

Revised, Nov. 1959

Revised, May 1961

THE HUNGARIAN POPULISTS

An Introduction

The making of this selection was inspired by the groundswell in Hungarian literature before 1956, and, needless to say, by the October Revolution of that year.

~~The Hungarian Revolution is still too recent, its main outlines out-of-focus. Volcanic, unique, abruptly closing - we see it as through a glass darkly.~~ But movements that do not achieve their immediate objective may yet leave an imprint as lasting as if they had won the day. In essence, the Hungarian Revolution was seeking a union of freedom and socialism: that was the secret of its power and its passion. ~~Its thinkers injected the idea of freedom into the structure of the new society, which they would not abandon~~ - incomplete, guilty and stricken though it was - for the sake of ^{the} ~~a false~~ ideology of abstract freedom. ~~But they did not evade that dilemma of the age.~~ Their answer was to stake their lives on their ^{own} integrity, as ~~writers and poets, and out of this newly-won allegiance to truth, to stand for the freedom that is both necessary and possible in the building of a humane socialist society.~~ ^{to the dilemma of the age} ~~It is~~ ^{For} this act of maturity that ~~has~~ made the Hungarian Revolution an event of world significance.

The book bears the title The Plough and the Pen to mark the share of the Hungarian Populist ~~writers and poets~~ in the moral, cultural and literary renaissance of their country. It contains their masterpieces in prose and verse, spanning a generation, along with the poems of the Communist fighters for freedom.

It was in the 'Thirties that a new force coming from the rural intelli

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gentsia entered the scene of literature and history. Its representatives, mostly of peasant origin, were all conscious of the peasant foundations of their country. They echoed the cry of the landless poor. Its writers developed the new disciplines of rural sociology; its novelists delved into the history of forgotten regions and social strata; its poets set a rural world in modern tonality in the place of an urban tradition. This same devotion initiated reforms in agriculture, education and communal living that began to penetrate a desiccated society. These varied inspirations and activities came to be called the Populist movement.

By 1945, when the Russian-sponsored coalition government took over, the Populists had emerged as an ideological factor on the Left, but were soon to be eclipsed by the militant strength of the Communists. Yet, in October 1956, that same Communist Party, one million strong, dissolved overnight, leaving a complete void - except for those deep wells of national idealism and social values that had nourished the Populist movement years before. After almost a decade of hibernation this movement came to life in the resurgence of its ideas in the minds of the October youth. In its natural blending with the Communist party-reformers' insights lay the hope of Hungary's own way to socialism.

A burst of impassioned poetry lit up the scene. Zeik and other Communist poets spoke for the entire nation. Illyes' "Tyranny" pleaded for freedom of the written word as the prime need of the hour.

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Part One of the ^{book} Anthology consists of prose on three themes.

The first of these, Waste Land, contains writings of the inter-war years. With sombre passion the authors tell of a Hungary ruined and degraded by the corrupt system squandering the moral substance of the countryside.

To abolish the latifundia which sapped the people's strength was the pre-need behind the urge for social change in Hungary.

The next, Pinions of Poverty, contains prose written around and after 1945. It is full of hope - telling of the joy at the redistribution of land, the first steps - tentative but voluntary - in the setting up of a collective farm, and the salvaging of a human wreck in a factory.

The last, Pledge, is work written before and during 1956. The catastrophic sham of the Rajk trial in 1949, carried out on Soviet orders and on the model of the Moscow Trials, sapped the country's morale. Government turned into tyranny. Hundreds were imprisoned. But an integrity that transcended the tragic replied in the voices of Dery, the Communist and Némethy, the non-Communist, with a simple pledge to all that is indestructible in man - a pledge to personal relationships; and to truth, even though man in his fallen condition had already denied it.

Part Two of the volume is the poetry - a more immediate interpretation of the times. History moved fast in '56, and the poet moved in step with it. He alone had the gift to lay bare "the good, the vile, the saving act, the sin." For six decisive months, between Spring and Fall, he became the living conscience of his country. The revelations about Stalin had brought a terrible awakening. On a smaller scale, but no less gruesome and revolting, the crimes of Stalin had been duplicated in Hungary by Rakosi. Rajk was framed, tried, executed in 1949. Hundreds of Communists and Socialists had subsequently disappeared in the prisons, innocent - but dishonoured and forsaken by their closest friends, for the charges against them were generally believed. In the sudden flash of realization the Communist poets bore witness to their remorse. They rededicated themselves to truth, to the freedom of creative expression, to their disinherited nation.

