

Hungary at the Turn of the Millennium

From the very day of their election in May, 1996 the new leaders of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences have laid stress on mobilizing the Academy and the Hungarian scholars and researchers in general to find and outline the alternatives lying ahead of the nation in the future.

The President of the Academy has made the Prime Minister acquainted with his ideas concerning this question.

In their decision no. 2184/1996 (16 July) the Government have entrusted the Academy with elaborating the proposition. At their extraordinary meeting of 11 September, 1996 the Presidium determined the possible topics of research. The present article explains why it is necessary to make the intellectual elite retreated in their autonomies or ivory towers active in the multiparty democracies of Europe and why the turn of the millennium forces first of all the intellectuals of East Central Europe to create a new type of public life.

I. Challenges at the Turn of the Millennium

The Hungarian nation and its state face great challenges in the years to come. Similar challenges were raised in the Central European region for the last time by the industrial revolution one hundred and fifty years ago. At that time the region was faced with an industrial revolution, a new method of organizing production, the concentration of labour and the free movement of the labour force as its precondition, the reshaping of the structure of settlement, the fundamental transformation of the norms of communal life, and the correspondent spiritual movements of Enlightenment, liberalism, romanticism, etc. These are the key words of the great change in the way of life in Western Europe a century and a half ago. In the first two thirds of the nineteenth century these changes reached the eastern peripheries of the western world as well. The leading statesmen of our region realized this new tendency and prepared their local programmes of reform for the modernization of the organization of work, the administration of the state, and the means of communication, i.e., the mother tongue, as well as for a revolution in mass culture, i.e., general education. These were the fields where the major changes took place in our region between 1830 and 1870.

The New World System

Similar challenges tower before the generations of today.

The new wave of industrial and technological revolution defeated the last great state structure of the Iron Age, i.e., the Soviet regime and transformed the inner life of the societies concerned. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Soviet zone the world ceased to be divided into two confronting spheres of interest. The thousand-year-old question of the eastern peripheries of the Occident emerges again: Is it possible to reconcile the standards of administrating economy, politics, and everyday life? The one-time Frankish and Holy Roman Empires constituting the core of the present-day European Union drew the northern and southern peripheries, i.e., the Mediterranean and Scandinavia into their sphere of interest in the past centuries. But what is going to happen to the eastern territories that have taken a different course? The advance of the Mongols, the Turks, and the Soviets in these territories were not merely military and political actions but also opportunities for the encounter of the eastern (steppe) and western (Latin) cultures. The peoples of the territory where they met, i.e., East Central Europe, have in their blood and history the heritage of this encounter often termed "local characteristics". Our development after 1945 was but an episode of this different course of development in the past millennium. During this last period we were part of the Soviet zone, the eastern branch of the European model of development from military, strategic, political, economic, and even cultural and intellectual points of view. Interestingly, this regime considered one of its parents, i.e., the Western European–Atlantic culture as its major enemy. It tried to lead us in this spirit of hostility, as well.

Now that the Soviet Union and the military, political, and economic zones it had created collapsed, we are once again faced with problems of readjustment to the world system. After the fall of the Soviet Union it is impossible to return to the model valid in the region prior to 1947, as it turned out in the years between 1990 and 1994. But it is equally impossible to adopt the American or Western European models of organizing the community partly because the local characteristics are strong, partly because the nations in the West are also in a permanent state of transformation. They, too, are confronted with the challenges of the new world system. Neither can the social and political regimes of 1949–89 and 1968–89 be continued in the name of an "organic development", which became clear both in Hungary and in the neighbouring countries to the north-east in the past years (1994–95).

We are experiencing a change of regimes these days. Our departure is fairly clear and carefully investigated by our historians. But it is far more difficult to define our destination.

Informatics and a Global View

The very day after the collapse of the Soviet zone a new wave of the industrial and technological revolution reached East Central Europe, the one of informatics. This means that the global aspect of development is becoming ever stronger, which is a challenge for our state apparatus and political institutions, as well as for the individuals and their communities. Every village, every small farm and industrial plant, every office or study is compared to their foreign counterparts in this world-wide contest. These are challenges that shake up the spirit and strengthen the will but, at the same time, they are rather ruthless. Besides the thousand-year-old demand to be integrated into Europe, a new type of global integration is also a current issue.

