectors. What potential non-Hungarian buyers of the book will be most likely to ask is why a brief English or German description of the contents is not added. Bartók's name in itself guarantees that the book will appeal to an international public. Furthermore, it is a well-produced publication—if people outside Hungary also realize that, so much the better.



Miklós Györffy

Wind-Blown People

Iván Mándy: *Huzatban* (In a Draught). Magvető, 1992, 219 pp.; Valéria Korek: *Utómagyarok* (Post-Hungarians). T-Twins Kiadó, 1992, 265 pp.; Imre Kertész: *Gályanapló* (Galley Diary). Holnap Kiadó, 1992, 240 pp.

If his characters were not so run-down and weather-beaten, and if the man himself were not such a humble, awkward figure, we might compare Mándy's inexhaustible, ever-growing *oeuvre* to some wonder of nature. He stands among us like some huge and venerable tree without which our lives would be unimaginable. He continues to grow even in old age, imperceptibly spreading still. Alternatively, we might imagine him as the enduring tree in the courtyard of an old tenement, leaves covered in dust, whose roots, cramped into such a tight space, draw into themselves enough of the juices of life in some unimaginable fashion. Or the tree could again stand on the square which is a constant setting for his stories, appearing in his latest volume, *Huzatban* (In a Draught), in "Day of Praise", in which the Master takes a German film director on a tour of his typical Budapest milieu:

"Down in the square, leaning against a thick-trunked tree. Around me broken branches, a carpet of fallen leaves. The tree is full of stabs and wounds, the eternal target for jackknife games... I gazed at the wounded tree in the silence of the square."

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We could best compare Mándy, with his indefatigable production, to one of his crumbly, draughty old tenements, one of those which sheltered many generations, which had never been luxurious and are now pretty shabby, though they still stand to haunt us as witnesses to vanished lives. Such a house is also the main character in the long title story of *In a Draught*, actually not so much a story as a stream of dream images or visions. The setting is the draughty strairwell, the decrepit elevator, the entrance way full of rubbish bins. In this space, which has virtually through Mándy, achieved mythical status, drift about no less mythological beings: "an infant woman", who comes down the stairs from Lajos Bauer's; "the rubbish fairies," two stoop-backed old women in grey overcoats, who pick through the bins, cans and buckets looking for tidbits; Uncle Arnold, setting out with his wastebucket, making his way in loops before ultimately disappearing; a girl, lover of the theatre, who rushes about everywhere; or the "story writer" himself, who nightly takes his bucket out to the trash bin dressed for an evening on the town:

"Light blue pullover with thin white stripes. Sporty elegance. Makes a different impression, though. Problem is that this is what I was wearing yesterday when I took out the bucket. Yesterday, and the day before. Dark grey suit. So cosmopolitan, it's almost arrogant. No reason to

overdress. Might offend someone. Fishbone jacket. That's got more style. Fishbone jacket with a dark green necktie.

"He dressed carefully, even tying the necktie twice. He picked up the bucket and struck out on his nightly route."

The short pieces collected in *Egy délutáni alvó* (An Afternoon Sleeper) draw their scenarios from the same trip to England which had furnished a theme for the earlier volume, *Autobiography*, where it figures as a grotesquely unsettling experience, disturbing the writer from his memories and dreams. There is not a novel here about what happened to Mándy in England, but rather how in the midst of English situations—in a restaurant, or shopping for clothes—certain long-faded times swim into his consciousness, like the horrific memories from the days of his early life, or the persecution of the Jews. There are three separate stories, "Day of Praise", "An Evening", and "A Night", but they are tightly linked since Mándy sets them into the course of one disturbing and hectic day. "Day of Praise" shows the writer as an expert on Budapest's golden age, guiding a German film director and his repugnant interpreter through the squares, houses, and courtyards in the shabby parts of town, in the vague hope that he will get a commission to write the screenplay for a television film on the subject. One of the greatest Hungarian writers of our time, in his fragile vanity, reluctantly admits to himself that he views this as an honour.

He is no easier on himself in the story about the evening which follows, in which he describes how he feared to sign a protest petition brought to him by a girl on a bicycle, in which Hungarian intellectuals appeal to János Kádár on behalf of Czech civil rights activists vilified and imprisoned. Finally comes the night, passed in turbulent nightmares drawn from the anxious memories of the day's upsetting trials.

Whoever is fond of Mándy's world and style cannot get enough of these new volumes of stories, whose charm lies, among other things, in the very thing that his critics once reproached him for: that he does not change, does not "develop". Yet this very unchangeableness of Mándy's, the stability of his original vision and superb literary technique, offer us a consistency, reliability, and sinewy endurance which are rare today. Mándy's style has a taste and a bouquet of which one cannot tire. It becomes more refined from volume to volume, offering the receptive reader ever new nuances. In 1993, Iván Mándy will be seventy-five. Long may he flourish.

Valéria Korek, born in Budapest in 1906, has lived in the United States since 1938. In 1960 her novel *A Visit to Buda* was published by a Hungarian house in Brussels; this provides the basis for her *Post-Hungarians,* which has now come out in Budapest. "Post-Hungarians", as we discover from one of the book's main characters, are those exiles who gradually shed not only their Hungarianness but even history itself. The term is based on "Proto-Hungarians", a people whose existence is postulated, born in the test tube of modern Medieval studies. They would have been a Uralic tribe which had still not mingled with our other ancestors, the Altaic Ugors. The Post-Hungarians have not sufficiently blended with the Americans to feel themselves as Americans but they cannot be made into Hungarians again either.

The book, complicated in structure, consists of three sections. If all one knows of the author is that she is an elderly exile, the first section might well be read as a memoir. The diarist, who appears to be one with the author, narrates in the first person her life in America in the fifties, the present in which the diary is written, and certain memories of her life in Budapest in the thirties. That this lady is the librarian of an imaginary American university, and that both she and the other

characters have imaginary names, does not absolutely undercut the apparent character of a memoir. But the reader becomes suspicious after the long-winded personal introduction, and later, the discussion of various details, which seem superfluous, works to create a motif: it seems as if the very man in a red sweater, who twenty years previously had crossed paths with the narrator, might have turned up in the library of the American university, and even tried to purloin her research topic, as was hinted at in the early days. The effect is to create the tension of detective fiction, though the fact remains that the scholarly work in question is too insignificant. For the moment nothing becomes of all this; the diary ends without us knowing anything about the man in the red sweater or his intentions, or what his connections to the earlier man really is. Indeed, we cannot say with certainty that the whole sequence is not entirely imagined.

In any case, the second section, "The Research", begins with the author of the diary, while concealing her identity, sending it to a psychiatric institute, where an entire team begins to examine it as the production of a specially disturbed individual. One of the doctors is a Russian exile who had lived in Budapest in the thirties and forties, and feels half Hungarian himself. The writer obviously intended the diary, written in Hungarian, for him. The research fails, though, to shed light on the diary's author, or at least no more than that she could not have existed in the condition the diary portrays.

The research contains many digressions which, like many details of the old woman's life, seem irrelevant to the subject, burdening the novel with extraneous filler. But the reader maintains the faith that this will all eventually come into focus. In any case, save for the one mysterious woman, Post-Hungarians are hardly to be found.

The third section, "The Story", full of them, is set in New York. Its two protagonists are known to us from the diaries as figures from Budapest: the ageing philosopher Géza, and the cousin of his divorced wife, the comely Livia, in her early thirties, visiting New York from Uruguay. The story is of the love between these two Post-Hungarians searching for their niche, a love which flames up unexpectedly, then fades towards a bittersweet end. In the background pop up figures presented in the digressions of the second section, mostly English and Americans, all consistently unengaging. One may dimly suspect that Livia wrote the diary of the first section, an expression of the fear which is part of the exile's lot. But it never becomes clear why precisely she identifies with the elderly librarian, and what her relationship to the imaginary characters of the diary is. The "diary" and the "story" go poorly together; it is difficult to recognize in them the consistent elements of the preoccupations of one and the same fear-driven person. Apart from the issue of literary coherence, each of the sections unfortunately shows little of the Post-Hungarians, much as one would like to see them. Most regrettable is the scarcity of memories of her youth in Buda, which, after some faint attempts, soon disappear entirely. Hence the somewhat melodramatic affair between the ageing man and young woman is regrettably lacking the most important part: their faded common past.

Imre Kertész is the author of the important novels *Fatelessness*, *Failure*, and *Kaddish for an Unborn Child*. His *Galley Diary* was written between 1961 and 1991. It is a highly unorthodox diary in that it strives to give a day-to-day account of the author's life without being an account of the progress of his literary work. The title well expresses the work's special, unusual quality: Imre Kertész's notes and thoughts deal with the issues in the life of a thoughtful man who has ended up in the galley of our age. Kertész's fundamental

problem is that he is compelled to live in the absurd twentieth century as a moralist, intellectual, writer, Jew, and human being. "This century", he writes, "is like an execution squad inflicting uninterrupted servitude." In this age "failure is the only experience which can be achieved". Hence the title of his novel, *Failure*. "Everyone's life is a half-completed and actually unsuccessful attempt at living. What makes us believe that this life is our life, that this world is our world?"

The moral person has no choice but to accept his term on this galley. "For me, it seems, the most fitting suicide is life." A person's primary task is to survive his existence as it falls to him. "To live life as it falls out, no matter where we live, and to live it fully, is the task of our lives."

"I must be almost insane to think about art. But to think about anything else is not worth it." Hence *Galley Diary,* for the most part, is a means to understanding artists, writers, and philosophers, and a set of reflections on them, their works, and their thinking. Imre Kertész's lode-stars are above all those philosophers who dwell in the border zones of word and thought, and whose remarks reflect his own personal struggle with existence. He reads and comments on Pascal's *Pensées,* Kafka's diaries and aphorisms, Nietzsche's essays, Camus' *Notebooks.* An endless list could be compiled of other writers, authors, and composers whom he quotes, mentions, and explains, from Flaubert to Wagner and Beckett. It is fascinating to observe how, during those three decades in which the cream of the Hungarian intelligentsia were shaped by ideology and censorship, or by ephemeral fashions, Imre Kertész managed to remain independent in his voluntary isolation, searching instead for the intellectual nourishment which would sustain and fortify him through his galley slavery. Thus he maintained that degree of sovereignty which kept—and keeps—him protected from the hysterical spasms of East European political life. For Imre Kertész, life's purpose is to "shorten the routes of escape—for the moment, an escape back to your desk."

