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Background Report
(Hungarian Research)

THE HUNGARIAN CULTURAL JOURNAL "KORTARS"
A REVIEW OF ITS FEBRUARY NUMBER*

The periodical "Kortars" is one of the accurate reflections of contemporary Hungarian literature. The paper was first published in September 1957 as a literary and critical monthly. At the time the government was trying to find the path of peace with the writers and used conciliatory tones. From the literary and critical articles published in "Kortars" a certain degree of freedom and independence could undoubtedly be ascertained, in spite of occasional assertions of official government policy. "Kortars" does not belong to any of the political organs. Its editors are: Jozsef DARVAS and Gabor UDMAS.

The following is a summary of its February number.

The contributors are rather mixed; most of them are politically undistinguished and the articles are mostly non-political. The better-known contributors are:

Laszlo SZENTES: an excerpt from his dramatical work "Cassius".

Sander VEGHES: surrealist poems.

Genn FEJA: "The Faigme of Gyula JUBASE" an essay.

Popularist writer Andras FODOR: some poem.

Popularist writer Jozsef KOSZUTI: a poem.

Professor Jozsef WALDAPPEL: essay on Gorky and Einstein.
Other items included:

An essay on Petre GROSU by Bela KOPFESI, employee of the chief directorate of a ministry; two poems by Jozsef BABACS, old

* This paper is a supplement to Hungarian Research Background Report of March 7 "The Situation of the Hungarian Writers after the Revolution" (from July 1957).

Social Democrat poet; poems by a number of authors less significant politically; Memorial to Andor Sabor, by Andras BISSIEDI; Poems by Sander HAKOS, Andras SIMON, Otis BEMERT, Soltan CSUKA, Lajos SIMON, János SIMON, Bela GYFFELI STANO, Margot SIKOSI, Gyula SIPON and LAJOS FREYER.

In the theatrical column, Jure KUMSTER, an old sympathizer of Jure BAY, reports on the theatrical events of the season. There is an essay on Francesco CRAM by Bela ARNYI, book reviews by LAJOS MERTENHASS, Pal PAPST, János KILKOR and others.

The two most interesting articles, essays on literary criticism, were written by Miklos STANOCSI and Gyergy BISSIKYI.

"The Face of a Generation" Article.

Miklos STANOCSI "The Face of a Generation?" covered an anthology of poems by 17 young poets. This anthology was published in 1957 and comprised 105 poems by 15 young poets, edited by Lóran SIMON.

STANOCSI compares this volume with a similar publication in 1938.

The first anthology was characterized by an enthusiasm ringing true at the time, for Party, the people, the building of socialism, but also by many clichés, much schematism and many empty phrases...

There is nothing similar in this new volume. There is no schematism, no enthusiasm and no formalistic stumbling. On the contrary!

According to STANOCSI, the poems of this anthology are characterized by

formalistic routine, a uniformly high standard, daring imagery, richness of rhythm and poetical forms, a certain checked smoothness and in general an evenly high level of poetical culture.

STANOCSI seems to recognize in the work of the young poets the influence of Attila Jozsef, Gyula ILTOS and to a lesser degree that of Sebete, Arpad Toth Kosztolanyi and Sander WEINER.

The most interesting assertion is that the young poets are characterized by a disinterest in politics.

How moving is this struggle of the young: for themselves, for their place in the world, their wish for a beautiful life, for a world of true humanity; how dearly they attempt to see things in the chaos of the past years, and how they guard their ideals in spite of occasional deviations.

According to KLADKOCHI, the poems reflect the strain of our years. This worries him.

Each one of these young poets started out on his path in the years when Communism and its achievements are natural conditions to them, unnecessary to be discussed. They speak rather of other things: of the basic disturbing impressions of their homelessness. These hide behind their choiced forms, suggested in the images they describe, impregnating their subjects.

KLADKOCHI tries to explain the reason.

Values were shattered in them and new ones not yet created; disillusionment and uncertainty, bitterness, reaching the point of opposition and sadness took hold of them.

