

## IN MEMORIAM ZSUZSA LUDVIG

It was always a kind of challenge to study Russia or the former Soviet Union. It has never been a popular topic in Hungary. An old joke concerning three key differences between the Turkish occupation (1541-1686) and the temporary military presence of the Soviet Union in Hungary (1945-1990) explained why the Turks were able to stay longer. The first reason was that Turks did not seek to compel Hungarians to learn Turkish in primary school. The second was that they did not require Hungarians to celebrate the anniversaries of the Mohács Battle (when Turkish troops badly routed Hungarian forces in 1526). And the last, but maybe most important, difference was that Turkish rulers never promised that they would stay only temporarily. The Soviet Union was therefore not really popular among young researchers of the 1980s, and this attitude carried over in perceptions of Russia in the 1990s as well.

Some daring young fellows thought that it would perhaps be wiser to keep using and maintaining their Russian language skills once they had mastered the language, and thus they continued studying Russian (Soviet) society, culture and economy. These studies gave them access to a magic world of sorts! Those who did not allow negative pre-conceptions to determine their attitude and remained open to the impact of a great culture were rewarded with exceptional gifts: masterpieces of arts, original and exciting ways of thinking, and friendships with open-hearted and open-minded colleagues. They learned to view the world from the (Soviet) Russian perspective as well, which provided them with a better understanding of the forces that drive the world economy and politics. The knowledge of this insider view is a precondition for the proper understanding of economic, political and social processes in any country.

Zsuzsa Ludvig was one such daring fellow. She studied Russian culture extensively and developed strong friendly ties to many Russian researchers. She also expanded her research interest to other post-Soviet states. Based on her accumulated local knowledge, she was able to understand and analyze economic and social progress in very comprehensive ways. She became one of the most renowned Hungarian experts of the post-Soviet region. Her research results were disseminated among members of the research community in several books and other publications.

I am not an expert on the post-Soviet countries, but I am aware that comparisons between that region and Central Europe require a certain amount of knowledge. My

cooperation with Zsuzsa was based on her explaining to me many of the details and drivers of current Russian economy and politics. I could always rely on her knowledge and information.

We also spent some time together at conferences and study trips in Russia, where we visited colleagues and friends. I would like to mention especially the Institute of Economics of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and our good friend there, Ms. Svetlana Glinkina. We visited her several times and also invited Ms. Glinkina and her colleagues to Hungary. These visits and meetings were always very special, for they allowed us to discuss the most serious topics in a friendly atmosphere, and also provided us with the opportunity to share many wonderful hours at interesting places and events both in Russia and in Hungary.

Zsuzsa was deeply convinced that personal contacts could play a key role in achieving better understanding between peoples and nations. She worked much on establishing, supporting and improving the networks between Russian and Hungarian researchers. Her passing was a major loss for the international research community.

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