His compulsion to write is itself a form of slavery for him. The diary's tripartite structure is shaped most strongly by his bursts of activity as a writer, not by the impression his oeuvre will make on posterity. It shows how the diary author stood with his efforts as a writer of other works. In the first section he "sails out onto open waters." This section, which embraces nearly twenty years, reflects his setting himself to his task, and the writing of the first novel, *Fatelessness.* The next, a mirror of the eighties, "drifts between cliffs and reefs," reflecting the period in which the second novel was born after very painful struggles, his literary career continuing under the sobriquet of "failure". Finally, in the last two years, "he releases the tiller, he pulls in the oars, content". Hungary has been freed from Bolshevism, though "not from itself". Imre Kertész became known as a writer, who freely and "contentedly" allows himself not to "row", or write, any more. In any case, the issue remains an open question: "What should be done anyway? I believe less and less in "literature", in fiction. Humankind does not just consume, but is itself consumed; what it had preserved for art (its most succulent tit-bit), seems gradually to be disappearing. What is left? Perhaps the example (existence): both more and less than art. The need to bear witness is ever growing within me, as if I were the last survivor who could speak, as if I direct my words to those who will survive the deluge, the brimstone, or the Ice Age—biblical times, great and grave cataclysms, the age of dumbfoundedness. In place of the person, the race steps in; the collective, like a stampeding herd of elephants, sweeps away the process of creation." With his *Galley Diary* and novels, Imre Kertész may have succeeded in saving his life and individuality, but the task for the galley slaves of the future will be no less difficult.

Gergely Hajdú

Memory Explored and Denied

Zsuzsa Takács: *Viszonyok könnye* (Tear of Relations) Jelenkor. 1992, 127 pp; Zsuzsa Beney: *Versek a labirintusból* (Poems from the Labyrinth). Pannónia, 1992, 62 pp; Géza Szőcs: *A vendégszerető avagy Szindbád Marienbadban* (The Hospitable, or Sindbad in Marienbad). Szépirodalmi, 1992, 277 pp; Mónika Mesterházi: *Visszafagyó táblák* (Refreezing Plates). Cserépfalvi, 1992, 53 pp.

Tear of Relations by Zsuzsa Takács is a portable vortex rather than a collection of poems, incessantly concerned with the cruelest and bloodiest sensations of body and spirit. It is the most telling volume of the year, which will be put down with hands trembling from an amalgam of ecstasy and shock. Its intentional lack of shape and occasional obscurity make it fairly incompatible with classic taste, and it was met with some grudges by the present writer but, at the same time, I am sure it would have pleased Al Alvarez. Zsuzsa Takács started to write verse in the mid-1960s and began translating from the English (as well as Spanish and Italian), so it is small wonder that she shows a close similarity with English verse of those years. Curiously, the poets who for a short time had a noticable influence on her have no similarity with her, nor do they have any with each other (Rilke, Lorca, and more recently, Cavafy). Takács's personality is too strong to be shaped by outside influences. She has succeeded in creating a consistent world out of obsessively recurring themes. Her poems are surrounded by this visionary ambiance.

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The title, *Tear of Relations*, puns on the phonetic likeness of the Hungarian words for "book" and "tear" (*könyv* and *könny*, which until a couple of hundred years ago were still homonyms). The volume deals with relations, but with relations that are incipient or about to break up. Nothing is said of what they are about, as one is told nothing of the second person involved in the poems. Concrete details of the outside world are also absent, which makes this strange poetry hard to understand.

Some people meet somewhere. The scene is perpetually, shockingly narrow. A room or a street, always in a city of ruins, suffocating in smog. Now Budapest, now Rome, or again London, stuck by some imaginary Blitz, the Jerusalem of Josephus, or Wajda's Warsaw, under the process of destruction. There is an invasion constantly going on, without attracting any attention. The moon always shines through a fog, shrieking trams run over fallen leaves, and nature only appears in the form of an alley: "the pollarded trees of a death camp." These tragic landscapes are the location of permanent apocalypse: "the sun has not turned black like a bag of body-hair, / the moon as a whole has not turned into blood, / the slime from the window only spilled on my dress. / ... I did not see the vermilion animal, / it was only the silence which

dragged out / warningly to the breaking point". ("The Fall of Babylon"). Yet, all in all, this is far removed from a philosophy of history.

Sometimes she says in so many words that these are interpretations of dreams, and this can be felt in other poems as well: she portrays everything and anything so that it re-emerges unexpectedly and half-forgotten, as in a nightmare. A confined and dark environment, a suppurating wound, in which one awakens bathed in sweat, choking, buried alive, painfully struggling towards the light, and not outside reasons, but gushing blood alone can give rise to jubilation. "Warmth! Blood everywhere! And is there anything finer / than the velvet brook? Did I ever long for anything else?" As a dream image, this unambiguously refers to the womb and to parturition.

Life is no more than a protracted birth. A truly human being is born again, as an adult, in such a way that the birth pangs, like Michelangelo's chisel, chip away the superfluous from the nucleus of the personality—"torment *macht frei*", as she puts it half ironically in "The Visitor". She has her doubts about the success of the process; her recurring subjects include induced abortion ("Diary") and still birth. "...How should I tell those full of hope that they must not wait as in the corridors of hospitals, /.../ So it has turned out that the one you have seen / so often, is now (still) born."(" Forbidden Pieces of Music"). This is also the subject of "Four Poems," the outstanding cycle in the volume. The personality, beyond all the futile acts of daily life, becomes estranged from itself, and by the time it receives a final shape, it no longer feels itself as its own. This takes us to the most alarming feature of the volume: all along it tight rope walks on the edge of schizophrenia.

This is also evident in the depiction of the relations referred to in the title, in "Dumb Game," as the title of one of her earlier poems, so often referred to, puts it. The scenes suggest a kind of Scandinavian ambience, like a Bergman film, or even more a painting by Munch. Two or more people meet and, after a glance or a gesture, they part. Turning against the wall, a woman is crying, and another one watches the scene from the outside. She is the same person, at the same moment in time. "Instead of mood lighting, it is practically a street / light that fills the room, no wonder, as it is inhibited by strangers, / including a woman, who will be me, if all goes well." The first person often blends with the third person, as is the case with the various second persons. "You" may mean a person, as for instance a lover in the first line, and another lover in the next line. /"I am thinking of my lovers, that is of just one"/, but it can also mean a nation, mankind, or indeed—as the entreaties make clear—even God, without any transition. Zsuzsa Takács's patriotism is one of the most extraordinary variants on this sentiment. Once it appears in the form of shame felt for being amongst a "drunken Hungarian rabble" on a train, "in compartments heated to thirty degrees"—again the quasi-womb. Then again she states that she is attracted by decay, by destruction. "How much I love the Hungarians!, I said. / ...) and the mysterious confession intended for you, made things go dark." Everything is connected with everything in this world—in a regression, towards the position of the small child locked between two parents, and at the same time towards a more archaic human state, nearer to perfection, which may provide a singular, perverted happiness.

Though the primary merits of this poetry lie in its visions, her versification, too, displays shrewd calculation, for instance in the choriambs inserted in the loosely iambic lines, echoing, as it were, one of her frequent images, that of a halting heart beat. However primeval the experiences expressed, it would be a mis-

take to underestimate Takács's deliberateness. The rarity of noteworthy imagery and metaphors can also be calculated, for in fact the whole oeuvre is a single depressing metaphor—that of existence which has no defences.

It would be an error to imagine that the methods of psychoanalysis allow one to see through the poet. On the contrary, it is she who surprises supercilious Freudianism in flagranti, and she adds its concepts with easy irony to her own interpretations of dreams. However surprising it will sound after what I have said, she does not lack humour—although her humour is cruel. On several occasions she starts telling a grotesque story which at first can be taken as a humorous anecdote, until it takes a tragic turn and the reader feels guilty complicity for responding with laughter earlier. As I have said, this is a vortex—mysterious, dangerous, unforgettable.

The collection by Zsuzsa Beney includes in a pure form all that which might be distilled from Zsuzsa Takács's chaotic (and much more exciting) sequence of images. These are "love sonnets meant for God," as she puts it, "the words of which I have been taught by the sufferings of my early loves." This is not a question of mysticizing the *coup de foudre* of profane love, after all, in the allegorical labyrinth of the title—in which the soul is led towards God by Ariadne's thread of suffering—the walls are made up of sensual impressions, of "mirages". The earthly body, including brain and consciousness, only leads one astray: "why can the soul become existent only in the body / when it would always like to overflow the brim / of death, because the crystalline glass / is a hard crust for its water, clear as glass." This poet of *amor sanctus* joins the Petrarchean sonnet with a stock of metaphors from the Old Testament, mostly from the Song of Solomon.

The sonnet form, whose recent popularity has made it over-used, is given a most elegant treatment by Zsuzsa Beney, for whom it has been her favourite form ever since she first started writing twenty years ago, despite the occasional verbosity of her formulations. Her stylized landscapes, the bower, the cliff, the desert, are more problematic. This abstract world provides a strange background to some modern matters, as for instance the "violet-blue crystals of the gas", referring concretely to the technology used in the Holocaust. Aware of this, she avoids recollections. Zsuzsa Beney, a doctor and specialist in pulmonary diseases, could obviously give harrowing descriptions of suffering, but no trace of that is to be found. This, however, clashes with the plan of the volume as a whole, which implies that she is to try to examine her own life from the vantage point of her proximity to God—as an individual fate is precisely that subject of which it is most difficult to speak relying on the psalms as a paradigm. What is more, even the assumption that life is *fate*, a coherent series of acts which can be set in some order and thus interpreted, is in need of proof in our own day and age.