The Antecedents

After the failure of the national rising of 1848, and the Compromise with victorious Austria twenty years later, Hungary found herself half-way towards becoming one of the modern nation-states of Europe. The rapidly forming middle class remained weak and alien. It was confined to Budapest and mainly consisted of industrious German artisans and the fast assimilating Jewish businessmen. The Magyar nobility refused to go into trade, and held a monopoly of army commissions and administrative posts in government and county. The aristocracy, mostly alien, attached to the foreign dynasty, and holding immense landed property, went into high finance. A carry-over from serfdom existed side by side with unbridled economic liberalism.

Around the turn of the century a grass-roots movement sprang up among the vast agricultural labour force of landless peasants, share-croppers, itinerant harvest gangs, and even among the paid-in-kind estate servants, the hacienda peons of Hungary. It was savagely repressed by force of arms. By that time labour unions on the German social democratic model were well established in the metropolis. From the outset the land question was alien to them and the disastrous cleavage between rural and urban labour was widening. The rural paupers still had no place in the nation. The growth of industry, a Western cultural orientation and a general modernizing trend brought no change in the rural Waste Land.

In the early years of the century progressive thought penetrated deeply into the rising middle class and its complement of impoverished nobility - in short, the intelligentsia. It made a powerful impact. In

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literature and in the social sciences new ways opened up in opposition to the forces of the past that still ruled over the country. In the newly founded literary periodical "Nyugat" (The West) a generation of writers found their home. Endre Ady's poetry brought a new era in letters, revolutionizing the language. The scholarly pursuits of the Sociological Society gave rise to men of Oscar Jászi's civic stature. He embodied a statesmanlike conception of democratic nationhood, with primacy of the peasant question and the rights of non-Magyar minorities. An earnest and idealistically minded student movement, the Galilei Circle, prepared the underprivileged young intelligentsia for future leadership. The socialist working class movement was gaining impetus.

But intellectual progressivism in the early 1900's, like the labour movement, resided in the capital city. Even home-town roots were severed. Sons of impoverished nobles from distant villages, sons of the small businessmen or professionals from rural towns found a longed-for refuge in the metropolitan wilderness and its world of littérateurs. And just as the literary revival of the "Nyugat" remained the intellectual climate of the educated only, progressive political thought, for all its awareness, failed to make the link with the social realities of a basically peasant country. This fateful weakness was the undoing of two revolutions: both the progressive middle class in 1918, and, after them, the revolutionary working class in 1919 were unable to win the support of the peasantry and bring them onto the historical stage. Yet nothing short of a human reconstruction could have created a democratic nation strong enough to stay the onslaught of the counterrevolution. The revolution of 1918 was merely the fruit of defeat and lacked a social program, despite the shining example of Count Michael Károlyi, who distributed his own lands among the landless. The Communists, in 1919, failed to distribute the big landed estates among the pauperized

peasantry. They ousted the big landowners and ran the estates as public property. After their fall and the return to power of the landlord class the counter-revolutionary régime of Admiral Horthy took cruel vengeance on the villagers and agricultural labourers who were said to have taken part in running the domains. Thus, on the one hand, the rural poor ^{had} did not receive^d the land, and on the other, they were victimized as though they had. More than ever before distrust and apathy gripped them.

The counter-revolution consolidated its hold. Disillusionment with liberalism and reform, with democracy and socialism was general after the abortive revolutions of 1918 and 1919. The country lay wide open to fascist indoctrination - which flourished in native variants as well as in the German version at a later date.

Organized labour received, under the administration of Count Bethlen, during the 'Twenties, a modicum of legal recognition, on condition that it renounce the right to organize rural labour. Under the impact of the world economic crisis at the beginning of the 'Thirties the pauperization of the countryside reached its peak. The landless peasantry and their families now numbered one in every three inhabitants of the small country. These were Hungary's "three million beggars."

