

## Summary 2020/1

The publication of our journal's first number of the new decade appears under exceptional circumstances. In fact, considerable doubts surrounded the advisability of its publication at all. Hungary and the entire world are under quarantine and self-isolation. The vast majority of the population is preoccupied by how to survive the murderous epidemic, how to continue its accustomed way of life.

After some hesitation, however, the question of publication was decided in the positive. We have to appear! This is our battle against the coronavirus. What is more, on the basis of the saying, "We don't live only once," the journal will publish on a richer and more expansive platform than before. The global spread of the coronavirus transformed in a month the existential realities and cultural habits of mankind. The historical significance of the event cannot be evaluated from its midst. Yet, no matter how expected its coming, to ignore its existence and not think about its consequences is an unworthy intellectual stance.

The task of preparing a quarterly journal often requires an entire year. In this case too, the present number took shape as a commemoration of the tragic events of 2019, when the death of the irreplaceable leaders of Hungarian Jewry left us bereft and orphaned. In the vacuum left by the departure of the great generation of Ágnes Heller, György Konrád and Tamás Ungvári, our task was to re-evaluate the possibilities of continuing in the narrow path they cut out for us in the midst of the jungle of forgetting. In this number, we thought that we could best fulfill this mission, which is one of the primary tasks of the coming years, by placing front and center the memory and empirical reality of György Konrád's magnum opus, *The Visitor*. In order to lift the writer's works into "collective memory," we have consulted with knowledgeable and intimate contemporary witnesses, asking them to share their memories of the origins of the *Visitor*. These witnesses include Julia Lángh, the writer's first wife, György Dallos, the writer's fellow dissident, Gábor Demsky, the editor of his samizdat period. We also turned to young writers like Zsolt Kácsor, Orsolya Péntek, Anna Singer Gáspár and Norbert Hakik to find out what impact the creation of one of the most influential sociological-literary works had on their own careers.

The death of the psychologist Ferenc Erős represents still another loss of the past year. Beyond its own significance, the event bears still another significance: that the first of the post-Holocaust generation has also begun its departure from among the living. This generation was born twice: first, as children of Holocaust survivors, who optimistically chose to stay in Hungary rather than emigrate to distant continents, they embody the biological continuation of the past; and second, as Jewish intellectuals, who in the course of the 1970s began to discover and reaffirm their Jewish identities, thus contributing to the continuity of Jewish culture. Tracing the dynamics of this process is a novel task for *Múlt és Jövő*. In his innovative essay combining sociology, psychology and history, Gábor Kelemen paints a history of the friendship between Ferenc Erős and András Stark. The essay focuses not just on their Jewish identities and psychological characteristics, but also on the historical background of an entire generation. The writing is accompanied by an uncommon wealth of illustrations supplied by the families of

Ferenc Erős and András Stark, who participated in the creation of the generational portrait of the piece. The photos they supplied emphasize the importance of this field, suggesting that the post-Holocaust decades of our childhood can become the subject of research, preservation and history. For this reason, the family photos are independent visual chronicles that transform private history into general history.