That God sends word precisely through His absence, is not a theological novelty, neither is interpreting "the scandal of the century" as attempt at a second redemption by sacrificing, after the Son of God, his Chosen People. But Zsuzsa Beney (who in much of what she says follows Simone Weil) does not claim to be a theologian. The mystery of failures proving to be successes and of victory in defeat has provided the opportunity for memorable pieces—striking oxymorons concealed in melodious lines.

In one of her deceptively simple poems she argues that our notions about God in fact distance us from Him: "Along the tracks of intertwined paths, / God and the soul perambulate interlaced / the earthy, moss-grown green rounds / of the mass of space and time. / ... / You cannot be

farther away than in the word / which calls You in words. Everlastingly—you are present only in the secret of Your non-existence, / in creation, which You have imbued / with Yourself, so that You should be fragrant in the form of forests, / so that you should be born again and again, just to die ceaselessly."

It seems strange how strongly the motif of the Second Coming, the apocalyptic *grand récit* is present in authors who can be considered as post-modern from more than one point of view. One of them is Géza Szőcs, the poet-politician from the Hungarian minority in Rumania. It is difficult to quote even a single line by him, not merely because this present collection includes only a few new poems, and those do not represent him at his best. (As an outstanding talent, Szőcs is always expected to come up with something movingly powerful and novel.) The difficulty lies in Szőcs blending four or five different styles and the viewpoints which accompany them—and which exclude each other. He often divides his work into short movements, something most strikingly exemplified by one of his matter-of-fact titles: "Miniatures, One-Moment Pieces, Haikus, Fragments, Aphorisms, Variations, Bagatelles: Wedding Stories"—and etymological and typographical jokes, one may add. Szőcs teases a more profound meaning out of plays on words. Texts, which at first sight seem to be homogeneous are, no less daring for their virtually dadaistic turns, as for example, "water bathes in its past / like Sancta Claus in blood sugar." ("Gritti on the Plane"). This is a crystal clear image, except that it combines three notions. A simple thought concerning the arriving sweetheart, as a gift of fate, is suddenly suppressed by the nervous reactions of excitement, and finally the myth of Atlantis surfaces from somewhere to shape some indefinite overflowing fright (sea water as a metaphor of blood).

Two layers stand out among the styles Szőcs offers hospitality to: one archaico-magic, and the other of late Romanticism, which has such a fondness for the first. The character of Szőcs, once an active member of the opposition and a prisoner of Ceausescu's gaols, includes some romantically heroic features, but precisely this provides ground for a touch of suspicion. Someone so sensitive to his intellectual autonomy would scarcely opt for the most easily attainable segment of tradition; it is more probable that he is beguiling his readers. Here one should pose just the opposite of the usual question: who is not speaking? It is not the Herderian speaking, who is seeking for the expression of the absoluticized ethnic character in archaic texts. The "disrespect" with which Szőcs uses folk tradition and Hungarian national classics, joining them to more vulgar linguistic material amounts to sacrilege in the eyes of true Herderians. He has put into verse on several occasions the romantic motif of the nation's death, but he has been able to do so with surprisingly little pathos, since he has concentrated on the realistic threats to an ethnic group existing here and now, instead of the myth, the possible assimilation of the Hungarians in Rumania to the majority there.

But to return to the question of who is not speaking, it is not somebody who places his poetic gift at the service of politics. As long as he felt that politics determined the whole life of his environment right down to the tiniest gestures, he accepted this as his subject. But since he has been able to discuss politics legally, he prefers to deal with other sensations. He envisions ecological catastrophes—in the style of nursery rhymes.

His most important subject is not what the poem is about, but the way in which it is worded: that with all the things which whirl through the mind, man interprets the world. But these meanings are not cemented into an integral whole. This is

why he so often uses the motif of the futility of adulthood, the absence of maturity which one tries to make up for in haste. This is a personality catastrophe on a world-war scale. As a 1988 poem puts it: "When you will be President of America / and with golden water-pistols in your pocket / ... / you suddenly take yet another unobserved step / and do not even feel that you are already past / the other half of your life / ... / and you will bury in the cellar of the White House the black box / which will be filled with your last words, / you will dig there in the cellar of the White House, / with a cross wires on your forehead, in galoshes, / with the hot line around your neck, / when you will be the American or Soviet President."

Refreezing Plates is the first, successful volume of twenty five year old Mónika Mesterházi. It keeps to a variegated, basically Classical style, using poetic solutions, or at least avoiding neo-avant-garde means, which appear in Szőcs in such profusion and, what is most striking, without turning to any grand metaphysical subjects. "Even if grumbling, I acquiesce in what / chafes my throat / when it utters / that it is superfluous / as it is, the whole lump, Budapest, / the houses, the air, and even / the trees, the books—that there is no defensible / surface..." Contrary to most of her contemporaries who are just appearing on the literary scene, Mónika Mesterházi does not even consider either overtly chiselled elaboration or a mass of mythological references. On the contrary, she takes subjects that seem to be the province of youth with unconcealed irony. Two poems are, for instance, about the ears of her dog. It is as if she rejects the notions about adulthood as expressed by the poets mentioned earlier. At the same time, she shows no trace of the typical newcomers' intoxication with the fact that she has feelings. She is a poet who tries to hide, but in a different way from Zsuzsa Beney. Nor does she imitate the attitude of Győző Ferencz (who taught her at university), a noted poet whose influence can nevertheless be strongly felt in the precisely elaborated idiom of *Refreezing Plates*. Mónika Mesterházi has an individual attitude to things, or rather, to the absence of things.

Events take place, they turn into memories and become incorporated in the personality, constantly changing, like the flow of Heraclitus' river. The poems carve out and sensually rebuild moments from time and this, in itself, is a traditional endeavour of poetry. But she never describes decisive moments, only preparations for something unidentified, and memories of emotions whose reality is questioned by the poet herself. Even if this "vacuum" connected with the absence encountered in the outside world /"no wonder if your face has a ghost image, / the compared-with it is haunting behind you", it is primarily an inner emptiness which she repeatedly sets forth, but which she does not propose to analyse. The water of the river is beautiful if it is not stirred up, indeed—as the title suggests—if it is refrozen, which means that there has been a thaw but that should not be spoken about. She knows, many false meanings would invade the vacuum if she were to try to speak about it: imagination masked as remembrance and emotion, social and private roles. "The inner noise makes it difficult for me to hear / when I speak, which voice is speaking from me. / I can read this on the faces of others. / ... / And for you I keep silent—suitably."

To give up speech (even if it is inadequate) might also be just a role, and not even an original one. Mónika Mesterházi devotes a whole cycle to explain her being a poet, blending resignation with pride ("I have done what is not worth doing"). Her pride is certainly justified. There are some six or seven poems in the volume which lead the reader to believe that she will succeed in her exceptional experiment—to base a significant oeuvre not on the gift of sharp vision, but on its denial.

László Somfai

Bartók and Szigeti

Béla Bartók's friendship and his creative connections with Joseph (József) Szigeti is considered to be an extremely well-documented subject. Szigeti's reminiscences and reflections in his well known *With Strings Attached*, along with other recollections, six characteristic and informative letters written by Bartók to Szigeti and five by the violinist to the composer, and documentation of their some twenty duo recitals in Europe and America, have all been published. The Bartók literature discusses Szigeti's splendid transcription of the Hungarian Folk Tunes for violin and piano (1926), Szigeti's role in commissioning a trio (the Contrasts, 1938) for the "King of Swing", Benny Goodman and himself, and how Szigeti, along with Jelly d'Arányi, Zoltán Székely, and Yehudi Menuhin, were among the privileged violinists who received printed dedications of major Bartók works. In addition to the Contrasts, Rhapsody No.1 1928 was also dedicated to Szigeti. Since the issuing of the *Centenary Edition of Bartók's Records* (Hungaroton 1981) the most exciting aspect of the Szigeti—Bartók connection for the musician of our time has been, however, the more than 100 minute long gramophone recording of them as a duo playing Bartók, Beethoven, and Debussy. The younger generation of Bartók performers use these recordings as a guide of primary importance to the re-creation of an authentic Bartók style.

Should the case be reopened? Still unpublished documents (thirteen Szigeti letters to Bartók in the Budapest Bartók Archives; annotated Bartók music in the Szigeti collection of the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest, etc.) alone would not necessarily justify a thorough reconsideration of their friendship. It is the preparations for the complete critical edition of Bartók's music, currently the central scholarly project in the Budapest Bartók Archives, that necessitates our re-examining the surviving documents in a broader context.

In fact, the close study of the Szigeti file can be a pilot project in answering urgent methodological questions in Bartók research. For instance, how can the complex study of such a rich documentation be used in the detection of lesser-known but similarly important Bartók links? How much can one rely on a single source of information? How do we know that the recollections of a witness can be trusted where there are contradictory statements? To what extent is a gramophone record a document, an authorized version, the textual deviations and significant features of which must then be incorporated into the printed musical text of the future Bartók critical edition? How much of a Szigeti—Bartók performance was primarily determined by Szigeti's ideas and

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style, and not by the composer's instructions? Shall we say that duo performances in general are less "authentic" than solo piano recordings played by the composer? And last but not least, how are we to explain the fact that Bartók made so many records with Szigeti but none with Jelly d'Arányi, Stefi Geyer, Imre Waldbauer, or Zoltán Székely?

This last may be called a superfluous question. Of the Hungarian violinists listed above, Szigeti alone was in a position to persuade leading gramophone companies such as Columbia, to make records with Bartók. Incidentally, the London studio recording in 1931 (Bartók—Szigeti: Hungarian Folk Tunes; Bartók—Székely: Rumanian Folk Dances), and the New York studio productions in 1940 (Rhapsody No.l, and the Contrasts with Benny Goodman) were of perfect assistance to Szigeti's career too: he was keen to play with famous composers, preferably presenting works written for him. In a way it was pure chance that, of the many memorable sonata evenings involving Bartók playing with several violinist friends, only the April 13, 1940, Szigeti—Bartók concert in the Washington Library of Congress was recorded. Fortunately, after twenty-five years, this some 70 minutes of live performance (Beethoven's "Kreutzer", the Debussy Sonata, Bartók's 2nd Sonata and the 1st Rhapsody) was issued on LP and can now be studied as probably the liveliest and most significant sound document of Bartók's personality as an interpreter, with no other sources of its kind comparable to it.