Apart from "dogmatical constraints and distortions" the obstacles of the development of this generation are:

The breakdown and deformation of our development, its faults and its extremes. Everyone of us has been subjected to manifold and complex influences and this mainly applies to the sensitive young intellectuals: the tumbling down of ideals, parents' complaints, financial and personal worries. All these factors were strengthened by the direct or indirect influence of petty bourgeois ideology, that of literary circles, sometimes in the form of a healthy initiative but sometimes also in the form of obstacles by the unsatisfactory guidance of Communist literature the constant alternatives of either rigidity or liberalism. All these had a destructive effect on youth and drove them into despair or mostly into withdrawal.

This retrospect, this look of revealing themselves, characterizes our generation of the young writers.

Reserve instead of revealing themselves, the cult of life's drabness and not its colorful aspects, obstinate stiltedness and not the free flow of words are characteristic.

The poets have withdrawn into private life but

In poems about love: grief, awkwardness and escape are the dominating features. Life, external realities -- however much they influence the young and however much they try to get a hold on them -- very often appear in the poems conventionalized, apologetically and as seen through the dense filter of literary and fashionable drifts...

The young poets look back at the thirties: they try to get into contact with the Hungarian and Western European poetry of that time.

From the lyrical poetry of the thirties they have not only taken over the tone but the ideology and the subjects as well, as if the attitude of 1935 could also be continued in 1955 in point of time, ideology and subject.

There must be no misunderstanding. I have no longing for the direct, political poetry, the schematism of 1955, nor do I miss the instant reaction to any political events but I certainly do miss the thousandfold colors of reality, the aspects of the new world and its impact on our present poetry... also the problems of our era, its dizzy speed, its results and failures and new ideas. All these are left out by our young poets, who shut themselves off from these realities.

REKESZTI's article on Szabo Szabo

The study by Gyorgy REKESZTI (the name is unknown and presumably a cover name. No note) raises an argument against an earlier study on Szabo Szabo by Endor ERSEI, also published in "Kortárs." REKESZTI does not see so many elements pointing to the future in ERSEI SZABO's works as ERSEI seems to have done.

A great impact, a great popularity do not always mean great value. Szabo Szabo's popularity is due to a generation stumbling along a false track. His ringing half-truth

not only made people realize the truth but also misguided them.

Neither does BERNHARDT agree with the statement by HINDI that Deazo Szabo's race theory is unanswerable.

Both Aty and Deazo Szabo became disappointed in the liberal illusions of the forty-eight. Aty took a turn for radicalism whereas Deazo Szabo does not advance but retreats...

The withdrawal to earlier periods caused by disillusion over the ideals of the last century resulted in his reverting to the former era of feudalism and Catholicism.

To solve the problems of mixed-up classes and national oppression, he accepted (i.e. formed his own special race theory,) the alien conception of capitalist democracy as a racial recourse.

Deazo Szabo would like to exchange capitalism for a collective state set up on a racial basis.

He was well aware of the contradictions existing within bourgeois society. In contrast with several of his contemporaries, he did not stop at mere criticism but tried to find a solution. It is here that he reached a dead-end and arrived at the most ludicrous, reactionary ideology.

Although Deazo Szabo enthusiastically welcomed the victory of proletarian dictatorship, he soon turned away from it. According to BERNHARDT, his starting point and his theoretical basis were wrong.

He attributes to growing Jewish influence all the shortcomings and backwardness of the Hungary of his generation... this is the racial point of view which excludes all possibility of a realistic evaluation of historical processes.

Deazo Szabo also comes into contradiction with the "populist" writers

The efforts of populist writers to achieve realism, their strong need for truth irreconcilably clash with his race-

tional, mythologic, mystical, peasant ideology. In his anti-German comments made from a racial basis, the tone sometimes surpassed the anti-German attitude of "Boop Zoo" and its circle and pet, with his racial theory, he built an impenetrable wall between himself and this group also. His isolation is not the sky-type loneliness of the revolutionary who is in advance of his time; it is that of a man struggling along on separate and wrong tracks.

End.