

Summary

In our previous number, we mourned the departure of a great generation: that of Tamás Ungvári, Ágnes Heller and Görgy Konrád. We have still not recovered from the shock. Their recent loss has illuminated with blinding force two elements in the history of Hungarian Jewry. The first is that the generation that had survived the Holocaust and the Rákosi-Kádár regime has brought into existence spiritual values that compare favorably with the achievements of the short, but all the richer, golden age of Hungarian Jewry between the late 19th century and the Holocaust. This achievement can in part be explained by the fact that the members of this generation were blessed with long life and were socialized into the still intact world of Hungarian Jewry. Their subsequent attempt to participate in the realization of the ideals of communism and socialism gave rise to bitter experiences that found voice in the most varied expressions of their work. It is only with the chilling disappearance of their voices that a second illumination has come into view; that this generation, which has lived through so many different regimes, has no continuation. The reason for this discontinuity lies in the absence of an organic Jewish community after the Holocaust, which could have fostered the flowering of new collective values. In the absence of the collective work of national mourning, there never emerged the common social space necessary to make the interaction of Hungarians and Jews, — perpetrators and victims, — a viable project. Imre Kertész's Nobel Prize represents the last, desperate attempt to envision the possibility of such a "Holocaust culture."

The writer would have turned 90 this year; his tombstone was created to mark the anniversary. An insultingly small number of us honored the occasion before the monument. (From its inception, *Múlt és Jövő* has made the discussion of the oeuvre of the living Imre Kertész its mission, and it intends to continue this in his afterlife as well.) In the final phase of Kertész's life, Zoltán Hafner acted as friend and editor to the writer and he has continued this role after Kertész's death. It is due to his efforts that we now publish a rare collection of photographs and diary entries, which provide insight into little-known aspects of the author's life, including even less-known sketches of his first wife, Albina Vas. In his speech at Kertész's gravestone, he uses his position as deep and intimate witness to provide a portrait of Imre Kertész' creative self. We complete the report with two newspaper articles by János Kőbányai, written immediately in the joyous aftermath of the news of Kertész's Nobel Prize, which now has the status of a document of the age by now.

It is difficult to get over the impact of Ágnes Heller's death. And if the truth be told, we don't really want to. Gábor Kelemen, — whom Agnes Heller called in one of her last letters the best judge of her works, — analyzes in his article the discourse of dismay following the death of the great philosopher. Ágnes Heller's oldest friend, Niszán Hirschman, recalls the fateful years (1946–1949) that he spent with Ágnes Heller and István Hermann in the Zionist movement in Hungary. His retrospective memory of a Hungarian Jewish generation is an authentic account and a rare document about how easily its members transformed themselves from Zionists to communists.

In this number, thanks to János Weiss and Ágnes Huszár, we introduce two outstanding German Jewish thinkers. (Their role is considerably more important than that of translators.) Micha Brumlik analyzes the continuous elements of the philosophies of Franz Rosenzweig and Emmanuel Levinas. Götz Aly's essay focuses on an aspect of the Holocaust, which concerns the economic motives behind the murder of Jews. It raises questions whether wide layers of the German public participated in the murder of Jews out of economic considerations. The historical sociography of János Dési depicts Hungarian-Jewish historical relations in the period between the last decades of the Horthy regime and the fall of communism, through the lives of two novelistic heroes. (Yes, they are "novelistic heroes," because such figures could only be invented by real fiction.) Dési's focus on the strange friendship and truly creative interaction between the Jewish László Szabó, who has survived forced labor and Soviet military captivity; and the anti-Semite Gedeon Barcza, who is a chess champion, suggests the complex social network of the Kádár regime, which is best captured by literature rather than history. Ágnes Szegő contributes to the increasingly trendy subject of family genealogy by presenting the newest findings of gene technology. Gábor Füleki explores the grotesque world of István Örkény's "one-minute novels," from the perspective of twentieth-century alienation. Judit Gera introduces the Flemish Belgian writer Joseph Pearce, through a translation of a chapter from his novel, *Vaterland*. In her book review section, Orsolya Péntek examines two films: the first, a portrayal of the life of Péter Nádas (Gerőcs Péter, *Natural Backlight*) and the second, a new Hungarian film by Barnabás Tóth, titled *Those Who Remained*, which has been named for an Oscar. It would be wonderful if, like *Son of Saul*, it won the prize, for its original perspective and visual language, as well as its outstanding acting, makes it worthy of international attention. And it could also serve as a reminder to Hungarian society of Imre Kertész' thesis that only one thing can be done about the Holocaust, to transform it into culture. The fact that such films come into existence and become successful provides some hope about Hungarian society, which unfortunately is covered at the moment with the fog of political mystification. It is an encouraging sign, in direct contrast to the judicial sabotage of the exhibition of the Jews of Pápa, which Ágnes Huszár's sad writing documents; or the public celebration of the anniversary of Horthy's entry to Budapest, along with the temporary appearance of his statue on the Gellért square, which János Kőbányai's visual report documents.

Just as we were about to go to press, the news has arrived that the government is planning to close and further centralize the National Cultural Foundation, which has financed many instances of Hungarian culture, including *Múlt és Jövő*. We ask our readers and well-wishers that they continue to support our cause with their talent and knowledge so that we can continue our thirty-year existence for yet another decade.