Though the amount and therefore the significance of the Bartók—Szigeti records may be misleading in some respect, nobody can doubt the importance of this connection, and the sincerity and mutual high respect felt by the two great musicians. Their friendship was formed relatively late, which explains the psychological background of a few seemingly controversial facts. For instance Szigeti, who helped Bartók in a most noble way while often remaining in the background, was not willing to play certain violin works by Bartók in America, despite the fact that the composer very much hoped he would. This delicate question will be discussed below.

Szigeti's restrained approach to fostering a fruitful connection had to appeal to Bartók. It has been established that they knew of each other as early as Szigeti's study years under Hubay in Budapest. In 1910 they even played at the same recital. But it was not until the mid-1920s that Szigeti, who at that time lived abroad, realized that, in the meantime, Bartók had become a major figure in the post-war modern music scene. We do not know precisely what prompted his recognition. I personally suspect that the response to the famous Paris performance of the 1st Sonata (April 4, 1922) by Jelly d'Arányi, who by then was living in England, and Bartók, in the presence of Ravel, Stravinsky, Honegger, Milhaud, Poulenc, and others was what primarily impressed him. The dedication of the two Bartók violin sonatas (1921, 1922) to Jelly, soon followed by the dedication of *Tzigane* by Ravel, was indeed an unusual acknowledgement, perhaps a challenge to Szigeti.

He chose the indirect way to approach Bartók. In 1926 Szigeti made a violin and piano transcription of pieces from *For Children* with the title *Ungarische Volksweisen,* which he sent to Universal Edition (Vienna). The publisher forwarded it to Bartók who, after suggesting a few minor changes, but impressed by the quality of the work, approved it.[1] This was a clever self-introduction. So too was the next step. Instead of asking Bartók to give the first performance of the brand-new transcription with him, Szigeti suggested a duo recital in Budapest with Bach,

[1] The manuscript is in the Stadt- und Landesbibliothek in Vienna, MHc 14300.

Szigeti's notes for Bartók: special pizzicato, flageolet etc. tricks on the violin (Budapest Bartók Archives)

Mozart, Schubert, Beethoven sonatas on the programme. (April 10, 1927). The recital created a sensation. According to a newspaper account, [2] they had a happy time together. At the end of the rehearsal, Bartók took Szigeti's violin and showed him unusual *col legno* effects. Szigeti tried them out and in return played new sounds from Stravinsky. (This naturally sounds a somewhat typical piece of journalism, but it is supported by a recently identified document in the Budapest Bartók Archives. Soon after the concert, Szigeti gave a page of examples to Bartók of special tricks on the violin: pizzicato chords combining the thumb and the forefinger, flageolet effects, and others.)

There can be no question that both men got more inspiration from this meeting than expected. Bartók liked Szigeti's style and virtuosity as well as his personality. By that time Bartók had various contacts with talented members of the Hungarian violin school. As a young man he had played with Hubay, the head of the school, he had enjoyed Adila Arányi's company (she was 15 at that time) and when he met Stefi Geyer (19), he fell immediately in love with her. He had accompanied the teenage Ferenc Vecsey on a concert tour. Imre Waldbauer was just 18 when, in 1910, he committed himself to fighting for Bartók's music; Zoltán Székely was 17 in 1920 when he began playing contemporary music with the composer (and Bartók immediately recognized his talent); Ede Zathureczky was 20 when he first played the 2nd Sonata with Bartók. They were much younger than the composer, honoured by this partnership, and quite naturally used the connection to advance their careers and define themselves as musicians. (Jelly d'Arányi, 28 in 1921 when she enchanted Bartók with her playing and her personality and inspired him to write two sonatas, was to some extent another story, partly a love story, which never really bothered Szigeti.)

In contrast to the younger generation, Szigeti at thirty-five, a celebrity in international concert life, was his equal. He could arrange things for Bartók; he discovered misprints in the printed edition of the 2nd Sonata, which he discussed with the composer. In two years the form of address in their correspondence quickly developed from the formal *Igen tisztelt Szigeti Úr!* through *Kedves Kolléga Úr!* to the much less formal *Kedves Barátom!*

Bartók recognized the favourable effect made by the first two violin transcriptions from his piano music (Bartók—Székely, Rumanian Folk Dances, Universal Ed. 1916; Bartók—Szigeti, Hungarian Folk Tunes, Universal Ed. 1927) [3] in the popularization of his music. In appreciation of the services of Szigeti and Székely, he wrote two rhapsodies in 1928, based on folk dances. He had great expectations that the rhapsodies would be a success abroad with the two outstanding Hungarian violinists. He offered a number of variant forms to make them a real success: with piano or with orchestra; the two-movement full form or the *Lassú* and the *Friss* dances independently. The two rhapsodies differed considerably in style, because of the very nature of the folk-dance material and the idea which underlay them, but also because Bartók tai-

[2] Jenő Feiks' in *Pesti Napló* (April 12, 1927), who also made a drawing of Szigeti and Bartók in rehearsal.

[3] The two other popular violin transcriptions needed more help and were published only in Hungary. The Bartók—Gertler Sonatina (ca. 1930) was considerably revised by the composer. The Bartók—Országh Hungarian Folksongs had a longer history: the 11-piece set of Országh's transcription, (1931) was fully rewritten in 1934 by Bartók in a new 9-piece arrangement which in this form is indeed the most original of all of the versions of *For Children*.

lored them to some extent to the personality and technique of the two violinists. According to Székely's verbal recollections—and he is a dependable witness—the composer let him read the music of the two rhapsodies while still in manuscript and asked him which he would like better. Székely was particularly fascinated by the 2nd Rhapsody, although it was more difficult in every respect. As it turned out, Bartók had already intended it for him, while the 1st Rhapsody had been meant for Szigeti. Székely soon played both rhapsodies with Bartók; Szigeti, however, played only "his" rhapsody.

One wonders whether Szigeti liked to be paired in 1928/29 with a much younger, ambitious but not yet recognized Hungarian fellow violinist in this way. Although he never wrote about it, he must have been affected. An indirect sign of this involves the Violin Concerto 1937/38, commissioned and first performed by Székely in Europe. According to Bartók's letter to Szigeti (January 30, 1944), the composer had sent the piano score of the still unpublished concerto to Szigeti and hoped that he would perform it in America. This Szigeti did not do, although he knew that the composer was ill, cruelly disappointed in America, and badly in need of a success. In fact, he never played the concerto dedicated to Székely, nor the solo Violin Sonata, which was Menuhin's piece. This was typical of Szigeti. In his later years in Switzerland, he did, however, study and teach them, and even quoted them in *A Violinist's Notebook.*

Returning to the 1st Rhapsody, a few interesting facts came to light during the preparations for the critical edition. In his recollections Szigeti gave an account of thirty-nine unpublished measures of the *Friss* movement in the manuscript which he received from Bartók. These were later left out, he comments. In fact all manuscripts and versions contain the passage, an *Allegretto scherzando* based on another dance tune from Transylvania. It was lovely music, but it was typical of Bartók's self-criticism that, on second thoughts, he discarded longer sections if they acted as a brake on the development of the form.[4]

Another interesting detail is the gesture of the original slow ending of the rhapsody, which Szigeti did not mention. Instead of the last ten measures of the printed score, (*Rubato, quasi cadenza)* originally there were only two with a suggestion: *Cadenza breve (ad lib.)*, i.e. a short cadenza to be improvised. In one manuscript amongst the Bartók papers in America there is a short and not very successful violin passage in Szigeti's handwriting. This they eventually rejected, and later Bartók sketched cadenzas, which became longer and longer, until finally he wrote the present form—which is still not perfect from the performer's point of view.[5]

Szigeti favoured the new (fast and brilliant) ending of the 1st Rhapsody, written months after Bartók had finished the composition. This new ending clearly belongs to the independent performance of the fast second movement *(Friss)* alone.[6] Yet Szigeti liked it, played it with

[4]I discuss this and several similar cuts in Bartók's manuscripts in my forthcoming *Béla Bartók: Composition, Concepts, and Autograph Sources* (University of California Press, Berkeley).

[5]Isaac Stern told me that in a discussion with Bartók in the 1940s he suggested a technically and musically more satisfying last measure for the violin, which the composer accepted.

[6]Movement I is in the key G; Movement II starts in E but, with the return of the opening theme of Movement I, ends in G—which is the key of the unabridged form of the 2-movement Rhapsody. The new (fast) ending recalls a theme from Movement II and, logically, arrives in E—intended as the end of the one-movement form, when the *Friss* alone is performed.

Bartók in the two movement full performance too (Bartók, whatever he thought, accepted it), and by recording the 1st Rhapsody with the composer in this form, created a tradition. This is a misleading tradition, I think. As a matter of fact, except for Székely, few violinists play the probably less attractive but musically only logical original form.[7]

All in all, the Bartók repertoire of Szigeti was selective: Rhapsody No.1 (with piano and with orchestra), Sonata No.2, *Contrasts,* Székely's and his own popular transcriptions, and the Portrait (No.1 of *Deux Portraits*) with orchestra. Except for the orchestral version of the rhapsody, all were recorded, the 1st Rhapsody with Bartók even twice, once live in concert and once in the studio.[8] All are extremely important documents, not only for the younger generation of Bartók interpreters but also for the future editors of these works in the Béla Bartók Complete Critical Edition. For Szigeti was an exceptionally careful reader of the music, who discovered mistakes and inconsistencies in the notation, discussed them with the composer, and played Bartók's music as the composer approved it. In addition, we have reason to believe that whenever he made some slight changes, playing chords, flageolet and pizzicato notes, glissandi etc. in a way similar to, but technically not identical with, the printed version, he had the composer's agreement. After all, Bartók was open to the advice of a master string player in questions of the proper notation and rendition, if he was satisfied with the "acoustic" (played) form of the suggestion.