Populist Origins

Against the background of gloom that hung over Hungary, a creative influence began to make itself felt towards the end of the 'Twenties, which within a short period was to broaden out into a veritable cultural revolution. From the outset it was more than a movement. Spurred by the unspeakable conditions among the agro-proletarian population, young writers, scholars,

students, answered the challenge, and began to investigate matters on their own account and to describe them. It was not an urge to "go among the people," "u narod," as the Russian intelligentsia felt it in the later nineteenth-century. The Hungarians, on the contrary, had come out of the people. They were an intelligentsia of peasant stock, who now turned homeward in anger for a thorough insight and a bitter summing up. The task was immense, and it so happened that it found the country's supreme talent at its service. Following in the footsteps of Bartók and Kodály and transplanting their revolutionary methods from music to the world of letters, they found in the untouched layers of the people's ways and language the art of modern expression, an art that abhorred the sentimental, the romantic, the "folksy". Their aims were high. The impact on the country was tremendous.

The Populist writers, as they later were called, differed much among themselves in thought, method, expression and temperament. There was no common doctrine. What they had in common was creative freedom and the angels' wrath. The Populist oeuvre consisted of some four or five dozen books - close-ups of peasant life, regional sociographies, novels, ethnographic studies, poems, statistics, diaries, family histories and minute descriptions of single villages. The poet Gyula Illyés, in 1933, called upon the youth "to explore the village." Earnest young scholars tramped along the dusty expanse of the Great Plain. Poets dedicated themselves to the humble, painstaking tasks of rural sociology.

In the mid 'Thirties Gyula Illyés wrote his largely autobiographical People of the Puszta, opening up a submerged world with the magic of his pen. Péter Veres, himself a landless peasant wrote his Village Chronicle; Imre Kovács his Dumb Revulsion, a factual record and flaming indictment; Ferenc Erdei, a peasant's son, his erudite regional studies; Aron Tamási produced his peasant myths and parables; László Németh, the novelist and

playwright, his multifarious ideas on communal rural existence.

All these were variations on a common theme. The Populist writers were searching for the mainsprings of peasant society. There, if anywhere, lay the potential nation in its vigour - elusive, recondite. The immediate purpose was undoubtedly to probe into the ills of the peasantry, to expose the corroding effects of their landless existence, and the deformation of life that is brought on by despair. But as the total work took shape, it brought more than that. It entailed a realization of the cultural manifold of the rural population, of the sharply delineated regions and the varied imprints left on them by history.

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Social doctrines and social myths were equally discounted, out of ~~a~~ ^{the} ~~deep~~ conviction that to record truly you must approach reality with a blank sheet. The spectrum of opinions ranged from class struggle to nativism in many hues. The equalitarian trend dominated and the peasant's claim to land was ^{the motive with} ~~a~~ prime demand ~~of~~ all the Populists. ~~Marxism~~ as such had remained outside the experience of their generation, [to the point of their being not even anti-Marxists]. Politically, the Populists brought back to life the rural radicalism of the turn of the century. In the course of their exploration ^{and discovery} [and discovery] a distinct policy emerged: ^{complete, partitionary} ~~out-and-out~~ redistribution of the big landed estates among the landless, ~~penance~~ to strip the squire of all inherited prestige; consolidation of holdings, to raise agricultural productivity; and a plan for re-settlement to overcome a ruthless and cruel practice of abortion ^{which prevented} to prevent ^{ing} the birth of more than one child in certain regions. ^{to a family}

The village-exploring movement brought new life to a despairing people. Within a span of three or four years the inert country was roused, many of the ruling class were conscience-stricken. The reports found their way back to the very nooks and crannies of villages, farmsteads and pustas,

whence they sprang. By the end of the 'Thirties the Populist writers had become the vehicle of the aspirations of landless peasants and agro-proletarians. They made themselves their political exponents: in 1937 the March Front was founded and, in a historic conference held upon a raft on the River Maros in 1939 its successor, the National Peasant Party. It faced up boldly to the persecutions of the Horthy regime and united the country's best writers with her poorest peasants. It was a prophetic combination.