In the midst of what could be called an act of collective mourning, emerged the global attack of the coronavirus. This is an enemy that has no face and a war whose end cannot be foreseen. János Kőbányai's writing, "Muse at the Time of the Coronavirus," interrogates the nature of the world that will follow the coronavirus. How will the writer and the role of literature be transformed in this new world? Is it possible that after the crisis, the subjects, traumas and sufferings will appear drab and blurred, failing to bring about emotional relief or therapy? Kőbányai illustrates his point by focusing on the circumstances surrounding the writing of an essay on Trianon and the Jews; that is, the memory of Trianon from the perspective of the Holocaust. He began working on the piece during the early phase of the coronavirus, and by the time he completed it, he found himself raising the following question: will these traumas without catharsis have the same meaning after the epidemic? Within a month, the footnote to the essay provided an answer. The article was unanimously rejected among the entire spectrum of the Hungarian press (sometimes referred to as oppositional or socialist-liberal), but the two Hungarian-language papers beyond the Trianon borders, -- the *Új Szó* of Pozsony and the *Szabadság* of Kolozsvár – took half-an-hour to decide to publish it in their week-end editions. Since Kőbányai could not initiate a debate about his questions and agonizing doubts, he decided to restrict himself to the problems and future trajectory of *Múlt és Jövő*. This is the topic of his "Coronavirus diaries," whose starting point is Venice, the European origins of the virus; Israel on the threshold of a third election; and the quarantined Budapest, where *Múlt és Jövő*, along with the memory of its past, faces a fatal challenge in the age of the coronavirus. For this reason, he asked the contributors of *Múlt és Jövő* for a similar reckoning. The opening phase of this new and frightening reality has found expression in the verse dialogue of Ádám Tábor and Balázs Györe (Balázs Györe with the translation of a prophetic poem by Allan Ginsberg); Szilvia Czingel with an article on Jews and epidemics; Zsolt Kácsor and Anna Singer Gáspár with their virus diaries; and the artists László Fehér, Emil Für and Dr. Máriáss with their sketches and paintings.

But back to our everyday work, if possible. Károly Bárd has written a broadly based, judicially informed review of László Bernáth Veszprémy's recent book, *Murderous Bureaucracy: Hungarian Public Administration during the German Occupation and the Holocaust*, which constitutes possibly the most controversial book about the history of the Holocaust during the past year. (He considers the subject so important that he has taken the unusual step of continuing it in our next number, which will focus on the dilemma of pronouncing moral judgment on the public administration of the Horthy period.) Veszprémy himself explored a sensitive theme surrounded by obscurity within the history of the Holocaust: the role of "Jewish policemen." György Gyarmati, an editor and supporter of our journal, has contributed a scholarly portrait of Mária Ormos. Péter Csunderlik has provided an extensive review of Béla Bodó's recently published book, *The White Terror. Antisemitic and Political Violence in Hungary, 1919-1921* (2019). (But why did this book first appear in English? We would like to

make sure the book is published in Hungarian as soon as possible. This is especially urgent in light of the Trianon centenary and the memorial for Trianon and the victims of the white terror soon to be opened up near the parliament. Unless the coronavirus stands in the way of this event as well.)

The coronavirus interrupted one of the most successful and revealing exhibitions of recent years, that of István Farkas's collection in the Hungarian National Gallery. This was not only an artistic event, but depicted the history of the rise and terrible end of Hungarian Jewry. Csilla Deák Abafay and ??? gives an account of this dual exhibition as well as of the important catalogue published on the occasion of the exhibition. What cultural ferment was interrupted by the pandemic! An example is the exhibit at the National Museum titled: "Clara, Rotschild Klára, Fashion Behind the Iron Curtain." The exhibit provides insight into an unusual career, as well as into the unknown face of the Kadar era. Under the title, "A Diary of an Exhibition," Szilvia Czingel has written an insightful study of both the exhibition and the short monograph by its curator, Ildikó Simonovics. (The piece is a new genre, patterned after "The reader's diary.") Czingel's account contains references to two other exhibitions: "Star on the House, Star on the Coat: The Yellow Star in the Hungarian Holocaust" (2B Galeria) and Sára Gerlóczy's "Holocaust," which contains the paintings and biographical details of the artist.

Mihály Vajda repays a longstanding debt of ours by drawing a portrait of József Gáli, on the occasion of the publication of his collected works. Judit Gera has reviewed the reception Eddy de Wind's unusually valuable eye-witness account, *Auschwitz, Terminal Line: The Diary of a Survival from the Death Camp*. Vilmos Voigt rescues from the oblivion of specialist monographs the work of Zsuzsanna Bereznai and Olga Kircz, entitled: *Five Hundred Years in the Life of a Jewish Family from Kecskemét (16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries)*.