Probably more caution is advisable in accepting that the general style, the tempo, the rubato in Szigeti's recorded performance with Bartók automatically represent the composer's ideal. Comparative studies of selected samples from the complete recorded material point towards potential problem areas of the indisputable "authenticity" of Szigeti's Bartók interpretation.

A comparison of two live performances of the 1st Rhapsody (Zathureczky with Bartók: April 11, 1939, Budapest; Szigeti with Bartók: April 13, 1940, Washington, D.C.) confirms that Bartók accepted a considerably slower tempo of the *Lassú* too; he actually enjoyed it, together with the gentler tone, more liberal use of rubato, and the more pointed accents and directionality in the performance of Ede Zathureczky. Szigeti developed a robust, noble Hungarian tone for the opening theme, safe in performance, but certainly a bit stiff.

Similarly, speaking of rhythmic freedom, one can rightly compare the first dance of the Rumanian Folk Dances in Bartók's solo performance (taken from the 1920 Welte-Mignon roll, or from the 1915 home-made phonograph cylinder) with the Szigeti—Bartók record (1920). The difference is astonishing. Szigeti takes a slower tempo, with heavier beats and with a much more rigid rhythm. Why did Bartók adjust himself to this tempo and style, if he had a clearly different piece in mind? He did play the piano accompaniment to a basically correct and certainly powerful interpretation. This is exactly the point: although the performance may be perfect and highly informative, a duo, even involving the participation of the composer, in general does not have the hundred-percent authority of a solo recording.

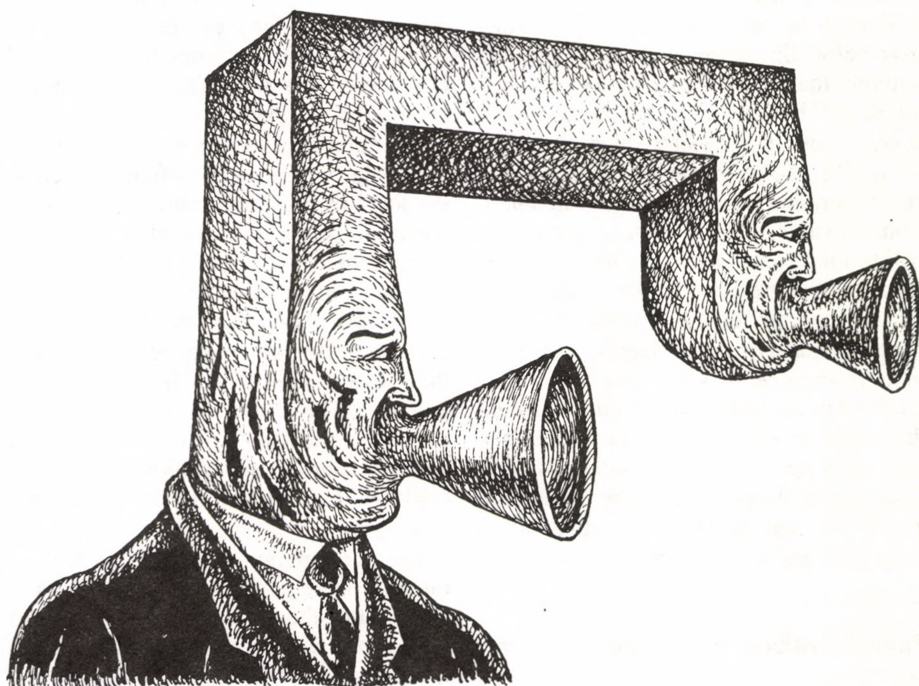
[7]Székely (together with Isobel Moore) recorded the violin and piano version of the two rhapsodies for the *Béla Bartók Complete Edition* in 1974 (Hungaroton SLPX 11357).

[8]Szigeti's recordings with Bartók were released in an amply annotated form in the *Centenary Edition of Bartók's Records (Complete) (*Hungaroton 1981, Vol.1, LPX 12326-33), on sides 6-7, 11-13, and were re-issued on CD in *Bartók at the Piano* (Hungaroton 1991, HCD 12326-31), CD 3 and 5.

In spite of these and similar reflections based on a detailed analysis of the old recordings, Szigeti's Bartók interpretation is a source of immense importance. Nor must we miss the main point. A musician who was able to achieve with Bartók such a catharsis as Szigeti did in the slow C major ending of the 2nd Sonata in the Washington recital, was a perfect Bartók player. Whether or not we have documents of the performance of other ideal Bartók players, this cannot be denied.

As Szigeti's correspondence in 1940 with the staff of the Library of Congress documents, he opposed the recording of the live performance of the 2nd Sonata. He knew that the sonata was difficult and they would probably not have enough time for rehearsal; he knew how difficult it was to play with Bartók, who improvised a great deal on the concert platform. Was it through vanity that Szigeti did not want to risk leaving less than perfect recordings for posterity? Or was he overcautious out of respect for his friend Bartók? Fortunately for Szigeti and for us, the Library of Congress recorded the full programme.

Similarly, one would like to know why Szigeti did not play with Bartók in America after their concert in Denver, on February 18, 1941, when this could well have been the best way to support the disappointed composer. Was it because Bartók as a pianist had received a bad press for a piano duo recital with his wife Ditta in the Town Hall in New York and, for Szigeti, collaboration would have been disadvantageous? Perhaps he did have to consider this aspect too, but then it was also Szigeti—and Bartók never learned this—who persuaded Koussevitzky to commission the composer to write a new work (Concerto for Orchestra, 1943) which led to a last upswing in his creative activity.



Paul Griffiths

Extraordinary Performances on CD

A simple salute is perhaps all that is necessary to mark the arrival of Kurtág's *Kafka-Fragments* on record (Hungaroton HCD 31135), a simple "here it is". That's the way in which the recording itself is presented, with no introductory text, not even a dating of the composition (which was created between 1985 and 1987). But silence in a review could easily be evasion, so let me add a few points to what I said about the work in an earlier issue of *NHQ*.

The first thing to be mentioned, after an encounter with the piece in sound rather than on the page, is the colossal stature of the performance by Adrienne Csengery and András Keller. Csengery's resilience and daring on every front—technical, expressive, musical, intellectual, moral—was evident in her work with and for Kurtág from before this piece was written; indeed, without that shared experience, Kurtág might well have lacked the creative confidence to push the project through. He could do so because he knew he had the ideal performer, and this recording, quite apart from its value in disseminating the work, will be inestimably useful to future singers who will want and need to know the voice for which the *Kafka-Fragments* were composed, and on which they were honed in performance. It's a voice that goes unafraid of the technical difficulties: often the singer has to emulate the violinist's easy stalking through wide intervals, and Csengery is always sure in placement and attack, without the roughness that other singers disguise as expressive force (in her performance everything is commandingly accomplished; she blocks for herself the easy, lazy routes). She also has the range for the piece—not only the pitch range, but the range from fierce declamation to things passed or rushed in a whisper. She can be magnificently authoritative; she can also be vulnerable and alone (the authority and the vulnerability are both enhanced by the church acoustic of the recording).

However, the work is decidedly not a solo showpiece, and the triumph of this recording belongs also to Keller, whose spirit and virtuosity are unstinting. It would be easy to be overshadowed by Csengery; he isn't (the skill is partly the composer's in creating two parts of separate, interlocked prominence, but it needed a formidable player to take on the role). And so one comes to understand how the work's double focus, on soprano and violin, is essential to its character. This isn't a set of songs with accompaniment: the violin part is often pitched at the level of a cadenza rather than a support, and often the musical imagery derives from the two lines together, as most obviously in the opening fragment, where "the good march in step" in the violin part while "the others dance around them the dances of time" in how the singer behaves. The singer isn't privileged by the music: she's not the expressive source, not the stand-in for Kafka. The music breathes through two musicians at once and equally.

Further experience, which this recording will make possible, may enable us to understand the details more clearly, to see beyond the fearlessness and the wit of Kurtág's identification with Kafka, and

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the remarkable inventiveness which enables him to create a new relationship between soprano and violin, in terms both of musical texture and textual connotation, in every piece. For instance, it wouldn't be uncharacteristic of Kurtág if there were to be a great richness of cross-references among the forty numbers. To give one example, the long "hommage-message á Pierre-Boulez"—which concludes the first half, just as the second is concluded by the next longest piece, in which the image of a pair of snakes, crawling together through the inhospitable world, suggests the soprano and the violin of this performance as much as the man and the woman of Kafka's letters and diaries—this Boulez message has the violin making slow attempts at scales against his own drone and quarter-tone inflections. As a sound event, this low-register double-stopping looks forward a few pieces to the fragment in which similar music—though lower still, on a second violin with scordatura—seems to stand in for the song of hell's duplicitous angels, while its presentation of something simple (a scale) being done with great difficulty has wider resonances, notably in the fragment dedicated to Pilinszky's memory: "I can't ... actually tell a story, in fact I am almost unable even to speak."

Alongside this extraordinary work and this extraordinary performance, not much else matches up. For instance, "D'Adam á Abraham" (Quintana QUI 903032), will be valued as a memento of Kurtág the performer, playing the organ in little interludes to separate lessons and plainsongs taking us through the book of Genesis, but the sequence doesn't work as an aesthetic whole. The matins responsories are sung by the Schola Hungarica, a clear-toned mixed choir; Kurtág's interludes have some striking moments—like the astonishing low notes of "Organum et campanae" or the dissolving melody of "De diluvio"—but the combination of plainsong, modern harmony and picture-making often suggests Messiaen. A more consecutive sacred narrative is offered by Pál Németh and his Capella Savaria, with the Cantamus chamber choir of Halle and soloists, in Carl Heinrich Graun's Passion cantata *Der Tod Jesu* (1754-5). Extraordinary to learn that this work survived in performance in Berlin for more than a century, against the competition of Bach's Passions: the sentimentality, perhaps, was the appeal. This recording is as persuasive as possible; it's also given character and distinction by Mária Zádori and Klaus Mertens among the soloists.