An episode of that time, later to gain great significance, was the publication in 1938 of a book on Marxism and Populism under an assumed name. It was reprinted in 1946 over the signature of ^{its author} József Révai, a high ranking Marxist critic and brilliant pupil of Lukács. It tried to ^{reconcile} ~~establish co-existence~~ between the two leftist camps, and asserted that Populist sociology represented the most significant trend of thought the country had known in twenty years; Marxists had much to learn from it. Their own cut-and-dried concepts of poor peasant, middle peasant and rich peasant stood corrected by the complex realities unearthed by the village explorers.

Parcelization of the landed estates
Re-distribution of the Land

In the event, the Hungarian peasants did not get their land as the result of any great struggle, nor through any initiative of their own, but by the Red Army's victorious advance. In the fall of 1944 the Soviet armoured divisions, sweeping Hitler's armies before them, entered the Hungarian Plain from the south-east. The landed gentry and the rural middle classes were on the run, trekking behind the retreating German Army. An amorphous mass of peasants, industrial workers, artisans and shopkeepers stayed on. Local administration had dissolved.

In the wake of their progress the Soviet military authorities launched a ~~re~~-distribution of the great estates. They set up local claimants' committees. Nothing could have been more appropriate. Hungary in 1945 was a country in which those who had no land at all and were hired workers on the estates, or seasonal or casual labourers, along with the rural paupers who lived on starvation plots still formed one third of the country's entire population.

of partitioning

The peasants, however, were too ^{far gone} downtrodden to take matters into their own hands. At first it seemed that nothing would shake their lethargy, deepened by fear, suspense and by the heavy losses in Hitler's war. In vain did history offer them on a platter the land they had dreamt of. Its seizure, when it happened, had a taste of unreality. The fortunes of war, after all, might turn, and bloody vengeance fall upon them, as it had done ⁱⁿ 1919. Their hopes had been betrayed so often and so cynically, that the chance of a total break with the past ^{were} regarded with utter disbelief. And their outlook ^{did not change} remained essentially the same even when, in the spring of 1945, ^{the radical} land reform was ^{completed} carried into effect ^{under the government's hand} by the government across the whole country. The picture at first was still one of ^{The peasants like sleep-walkers} ~~stunned~~ ^{performing} ~~in the shock of~~ ~~awakening~~ ~~like sleep-walkers~~ ~~in the middle of performing~~ the ^{was} ~~historic~~ act, ~~they~~ discarded the millennial past at the rate of a century a day, over a period of roughly ten days - the length of time it took in most ^{parts villages} ~~countries~~ to carry out the reform.

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was felt in the way

The land reform sponsored by the Russians incorporated many ideas and suggestions of the Populist writers and rural sociologists. Indeed, their recommendations happened to be even more radical than the ones put forward by the Hungarian Communists. In later years, as converts to Communism, the Populists' intense loyalty rested on the fact that the

perennial longing of the poor peasant had been fulfilled by Soviet Communism. ~~They rightly saw in the land reform~~ ^{was} the great divide between the old Hungary and the new. None of the later developments was of the same order of magnitude. The years that brought iniquity and misgovernment, ~~forced collectivisation and wheat contributions to the government~~ ^{forced collectivisation and wheat contributions to the government} at nominal prices with ~~the attendant disastrous effects on agriculture,~~ were merely a blight on the land reform, not its undoing. The ~~redistrib-~~ ^{expropriation of the big landowners} ~~ution of the land~~ proved unshakeable and irreversible. There was no La Vendée in Hungary. The peasants, In 1956, ^{disappointed} ~~shattered~~ any hopes the ancien régime may have nursed of using the rising as a means of their ^{own} ~~return,~~ ^{own come-back.} The peasants turned down the former landlords: they carted free food to the striking factory workers, and held on to their land. ^{After 1956 extensive collectivisation created new and as yet unsolved problems.}

The new village: Populists and Communists

While the land reform itself was not the peasants' own achievement, the settlement of the new lands was. Animals and machinery were lacking. The new peasant farms were successfully established in the devastated country at the cost of a supreme effort and much personal sacrifice. The new holdings took root, and after a few harvests the fear of a return of the landlords faded.

