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"YOUNG HUNGARIAN WRITERS STRAIN AT PARTY LEASH"

Budapest, January 4 (Ureks) - The article, here reprinted (in part), ¹⁹⁵⁵ ^{Footnote} summarizes the debate "What we Socialists" has been conducting on the problems young writers face in Hungary today. It is about the most revealing admission of the Party's failure to make its propaganda effective among the young intelligentsia and to make it toe the official line. Admissions of this kind have been made before in a more fragmentary manner but the present broadsheet is almost unique in giving the scope of the Government's troubles in literature. The article makes an interesting distinction between party and non-party writers. It observes with some dismay that the brunt of criticism is borne by the party men and that those who are outside the Communist party are comparatively free to indulge in asserthods, often even dangerous, ideological fantasies. The phenomenon is not new. In the more strictly circumscribed political field, too, Hungary has always been the main crime whereas those who never subscribed to the faith have been relatively free from official strictures. "Many young writers think", the article says, that "...to be a Communist writer is equal to being constantly criticized, to being the whipping-boy of literary life". It adds that the demands constantly made on Communist writers and the publicity given to their imperfections has created an atmosphere in which it is tacitly understood that the main threat to Socialist literature comes from imperfections within the Communist medium, whereas the real danger is not this at all but a host of bourgeois and other evils, of which the article then proceeds to draw up a list.

These evils are as numerous as they are spectacular. If Hungarian literary life really suffers from all these shortcomings there would seem to be little danger of Communism letting down lasting roots in the tastes and consciousness of the present generation. The paper makes no bones about admitting that "shortcomings" and opposition to the Communist brief affect the majority of young writers. They are subject to bourgeois ideological influences which comprise "populist" ideas, variants of Western bourgeois thinking and "ethical endeavors" by which it is probably legitimate to understand support of a civilized code of moral values not tied to Communist expediency. We are told that such culpable vices are cultivated in a more organized fashion than

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we have so far been led to believe, for the article mentions a "New Moon" circle where these meetings have found a permanent base. To boot there are those who suffer from a serious intellectual schizophrasia - one young writer is mentioned who writes nothing but short stories with an anarchoid and bourgeois message while with his second self he is extremely active in the file station backing "socialist" and even "Leninistic" plays for the camera. Then there is that old and well-tried tag: objectivism i.e. abstain from everything that goes on in the building of socialism. One section of writers belabours subjects which are timeless or too distant to be of use, others deal in foibles, eccentricities or issues that are incidental to social life and do not organically flow from it. Then there are those who still think that love is a central subject of literature; many are wrong-headed enough to feel that a writer is not a writer unless he can depict a shifting mass of a fleeting mood and leave it at that, unrelated to the society in which these things occur.

The article has been produced by a dogmatically inclined brain-trust within the writers' Union. It is therefore not surprising that 'Heti es Irodalom' itself is accused of pampering some of the young writers. The article does not approve of subjecting these young men to harsh or unconstructive types of criticism - but it thinks that they should be gently shown the right path. Such efforts have already been made but it admits that the majority of critics refused to support the operation.

The picture we get from the article as a whole is as confused (hence truthful) as Hungarian literary life itself would appear to be. For over and above those who reject Communism and all its works, the guilty include reactionaries and revisionists as well. The manuscripts, we are told, that reach Hungarian publishers are as diverse but typical as excursions into existentialism, modernist verse, Stalinist cliches and revisionist books of all kinds.

Finally the article poses a very pertinent question indeed: what are the sources of bourgeois and Western influence? The "New Moon" circle is apparently not the only hot-bed of these criminal fermentations. There would appear to be other bourgeois circles and salons, too, which "retard the socialist development of young writers." But the principal causes given are twofold: "immediate surroundings and the example of the older writers who have entrenched themselves in bourgeois positions of...anergic bourgeois class into criticism in a superficially Marxist garb."

This is a formidable indictment - in there, one may ask, anything that has not gone wrong in Hungarian literature? The remedies offered are neither new nor are they likely to be more effective than they were in the past. The famous advice that "we should make sure that the party's policy has an increasing and organized influence on the thinking of the young writers" is surely about the most empty thing the brain-trust could have thought out during its many sessions.

In 1955 Lenin wrote: "Down with non-party writers! Down with literary experiments! Literature must become...a wheel and a screw of the single great party mechanism". In Hungary today non-party writers are certainly back in print and are far from losing the party line. The regime's complaint is that with these writers, about it is difficult to reduce literature to a state where it would act as a "wheel and screw of the single great party mechanism". Would it be too far fetched to assume that a kind of revisionism, but certainly a lack of iron control, has confounded the counsels of the party at the very top and that as long as non-party writers are "up" and not "down" as Lenin demanded "the wheels and screws" of literature will never fit into the party mechanism? But one can go even a step further and say that in Hungary at least party literature itself has proved an unreliable instrument. It is to be doubted whether the sectarians, condemned by the dogmatist enough authors of the present completely carry any weight within party literature but there is every sign to indicate that Nagy, Gombi, Hay and Lukacs are not without a following.

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** See Hungarian Press Survey No. 912 of 4 January 1961.