But the only other release to come near the Kurtág *Kafka-Fragments* in intensity and interest is a recording by Zoltán Kocsis and Adrienne Hauser of the fourhand versions of Bartók's *Miraculous Mandarin* and Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony, op.9, each of these arrangements being the composer's own (Quintana, QUI 903021). I'd expected the Bartók, like the four-hand reduction of *The Rite of Spring,* to be a tonic alternative, the Schoenberg to become an impenetrable scramble. But that wasn't the way of it at all. Bartók's richest orchestral score turned out to need its colour: the arrangement, even when played with such alacrity and finesse, sounded cheap and slightly ludicrous. The Schoenberg piece, by contrast, comes up brilliantly fresh and alive in this recording, partly because the counterpoint is so much more precisely managed by twenty fingers than it can be by fifteen musicians, with all the attendant difficulties of ensemble and of the different speed and volume with which instruments speak. Speeds which would be hazardous for a chamber orchestra are safely thrilling for Kocsis and Hauser, and one doesn't miss the wind-heavy textures of the original. With four versions now on record (the 1906 score, Schoenberg's later full-scale orchestration and Webern's quintet cramming are the others), the chamber symphony must be counted the most satisfactorily mutable piece of music since Bach.

Tamás Koltai

Misguiding Ideals

István Eörsi: *Az áldozat (*The Victim); Molière: *Tartuffe*; Friedrich Dürrenmatt: *Romulus the Great*; Milan Uhde: *Glad Tidings*

Theatres now are trying to be both artistically meaningful and commercially successful. They see themselves as both having to provide answers to the questions of the day and trying to cling to their audiences. They should reflect reality, but also make you forget it. For the most part it seems to be musicals that are best suited for this paradoxical purpose. The Vígszinház chose *West Side Story*. This evergreen is always assured of success. The conflict between immigrants, aliens and ethnic minorities is now as timely in Hungary as it was in the America of the 'fifties; refugees are flooding into the country, racist slogans and skinhead violence have forced themselves upon the public, and social problems are becoming more and more evident.

There is also a Hungarian "West Side Story", which the Budapest Repertory Theatre has somewhat reworked from a musical that was first performed ten years ago. Like Bernstein's, it is set among bleak tenements; in "the rough part of the city," to quote a famous Hungarian poet. *Cigánykerék* (Catherine Wheel) is about the clash between Hungarians and Gypsies, unfolding in the inner courtyard of a house with a circular open gallery, a smoke-filled café, and a tattered cinema. The love between a gifted, self-taught Gypsy painter and a "white" school-mistress is embedded in stormy romanticism and acute social drama. The last moment of the play freezes on a giant photograph of a skinhead, glaring threateningly at the Gypsies. This is a direct reference to the manifestations of xenophobia and racial hatred in Hungary today.

To commemorate the "discovery" of America, the Budapest Operetta Theatre premiered a rock opera, *Kolumbusz, az őrült spanyol hányattatásai szárazon és vizen* / The Vicissitudes of Columbus, the Mad Spaniard on Land and Sea/. At the same time as paying tribute to the fantastic undertaking, the play also contains two minor scenes showing that Spain in 1492 also saw the conquest over the Moors and the expulsion of the Jews. The second part of the play concerns the subjugation of the Amerindians, though, it has to be said, not overly critically lest the festive mood of celebration of the enterprise be spoilt. (The subtitle, "The Odyssey of an Undertaking" is a reference both to Columbus and to the calvary involved in acquiring backing for the production.)

One issue which is preoccupying the thinking public is the process that led from various utopian ideas and messianic faiths to a total awakening.

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István Eörsi, playwright, poet, publicist, a pupil of György Lukács, and above all a nonconformist, has reached back for an answer to Christ's day in *Az áldozat* (The Victim), which was staged by Péter Valló in the Arizona Small Theatre. The conflict interwoven in the basic fabric of the play is between Mark and Judas. The dramatic conceit is that Judas has been chosen by Christ himself as a tool, through whose "treachery" He could die, resurrect, and become the Redeemer. Forty years after the crucifixion Judas, the murderous assailant, still persecutes Mark. He is impatiently waiting for a delayed redemption, while Mark is about to turn the idea of redemption into a world-wide movement. Mark speaks about mankind; according to Judas, Christ had never so much as uttered the word. Mark performs the sacrifice of the scribes in the shade of the destruction of Jerusalem and of Roman hegemony; he adjusts the text of his gospel to the times. Judas ends his life on the cross, unredeemed, a victim of his fidelity to Christ, to the hero of the struggle for freedom of a small subjugated people. So that we can be told something about the nature of the empire which is massacring the "Christian Jews", Domitius, an agnostic sceptical Roman patrician, also has to perish if he is not willing to serve Rome. And one more important episode: just as the Evangelist did with the history of Christ, the story of the empire will be written on the basis of its utility—"to suit the times", as described by a certain Tacitus, who, just out of his teens, is watching events on Eörsi's stage.

The Victim is concerned with sacrifice, devotion and betrayal in a multiple way, dialectically, to use an outmoded word. The play immortalizes the fictive moment of the birth of Christianity as a world religion, in which one must take leave of "narrow-minded loyalities", of the original idea of the liberation of a people (a modicum of which at most can be later smuggled into the final ideology). To save it, it must be turned into an "imperial faith" (even if at the time the empire is still persecuting it). In the private sphere of the action, the presence of two women (a noble Roman lady and an illiterate Jewish teenager) further modulates the concepts of loyalty and treason. In this play, written in the mid-1970s, Eörsi expresses with rare intensity ideas which are now more valid than ever.

Abuse of the Christian faith and love (the history of which started with the death of Christ) has been a frequent dramatic subject, *Tartuffe* being perhaps the best known. The hypocrite, who worms himself into the confidence of his benefactor only to denounce and betray him, is portrayed as a modern sycophant in the Budapest Repertory Theatre production. The director, Dezső Kapás, has boldly transferred the plot into the recent past, turning it into a Hungarian play. The setting is Budapest and the date May 29 1938. That fateful day saw two notable events: the procession on the last day of the Eucharistic Congress, the great international Roman Catholic event held that year in Budapest, and the day when Act 15, the first anti-Jewish law, setting a *numerus clausus* for Jews in the press, in offices, in the medical, legal, and acting professions, came into force in Hungary. In Orgon's comfortable middle-class flat, the radio reports on both events. The situation is fairly delicate. Tartuffe, in the mask of a devoted, self-effacing Christian, has wriggled himself into the favour of a pious Catholic family (who in the final act are just returning home from the Congress's closing procession). Orgon himself has Jewish blood. Up to this moment all this seemed of no significance, but now, listening to the news, Dorine, the maid promoted to housekeeper, thinks it better to conceal the menorah she happened to observe while packing. Who knows what lies in store? The audience knows the answer, but the characters are

still unaware of it. Tartuffe carries out his petty tricks in the name of the religion of love, but on being thrown out by Orgon, he starts howling and gesticulating like a mini Hitler. On the day of "the worldwide feast of love" (as the radio announcer puts it) the exclusion of certain citizens also begins. Orgon cannot yet know where all this is to lead, but it is not impossible that he is instinctively seeking the favour of the man who may offer him protection. His devotion to Tartuffe might imply some unconscious striving for security. It may be becaue of this that he wants his daughter to marry Tartuffe. Historical experience combines with historical blindness. "Many things could happen earlier, but times have changed." How often in the past have people, their very existence threatened, reassured themselves with this self-deceptive hope? And how often have they fallen victim to hypocritical lies and their own good faith? The production tells us that in the name of sacred faiths something which citizens ought to fear is being elevated to the rank of *raison d'état*. Before asking whether it is permissible to up-date Molière, it should also be asked whether this is not precisely the subject of *Tartuffe,* and whether it is not superfluous today to reiterate this idea.

A certain 20th century trend, profoundly discredited over the past seventy years, has tried to promote the religion of love to an ideology. One noted examplar of this trend is Bertolt Brecht, whose importance as a playwright has not been diminished by the failure of that ideology, nor by those who are trying to extend the bankruptcy proceedings to some of the best intellects and artists of our century. In *The Caucasian Chalk Circle,* Brecht examines the possibilities of affection under given social conditions. "It is dreadful to be tempted by Goodness," the Singer comments on the meditation of the servant maid, Grusha Vashnadze, over the fate of an abandoned infant of a prince. In the Csiky Gergely Theatre of Kaposvár's production, the director, László Babarczy, makes it clear that although Grusha's heart tells her to adopt the foundling, the decision she makes is irrational, against her own interests, one which will bring her trouble. Brecht's favourite idea (expanded in *The Good Woman of Setzuan*) is that under adverse conditions, it is hazardous to be good. In the "ancient China" of the Chalk Circle parable, conditions are bad because they are confused. The old regime has been overthrown and the new one is still trying its muscles. It is not yet strong enough to deal out the blows it would like to, it is forced to give way here and there and to set store by appearances; accordingly, amid the overall uncertainty of morality and law, justice might accidentally prevail. In Grusha's trial, arbitrary justice is manifest in the person of Azdak, an impostor sitting on the judge's bench. Azdak is outside the law, a typical product of conditions of *anomie*. He is a reversed Tartuffe in that he shows himself worse than he really is. He is foul-mouthed, a drunkard who expects to be corrupted. He has no desire to ingratiate himself with anybody, in fact he enjoys the pose of being as repugnant as possible. Yet he manages, somehow or other, to see that the honest, the poor and the good come out victorious. Zoltán Bezerédi's performance makes the character even more lovable than usual. This may be because in times when there is full awareness that some people, posing as heroes, are impostors, we accept that real impostors can easily turn into heroes. Impudent confidence-tricksters, holding out their hands, but surreptitiously dispensing justice, are appreciated in contrast to pretentious believers in utopias, who only fear for their power. Azdak reminds one of the simple truth that at a time when ideas and faith are devalued, one should trust "unprincipled" acts rather than passionate harangues and professions of loyalty.