In the villages at this time two parties existed as closely-knit organized bodies, the National Peasant Party of the Populists, and the Communist Party. Both represented the poor peasantry, the new holders of land. The powerful and numerous Smallholders' Party had a more ^{indefinite} identifiable character - it was a large body of voters, and represented the non-expropriated, better-off peasants. It was, at the same time,

Likely to attract the expropriated classes and their supporters: a counter-revolutionary party inside the ruling coalition.

In the eyes of the West the Populists' National Peasant Party appeared as the usual crypto-Communist grouping. ~~But~~ in fact the two parties were bitter rivals, contending for the new peasantry whom they both genuinely represented. There was a deep difference in temper, tradition and modes of action, a difference which later proved decisive. The Peasant Party acknowledged the "natural hierarchy" of the village, though they, too, drew the line at the wealthy peasant who was, of course, an employer of agricultural labour. The Communist Party, on the other hand, rode roughshod over the intricate social structure of the village. The communities in which they shared in the administration were unquiet and tense, as the half-Catholic, half-Calvinist towns and villages of the Great Plain had traditionally been. More often entire villages were either Communist run, or Peasant Party run. In regions where modern business methods had been developed on the former great estates, the Communists held sway; where life was moving in more traditional grooves, the Populists ruled. Even the type of village leaders were different - dynamic, burly personalities on the Communist side, against the contemplative Peasant Party men, either peasants or peasant-minded intellectuals, usually well acquainted with the eminently readable Populist literature.

The Cultural Scene

The differences in the two radical parties' climate of opinion, background and ethics showed very clearly in the youth of the grammar schools and universities. The students of the Gyórfy College, a group

of ethnographers and rural sociologists, had been heroes of the resistance against the Nazis. After 1945 they became the young people's idols, on which they tried to model themselves. The Populist writings, by this time classics, acted as a powerful leaven. Deeply influenced by this heritage, young people banded together to emulate the Györfy College, improvising a settlement, a "People's College" in some abandoned half-ruined house with just a few sacks of beans and flour, given in their support by Populist sympathizers. The country was still in ruins. People's Colleges were soon attached to almost every grammar school, technical school, art school, music school, and the various Departments of the Universities. They were a grass-roots movement, creating close communities of students, homes of discussion and free growth, of personal friendship and achievement. In brief, centers of future leadership. The movement spread as it had sprung up, not started by any single act, and controlled by none. The People's Colleges later formed a Federation, which became in the course of time a veritable battleground between the contending ideologies. The Populist inspired youth were seekers, with a deep-rooted conviction that answers should be found empirically and would work themselves out. The Communist complement among the student leaders were seminar-trained, knowing all the answers.

By 1948 the Populist youth began to accept Communist doctrine. Not, at that time, swayed by compulsion, but by what appeared as ^{the}inescapable ^{logic} historical logic. The recalcitrant remnant was soon washed away by administrative methods. The Colleges, taken over by the Communists, ^{soon} lost their character.

But it was the Populist converts to Communism who were to write an unexpected chapter in modern history. After an eclipse of less than ten years the original inspiration of their thought and method was to come

again
to the surface in 1956 from beneath a heavy overlay of Communist doctrine
In the year '56 converts were re-converted to their initial world of
thought, and ^{veteran} seasoned Communists joined hands with them. More important
still, those who had been the youthful inmates of the People's Colleges
in 1946 and '47 now, in their late twenties, provided the stratum of
leadership that found its voice in the Petöfi Circle.

Lukács and the literary debate

In 1945 the Populist writers, mostly in their forties, were at the
peak of their creative powers. Their writing had matured. Their thought
broadened and branched out into differing persuasions. How would Marxism
affect them? How would they affect Marxism? The question was crucial.

These were the candid years. The Left of every shade and opinion
moved in a climate of freedom it had never known. Formerly this had
been the sole privilege of the Right. If this privilege was now somewhat
curtailed, the Right was still able to make the most of it, by sheer
force of historical routine: revolutions in Hungary, in their experience,
were to be regarded as something transitory and doomed to fail. The
quarter century of ultra-nationalist, fullblooded fascist indoctrination
died hard, and provided a popular following for the "historical classes,"
dispossessed for the moment, but biding their time. The Left had many
shades, yet one common revolutionary purpose: to destroy the ancien
regime - that feudal past and its modern bastard out of laissez-faire
capitalism. In ^{doing so} ~~striving for this~~ the Left put on muscle and sinew.

The political tensions between Left and Right grew with every new
achievement in the country's reconstruction and social liberation. On
the Left, controversy about the role and future of democracy was vigorous.

Whether the democratic freedom of the first three years was foredoomed, is a moot point. It was real while it lasted. Indeed, the cleavage between the ultimate perspectives of the revolutionary parties themselves threatened to rend the revolution. ^{And} literature was fated to be the main battlefield.

György Lukács, the Marxist philosopher and leading critic in literature turned with genuine interest towards the Populist writers. He combined high-level Marxist thinking with a sincere endeavour to create a platform for a broad liberalism in matters of literature. This brand of Marxist liberalism was entirely unknown in the Communist world. Lukács supported it with an original view of the relations between literature and society, and between literature and history - a system of thought which was in the last resort based on the humanist component in Karl Marx' philosophy. His aesthetics allowed him an elasticity ^{quite} unusual with a doctrinaire outlook, whether in politics, religion or art. Great artists, he taught, may create immortal masterpieces, while holding an entirely false philosophy. The good cause may benefit by cultural achievements not only different from, but even hostile to one another. Both Slavophiles and Westerners, he argued, served the Russian freedom movement of the nineteenth century. When there is an underlying unity of purpose, when a whole people is on the move for its liberation, the backwash will make the writers of the time serve it, no matter how much they differ in general outlook.

Lukács' dream of sheltered islands of freedom within the onrush of a social revolution was, in the circumstances, bound to fail. He succeeded in winning particularly the young Populist intelligentsia over to Communism. But Communism was in ^{an} ~~its~~ increasingly doctrinaire phase. Soon the youth itself turned against his liberal ideas and sided with

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the rigid party lines on literature as on all else.

The new tensions of social transformation now pervaded the whole of society, imposing their alternatives ~~and shaping~~ ^{life} life issues. The youth became restive, assailed by genuine doubt as to whether the emotional traditionalism, the diffuse inspirations and contradictory utopias on which they grew up actually offered a way into the future. They veered round towards the more radical solutions of the Communist policies with the zeal of the convert: Let the country, at long last, be built up on new foundations, in a new framework! Put militancy first! Their need was not for Tolstoi and Balzac. If they were to bear the brunt of socialist construction, literature had to depict the heroic aspects of their own everyday lives. It was a case for what is known as "socialist realism."

Inter arma silent musae.

Many young converts of 1948 burned their bridges, leaving behind all that made them. Young historians and sociologists ^{literally} threw out their entire libraries. Sociography was dropped altogether. It had acquired in their eyes a counterrevolutionary connotation.

Unbelievable though it seemed to the world, young poets had endorsed willingly the principle of literary regimentation.

In the retrospect of ten years one of their generation describes the shift: "In our surpassing certitude we hardly realized, that sometime around 1948 our attention began to wander from the realities of life as it was building up around us, and began to take its bearings solely and exclusively, and with mounting passion on constructing the ideological framework... We swore by the People, the Workers, the Peasants, yet our eardrums did not sense their heavy breathing, a rosy mist shrouded our eyes, blinded to the agony and distress of the lives around--"

In the Summer of 1949 the blow fell. The dyed-in-the-wool party-philosopher Rudas launched a ~~threatening and rude~~^{crude} personal attack on Lukács - an intimation of the reign of terror that was to follow. He called for the suppression of all but socialist realist literature. Zhdanov's doctrine became the declared literary policy in Hungary. Lukács published an article in which he retracted. Early in 1950 he withdrew into academic life.

Only much later, in the cleansing fires of October did the youth draw again on the humanist vision, which Lukács had so courageously sustained.