Friedrich Dürrenmatt followed in the wake of Brecht when he took the judge, who twists the law out of moral considerations, as the model for his emperor who parodies power out of similar motives. *Romulus the Great* portrays the disillusionment of the moral philosopher. Romulus, the last Western Emperor, thinks that if the empire is collapsing anyway, burying morals, learning and the arts under it, one should precipitate rather than block the process, and save one's subjects from one's own degraded power. Since Dürrenmatt is a follower of not only Brecht but G.B. Shaw as well, he treats dogmatism with the chatty irony typical of sceptics. A strange paradox of this absolutely non-historical play is that history confirmed the playwright after his death, even if not in the way originally envisaged. The Great Powers of the 1950s, which Dürrenmatt imagined in the place of the Roman Empire and the Germans, are no longer what they were at the time; indeed, the one which has ceased to exist is not the one whose decline his play diagnoses. In the successor states to the former communist superpower, it is impossible to read Dürrenmatt's play in any other way than as a pamphlet on the final dissolution of the system based on the "scientific ideology". Romulus the Great reminds one of the Great System-Disintegrator, who hastened the process, to the amazement of the stupefied world—though perhaps not with the same deliberation as his predecessor in the play had done.

Géza Tordy's staging in the Pesti Szinház, emphasizes scenes other than those highlighted in the revival a year and a half ago at Kaposvár. There is nothing unusual now in the exchequer being empty and in the burning of documents that would compromise the system. Today the sober, disillusioned voice—that of Romulus—"Do learn to live without fear"—sounds the stronger. The stress is now shifted from the "saviours of the country", who urge Romulus to take a patriotic stance, to Romulus' everyday morals. The poultry-breeding emperor, renouncing both empire and power, is morally superior to the speechifiers responsible for the debacle. The question is only what will happen after the downfall. Odoacer, the enemy thought to be a murderous barbarian, turns out to be a stoical sage, similar to Romulus, who for the time being still keeps the real barbarians well in hand, though they stand threateningly behind him. The change of regime can take place peacefully, the closing scene suggests. But what happens if barbarism breaks loose? The production offers no answer to this.

Way back in 1986, Milan Uhde, currently the President of the Czech Republic, but then an opposition writer, wrote a play on Marx and Engels, the pair who share responsibility for the 20th century ideology of "welfare for the people." That strange couple feature incognito in the comedy, with distorted Christian names. The play expands Shaw's malice towards the grotesque. In the intention of the playwright, *Glad Tidings* is not a political treatise: "It is about a whooping lie, a father who has proved a failure, a husband who has proved a failure, a lover who has proved a failure. I would like it to be viewed like this instead of seeking all kinds of complicated symbols and allegories in it... If I had wanted to argue with the philosophy of Marx, I would have written an essay, not a play."

The plot concerns a comedy of adultery, in the course of which both the loving wife and the maid serving as the mistress die, and then rise as ghosts to render unnecessary the dispensing of justice, which, after the utopian victory of the revolution, is nationalized anyway. All this, of course, would be of little interest if one were not to know who the characters were. Nevertheless, they are not given an over cruel

treatment by the playwright or by János Dömölky, the director. Rather they laugh at them, as at the characters in a Feydeau farce who fail to find their own identity. The stage of the Chamber (the studio of the noted Katona József Theatre) is visited by ghosts—both living and dead—levitating in the same white wrappers or suits, a couple of centimetres above ground. Four days before the first Hungarian performance of the play, the statues of Marx and Engels were removed from in front of the former Communist Party headquarters and carried to a sculpture park established for the statuary of the old regime. That is one way of dealing with the ghosts of the ideology. Theatre has to do it, and has done so, in a different way.

Gergely Bikácsy

Video Eye and Video Weapon

Róbert Pajer: *Devil Take It*; Árpád Sopsits: *Video Blues*; Ferenc Grunwalsky: *Goldberg Variations*

The Hungarian cinema is on the threshold of a new era. This is now more than a conclusion drawn from economic and political developments; the proof is in the new films and the young debutant directors and is borne out by the Budapest Film Festival of this spring. All the same, apart from Ildikó Enyedi's charming *My 20th Century*, which attracted wide attention three years ago, first or second films still excel only in their intentions.

Although the big achievements are still to come, these hesitant but gifted works do mark the change that has taken place, with certain paths now permanently abandoned and new paths being opened up. This is borne out by Zoltán Kamondi's *Paths of Death and Angels*, which had a favourable response despite all its faults and mannerisms, and Tibor Klöpfler's *The Man Without Abode*, an interesting piece that examines the film form and is obviously meant for a minority audience. What is common in these films is an admixture (sometimes in an uncertain and hesitant way) of "photographic reality" and the play of fancy, one that pushes off from reality. The two are not incompatible: new Hungarian films inspired by the post-modern, combine a strong desire to create reality with the fancy of taking off from it.

A ticket to Róbert Pajer's first film, *Devil Take It*, involves the cinema goer in an entertaining nonsense. The zany film is now generally accepted. In the best of them, a realistic opening leads into a topsy-turvy, surrealistic world, all logic left behind, in which anything can happen, and the apparent (or real) jumble of somersaulting nightmares is held together by the quality of the comedy. It must be said that *Devil Take It* is somewhat uneven in its humour.

We need not bother to waste time with the story-line, nor did its makers do so. Here, as opposed to the usual zany films, it is the starting point itself that is fantastic: the Devil arrives in Budapest in the shape of a hyper-rich elderly lady. Her driver is her no less diabolic familiar. Their intention is to steal the elixir of life, which does away with death, and to kill its inventor. For reasons beyond my ken this involves a great deal of trouble. First the Devil pitifully bargains with the inventor, who simply sends her packing. Later they entrust a slow-witted, though not feeble-minded, plumber with the job. He plays hard to get right up to the very end of the film. He has two completely insane criminal friends, who after many a comic turn, finally succeed. But since they are working on their own account, the Devil comes to grief—by the end of the film she is waiting for better days in a dog-pound, in the shape of a cat.

The arrival of the Devil into our dull life is an ancient device, used alike in master-pieces and broadsheets sold at the

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fair. With an acceptable enough intention, Pajer appears to be trying to conjure up the atmosphere of broadsheets. He does so ironically, cocking a snook in many directions, sometimes even portraying our real daily life as a contrast between our lives, whether crime-free or replete with petty crime, and the supreme Evil. He, just like any well-read member of his audience, must have had Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* in mind. Whether or not this was intentional, I felt that this parallel continued in my mind. This film, with its generally witty, though carelessly patched up buffooneries, illuminates fairly ingeniously the great nothingness of our life. The real, the eternal arch Fiend (Bulgakov's for instance) would arrive here, in the Budapest of 1992, all in vain. Satan needs an adversary, he desires a successful struggle, people worthy of being vanquished, he desires a world which may have already been abandoned by, but still remembers, God. He would be utterly bored in nothingness; a worthless, drained environment is more wretched than mediocrity. He would leave in a hurry for places languishing under dreadful dictatorships, to conquer the great talents suffering under the yoke, to wrestle with souls ravaged by tremendous passions.

That is what the real devil would do, but the devil in this film is so clumsy, so uncertain, so flighty, that she is probably only a sub-devil, a junior member, a sub-imp. Accordingly the region of nothingness suits her, the uncertain drabness of Hungary today. She is a worthy companion for the two clumsy burglars, the police officer, even more imbecilic than the burglars but more high-handed, and the mock hero, the half petty bourgeois, half criminal, dominated by his commonplace wife. In order to make the reluctant plumber get down to work, the visitor from Hell occasionally tempts him in the form of a beautiful young woman. It seems only natural that even this should prove a failure: the man does not dare to whip the she-beast who yearns for this. The stasis of the static everyday in Hungary is stronger than Satan.

If the makers of the film will once overcome their inferiority complex, which they still conceal behind a powerful self-confidence ("where are we still from Satan!"), and will believe that with more demanding humour, a stronger story-line and more daring fancy, Lucifer and Beelzebub can in fact be conjured up, then they, these monsters with their horrible humour, will surface on the Hungarian screen, ennobling our drab workaday world.

Two years ago, Árpád Sopsits came up with a real maiden film, traditional in the usual sense of the term; based on the documentative view of the 1960s and '70s, it blended crude reality with gentle lyricism, the interest of news items with an exquisite depiction of the environment. *Shooting Gallery* was a film by a young man; it treated the form cautiously, almost traditionally, without too much experiment. It was a realistic film and steeped in the exacting traditions of minor realism, with amateur actors and authentic background, a story scarcely deviating from a daily news item and a lyrical tension.

Although Sopsits scored considerable success with his first film at various international festivals, he later said that he did not intend to continue with "image preservation", but intended iconoclastically to break the image and discard the schemata of traditional feature films.

His second film is indeed a surprise, all the more to be appreciated for his courage to change styles, even though the outcome is only partially successful. The storyline of *Video Blues* could be called post-modern, and not just because the script is by László Garaczi, an interesting figure in post-modern Hungarian writing. The story is both pretentiously trashy (a story of murderous jealousy and revenge

involving two brothers) and the chronicle of Nothingness—an anti-story, the tragedy of unimportant people, suggesting a parody—all in one.

Two brothers are in love with the same girl. One marries her and the other, disappointed, escapes to Paris. The brother vegetating in Paris is filled with a thirst for revenge. This he wreaks in a contrived, tortuous manner by provoking his brother to commit murder by luring him to Paris and having himself be murdered by him. This bizarre story—despite all its post-modern features and its refusal to draw on the narrative conventions of the cinema—still has the effect of traditional kitsch: it is strident and mediocre all at once, no more than trash dressed up in modernism.

More important, and also more valuable, is the formal idiom of the film. Sopsits has not added novelty to the narration of the story through the unfolding of the plot. Despite self-ironical turns, he could not, or did not want to, boldly shoulder the bloody frivolity and trashiness of the story. Rather than rely on the written script, he entrusts the formal idiom with all the burdens. However astounding the story, the value of *Video Blues* lies solely in its cinematographic solutions.