Zhdanov and the First Silence

After the withdrawal of Lukács a long silence descended on the senior writers who held first place in Hungarian letters. Needless to say, they did not endorse Zhdanov's innovations, and now remained alone. For the first time the conflict between regimentation and ~~freedom~~^{strangled} repressed literary publication. The works of the village explorers were taken out of circulation, and in time banned. The monthly "Válasz" (The Answer), edited by Gyula Illyés, was suppressed. László Mémeth by 1948 had concluded the novel, named after its heroine, Égető Eszter, a Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre of his times. It remained unpublished till 1956-57. The story of Aron Tamási's childhood, Cradle and Owl, remained unprinted, as also did the manuscripts of Feja and Kodolányi, who always had strong national affinities, of the veteran Communist poet Kassák, who obstinately wrote in Whitmanic verse, the "urbanist" poet-writer Milán Füst, the poet Lőrinc Szabó, whose lyricism was purely personal, and many others. They withdrew from the nation's view, eking out life as translators, tutors,

village librarians, eventually going back home, if there happened to be some outlying farm building to go to. They were keyed up for ultimate effort. The creative vein did not give out. Their writings were stored in the desks. The silence lasted off and on for seven years; in 1953 and '54 it crumbled under the liberalizing government of Imre Nagy, was clamped down again in 1955 by the return of Rakosi to the premiership, and finally broke in 1956. When it was published, the voluminous literary harvest of the writers' First Silence overwhelmed and enraptured the country.

While these works were written in poverty and oblivion, the ^{official} other writers worked in bodily comfort and under public surveillance. Official concern with work-in-progress, its occasional open discussion and discussion, express guidance, censure and textual corrections must have been irksome enough even at the best of times, when the writer was in full harmony with his undertaking, from the sheer misery of sitting in a glass-house and having a searchlight play on his writing desk. Later, in the years of doubt, such interference became a nightmare, an onslaught on the writers' integrity. The required works were written: they were processed. They did not ring true. ~~elderly~~

In 1952, a public discussion of the works of thirty prominent writers was held. József Révai had lately become the protagonist of "socialist realism" and the literary dictator of Hungary. He attacked the hero of Tibor Déry's part-written trilogy, Response. Déry's pure in heart adolescent worker was shown up as the product of "petty-bourgeois moralism." The attack misfired: it led to grave moral revulsion among the writers, whose doubts began to be roused by official acts of coercion and savagery. The ideological terror, now at its peak, left the writers with wounds that did not heal.

October

The volcano that was ^{Hungary} October has been scrutinized and analysed ^{judges} ~~all~~
~~over the world~~ more ^{closely} minutely than any other event in recent history.

Some regarded it as wholly engineered, and others as something altogether too natural to stand in need of any explanation. No serious attempt has ever been made to find the rationale of its order of magnitude, the fact that the chance events of the Twenty-third of October struck the entire nation to the depths of the individual souls. The magnitude and vitality of the rising, the utterly unprecedented length of the general strike of the socialist workers were due to those glimpses of a hopeful alternative with which the Populist Weltbild gave body to the abstract idea of nationhood. Here was pre-formed a concept of communal existence, fragments of which shone through the embitterment that was moving towards a climax.

On the political and governmental plane Imre Nagy had fought a losing battle between 1953 and 1955. This veteran Communist, the bearer of Hungary's hopes, was murdered in 1958. A man of Calvinist peasant stock, he was a lifelong expert on agrarian problems. As Prime Minister after Stalin's death he attempted to humanize the government's policies in every field, first of all in collective farming in an attempt to restore its voluntary basis. Later, he gradually effected the release and rehabilitation of many innocent victims of the Stalin era. He was countered in his policies by Rakosi, as General Secretary, who ousted him from power, in 1955, in a Stalinist restoration.

Rakosi also tried to subdue the writers whose conscience had already

been roused and who fought back with the courage of despair. The motive forces in their revolt, in which the Communist members of the Writers' Association took the lead, were moral revulsion at the sight of tyrannical misgovernment, and ~~the~~ growing certainty ^{of} ~~about~~ the sickening murders of their innocent comrades. All this they had been induced to serve of their own volition. *the historical reluctant revolt*

Significantly The ~~cultural and intellectual~~ platform from which criticism gained the ear of the nation, was the Petofi Circle. *intended first to be named after Galileo, as was its forerunner, a left leaning party* Originally ~~it~~ had been an offshoot of the Communist youth organization, *the Petofi Circle* ~~that huge, thoroughly~~ *that huge, thoroughly* ~~bureaucratic body,~~ with some purpose of relieving boredom by discussion. But with the deepening insights into the party's depravity, the membership broadened out to include Hungary's intellectuals - poets, writers, philosophers, economists, historians and social scientists.

In the discussions that were held in all these fields, and that are now part of history, the country was re-vitalized. The empirical trends of thought and the ethnic realities of the resurgent Populist mentality filled the vacuum left by the crumbling structure of blind conformity. Here the interplay of Populist social thought with the humanist aspect of Marxism resulted in the powerful explosive of Party Reform - ~~powerful,~~ for it was filled with the vision of a Hungary socialist in her own rights.

On the Fourth of November the brute force of Soviet armoured divisions crushed these hopes of a nation in re-birth.

The Second Silence

Beaten, yet unvanquished, the nation lived by its moral strength, with ^a ~~the~~ sense of a newly-won coherence. Its government was imposed,

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The Second Silence

Beaten, yet unvanquished, the nation lived by its moral strength, with a sense of newly-won coherence. Its government was imposed, hence weak and isolated, trying to govern by spurts of violence. From the manifestations of the people's fearlessness and the continuing flow of cultural life the complex picture resembled victory more than defeat.

The revival of letters that had come into full swing in 1956 was not cut off by the cataclysmic months. The works that had matured during the First Silence were still rolling off the printing presses after the October Revolution. The Populist classics, long out of print, were re-published and filled the bookstalls. The country embraced its heritage. Németh's collected social dramas and historical plays were published in 1957. In a class by itself stood the publication, also in 1957, of the collected poetic works of the young Ferenc Juhász, a landmark in Hungarian lyricism. ~~His early poems~~ Juhász' early poems were in a Populist vein; his mature poetry was ultra-modern. Modern Western writing and poetry swept the country in the wake of the ~~Revolution~~ Revolution; excellent translations were published in great numbers.

10/10/60

A number of poets and writers, mostly Communists, suffered imprisonment for the part they had played in the sparking of the Revolt. Others, barred from writing, eked out a living in obscurity. Yet others were being publicly entreated to publish their recent works. In solidarity with their persecuted friends and colleagues they withheld their voice. Led by the poet Gyula Illyes they refused to have their newer writings published. ^{grand} A/campaign, conducted "against the so-called Populist writers" filled the literary monthlies, weeklies and even the reading supplements of the daily press for the length of one year. The accused remained aloof. ~~When the year~~ When the year was over the ineffectual discussion was called off. The writers' silence held ^{at long last} while the prison doors remained closed. Illyes' ^{many} verse began to appear again in April 1960, when Tibor Dery and ^{others} others were released from captivity. The "thaw", ~~at least in publishing,~~ ^{is unmistakable. Red came about.}

^{1/11} Hungarian Populism is not any more, as it was a quarter century ago, the cause of the peasantry alone. It has become a ~~fixed~~ frame of national existence, no longer alien to the industrial worker or the urban intelligentsia.

I.D.

Revised, May, 1961

THE HUNGARIAN POPULISTS

An Introduction

The making of this selection was inspired by the groundswell in Hungarian literature before 1956 and, needless to say, by the October Revolution of that year. ~~Momentarily~~

Movements that do not achieve their immediate objective may yet leave an imprint as lasting as if they had won the day. The Hungarian Revolution was seeking a union of freedom and socialism: that was the secret of its power and passion. The writers and poets did not abandon socialism's work in progress, faulty and stricken though it was, for the sake of an abstract idea of freedom. Their answer to the dilemma of the age was to ~~stand~~ ~~the~~ stake their lives on their personal integrity. To serve truth became in their eyes the supreme need in building a new society. ~~This~~ This act of maturity made the Hungarian Revolution an event of world significance.

~~EM4~~ EM4-4947 - Jack

EM6-8311

(276) Betty

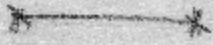
Anderson

EG-2200

Anderson said to me:

Suggest to your Publisher, ~~if he~~ to send the ~~book~~
Plunge the Pen to Random House, and at the
same time let me know ~~if~~ and I
~~will then~~ ^(Jason) ~~will then~~ ~~write~~
about it.

'About the ~~book~~ ^{Forward} your Publisher should
turn to me nearer or time.'



Adrian

Technical problem: is it pos. to go ahead
in Engl. and at the same time



Machahan

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