Virtually from its first to last shots, the film is the recollection of a correspondence that has taken place via video tapes. Sopsits uses the novelistic, sometimes outright sensational story simply as a pretext for experimenting with image. (But meanwhile, let me repeat, he tries—erroneously—to keep the story as something that should be taken seriously.) His film suggests, with a far from negligible inventiveness and pictorial power, that reality, truth and the past cannot be reconstructed, not even by the seeming objectivity of video recordings. The brother in Paris doctors old recordings, cutting and changing them, in order to prove that his brother's wife, who considers her marriage a happy one, has always loved him and indeed, has even deceived her husband with him. The brother in Hungary tries to deny the images of his brother with images. It is a duel between motion pictures in the jungle of video tapes (a post-modern metaphor in itself). The pliant past, false or falsified, and restored to life, becomes more and more uncertain and confused: the duelists are swallowed up by a past turned into imagery.

The film culminates in a final grand scene, which is the climax both to the stridently melodramatic revenge story and to the experiments carried out with the video tape as a formal idiom. The brother in Paris dies; even after his death he has the last word, and the last picture as well. He delivers an epilogue to the video duel beside his bullet-pierced corpse. He has become immortal.

I have discussed the high standard of the formal idiom, but it is also the question of something more, as it becomes clear from the last sequence of the film. Before the strange "self-reckoning", the brother from Hungary goes to buy a weapon—a fine one. He keeps on making his choice for a long time in the Paris gunsmiths, even though he has no chance whatever confronting an adversary armed with a video camera.

I do not know how well Sopsits is acquainted with Paul Virilio's *War and the Cinema,* or his theories on the image. "The origin of cinematography is the rifle, and that of the film the repeating rifle... In the war of the images all kinds of perception are more important than any kind of ammunition. If I see what the enemy is about and he does not know that I can see him, I am the stronger. So images turn into a weapon", the French theoretician of image and light writes. He would certainly welcome Sopsits's film, whose consistency of formal idiom proves his theory right. The last sequences are particularly striking.

It is therefore the camera that is victorious: the video eye, seeing everything

and transforming even the past, is mightier than a firearm. A pity, then, that the brazen yet slight story, with its platitudes taken seriously, does not prove a worthy combatant.

Goldberg Variations is the title of the sixth feature film by Ferenc Grunwalsky. It refers to the music by Bach which accompanies a film of gloomy mood and tragic tension.

Goldberg Variations appears to be the closing piece of a trilogy. The director's two previous films (*A Full Day* and *Little But Very Tough*) received critics' prizes in Hungary, and despite controversy, were generally *succès d'estime*. They are little known abroad, and their true significance even seems to have escaped full recognition in Hungary as well. Grunwalsky is both held in high regard, and forgotten by his peers, understanding audiences and critics alike.

All three films end with one or more murders. In none of them is it the crime itself which is important; it is, rather, the person forced to commit it or trying to make his escape through it. The director's experiments with film idiom would deserve a separate discussion. (Incidentally, Grunwalsky shot his recent films himself, something that now rarely occurs anywhere.)

The first shots of *Goldberg Variations*, before the main title appears, show a huge eye that begins to fill the screen. His two earlier films opened with similar shots. The eye opening on the viewer in an embarrassing close-up becomes the principal motif in films that are based on close-ups. (Or one should rather say "super close-ups", to be precise.)

In all three films the eyes begin to live a life of their own, appearing as singular living creatures. Long silences, great stillnesses, and faces, which can perhaps be seen in such close-ups only in nightmares all hallmark Grunwalsky's three films.

All three films end with a murder. The young taxi driver protagonist of *A Full Day* owes a fairly large sum to a colleague who is engaged in dubious financial affairs. Since he is unable to pay by the given deadline, the creditor, as an underworld warning, "borrows" and "uses" the wife of the protagonist. The driver kills his wife in jealousy. *Little but Very Tough* is the story of a man turning from a thief into a brutal, wanton murderer; at the end of the film, after evening the score with his accomplices, he falls into a river while escaping. His death resembles suicide.

Grunwalsky's new film, *Goldberg Variations*, is obviously the inner portrayal of a kind of penance. The principal characters are an average married couple, whose teenage son unaccountably commits suicide. The film tells the story of a single day after the funeral. At its end, the man asks his wife to kill him. It is certainly not the horror of this conclusion that gives the film its value; rather it is the minute portrayal of the parents' helpless contortion and agony. Some of the critics rightly recalled the atmosphere and style of Bresson's "atonement films".

Grunwalsky, who is sometimes criticized for his extreme, bizarre solutions, is a maniac if not of crime, then of socio-authenticity, with a devotion to reality. All three of these films start out with real events and offer extremely precise descriptions of their settings. They offer sociology, and also something more: a blend of psychiatric interview in depth and socio-photography. The director has long been inspired by both of these. He leaves descriptive and documentary film sociology far behind, and at the same time feeds on it.

Grunwalsky shot the first film of his trilogy in video, and the other two in 16 mm; they were copied and blown up later. His reasons were only partly financial and economic; he also wanted to work faster, with a low budget and a small crew. Grunwalsky deliberately uses video

for his experiments with formal idiom, and 16 mm film is also more easy to handle. Once he used the metaphor of "advanced light-guard" at the opening of an exhibition of his colleague, the photographer Lenke Szilágyi. He, too, delves to the centre of light with the desperate and sacrilegious audacity of a "light guard", or rather a light scout, as nuclear scientists delve again and again into the latest smallest particle of the atom.

Some of the critics have spoken of the mannerisms of this director-cum-cameraman. Certain formal solutions, employed perhaps much too often and dangerously close to being obtrusive, are disturbing in these films. Not only the play with light and illumination—but it is also disturbing that he sometimes uses a needlessly slanted angle. Yet these real or supposed mannerisms do not decrease the value of these films. To my interpretation, Grunwalsky's wrestling with form is a sign of the battle faught by every real creator: he wants to discover film anew. His point of departure once the camera rolls must be that no film has existed before him, that every device is being used for the first time.

As mentioned, the films of the trilogy are dominated by human faces in close-up. Sometimes, and often unexpectedly, the protagonists, and with them the camera, look, in jolting rhythm, into the infinite. The protagonist in *Goldberg Variations*, about to bury his son, gazes at the passing clouds through a rain-swept windscreen for some time. The sun cuts in from behind the sharp edge of the clouds. No words, no human speech is needed: we are given everything by the silence and the music. In Grunwalsky, only the sky, the trees and the clouds can cope with the force of the human face in close-up. As in Bresson, one feels the ultimate absence of god in Grunwalsky too. It envelops one mutely under the overcast sky.

At the end of *Goldberg Variations*, after the cremation, the father goes back into the crematorium. Fires glow in the incinerators. "Are you strong enough to watch?" he is asked. He wipes away his tears and sweat. He stands with strangely sloping shoulders, turning his back on the glowing incinerator. "Feed-in", goes the ugly jargon of the trade. A sort of dreadful humour is here, too. The situation is anomalous and awkward: the father asks whether it is possible to place by mistake someone still alive in the incinerator. Then there comes a point when even the blackest humour must subside into silence: the father turns to the incinerator and watches the "feed-in". This is one of the purest moments in this and in all Grunwalsky's films.

His formal idiom and his whole outlook make Grunwalsky appear to be a director who would have been in his true element at the time of the classic silent film, between 1915 and 1925. He is thus a latecomer. Or, he might be before his time, making his greatest films in some 30 years time, sometime around 2025, in the age of new and still unsuspected techniques and possibilities of seizing light.

This of course is only a suggestion. Grunwalsky lives in the naively perfect and irretrievable past and the still unseeable future of the film; so, he can certainly not forget about the present, with its muddy, mediocre reality. "There is no such thing as an unobserved camera," he sums up in an aphorism which would not be unworthy of Godard. Godard's name and example cannot be omitted when speaking of Grunwalsky. In the course of his career he has slowly started to deny the primacy of the sociological approach, without becoming unfaithful to the almost naturalistic depiction of reality (which, however, he now only uses as a background).

This suggests a link to Bunuel. While respecting it, Bunuel rejected Italian neorealism. He felt the manner of portrayal offered by this school to be insufficient.

Naturalistic reality must be presented as a determining background, but he held that the duty of the cinema is to penetrate behind the surface, to reveal human interior.

"Let us live in our own Time" is the title of a book by Lajos Kassák (1887-1967), the noteworthy Hungarian avant-garde poet, writer and painter. Kassák, who in the first half of the century exercised an extraordinary influence on Hungarian literature was, paradoxically, the most realistic of artists, yet at the same time the most single-minded form-breaking of artists. Without wanting to compare their weight and significance (nor was this my intention when mentioning Bunuel and Godard either), the same can be said of Grunwalsky too. "Let us live in our own time": Few directors in today's Hungarian cinema proclaim this so consistently, and few of them place an extraordinary technical and formal attainment in the service of this imperative.

MAGYAR SZEMLE

*"Mi, a **MAGYAR SZEMLE** szerkesztőbizottsága és szerkesztői, a teljes magyar szellemi életet hívjuk meg a folyóirat lapjaira. Szeretnénk, ha találkozna nálunk mindenki, aki értéket őriz és alkot, éljen itthon, vagy határainkon túl, légyen volt ismert, vagy ismeretlen az elmúlt évtizedekben. Követelményünk csak ennyi: a jövő felől szólni, a teljes élet és a teljes szellem felől pillantani jelenbe, múltba."*
(Kodolányi Gyula: AZ ÚJ MAGYAR SZEMLE)

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The Swiss Army knife is not a set of tools but an object for meditation, testifying that one must be ever-prepared, for this unravelling, un-predictable and absurd world may collapse on his head at any moment. For the time being I still have a job and a roof over my head, there is peace and I am suffering nothing, not even a toothache, but one tiny jolt and the whole thing will collapse: my place of work could go bust, a missile fired from who knows where could wipe my house away, leaving me under the open sky, and it may be that I myself will extract my upper left third incisor with the pliers in the Swiss Army knife, and put its chisel to use if I need to whittle myself a hut somewhere, since you have to go on living—I can't just fall on my sword because I don't have a sword, just a Swiss Army knife, which is a little too short for the job.

From: *The Swiss Army Knife*, by István Váncsa, p. 128