The first vehicles of a global approach appeared at the beginning of this century in the form of intercontinental systems of production and military organizations. By our days these systems have perfected themselves. The revolution in information and communication unfolding in the past decades help these organizing principles of production, politics, and culture reach hegemony. This new tool of globalization brings about revolutionary changes also in the inner organization of the communities and a turn in the relationship of the individual and the community. The revolution of communication has, in turn, opened a new chapter in the history of human relations. Not only in the political organization of the communities but also in the relationship of the individual and the local community, and in that of the various civilizations of the world. It opened a new era also in the history of the state as the local unit of organizing the community going back to thousands of years. It has been our obsession since 1992 that the relationship of the individual and the community has to be reconsidered.

The new type of conflicts is no longer a military or political one as it used to be between 1945 and 1992. The new conflict lies between the local interests of local societies and the international interests of productive systems. What is our own interest? Is it the local interest of the (Polish, Czech, Slovakian, Hungarian, Rumanian, Croat, Serb. etc.) communities? Importing a new system did not prove successful. Neither by the fathers, i.e., an import from the East, nor by the sons, i.e., the import of Atlantic principles from the West. How far can the traditional organization and institutions of European integration be reconciled with global integration? Will this new type of integration represent the interests of 3 to 4 or 7 to 8 larger states? And what about the smaller nations? Who is going to determine the interests of those regions, with East Central Europe among them, that have no military or political fame and the representatives of which do not take part at the "summits"? In our view, the global approach should bring about a mutual relationship as it was understood by the leading politicians of the age one hundred and fifty years ago, which means that the culture of a central sphere of power should not be imposed on other territories.

If looking back honestly on the course taken by the individuals and the communities one can see the departure of this new order. But the destination is far more difficult to determine.

Reconsidering History and Looking Ahead

Reconsidering our problems makes an analysis of past and present necessary. At the same time questions should be put to clear up the possibilities of the future of individuals and communities, states, nations, and continents. These questions should help us find alternatives and formulate recommendations, which is the task of generations active around the turn of the millennium. It will be their duty to define the current changes in the world and find opportunities to enforce our interests.

It is a task not just for a few years but probably for a decade. It should not be a single effort but a continuous making of a list of tasks and ideas. A matter of many years of untiring research and thinking on the part of both theoretical and practical experts (the necessity of which has been realized by certain foresighted statesmen in the other hemisphere).

We have kept repeating for years that the long-term challenges facing our societies and the strategic questions of our region should be dealt with in a serious scientific manner. This time our warnings will be more than mere words, since we have the opportunity to make recommendations as to the topics of research and the organizational framework of this long-term activity. At the same time we shall outline the benefits of our work for the society. We shall try ourselves, the Hungarian intelligentsia (both the political and the scientific elites) and find if we are able to fulfil this noble task.

II. Questions about the Future (Recommendations of Topics to be Researched)

The programme of this strategic research is a hypothesis as all other research targets are. This framework even changes with the progress of the work itself and with the opening up of new dimensions, new topics of research. This change depends also on the growth of our knowledge and the world around us.

Let us here enumerate only a few of the recently outlined projects. These are the ones we think important to deal with in our new world. Some of them may be followed by further research, some may disappear as unimportant.

States, Nations, and Regional Planning

The role of the state has to be reconsidered in East Central Europe. Should it be restricted to ensuring and controlling the conditions of production and

marketing the products on local level, and to the traditional general and special administrative functions or should it be allowed to include opportunities for state intervention also in various other fields of life? Should the state act as a proprietor and entrepreneur? By what means can it promote the successful activity of the communities in the world contest of production and culture in the future? This is probably going to be one of the outstanding questions of strategic research aiming to preserve the diversity of cultures and our future world. The global approach, namely, confronts the small civilizations with languages spoken by small nations with the need to meet global challenges in a world-wide contest. By extending the spheres of communication and production these global efforts render the use of the so-called universal languages unavoidable or even compulsory. These world-wide languages are supported by large financial circles, since teaching them all over the world is no small business. Cultural enterprises based on mass communication create technologies working with these languages and the traditions based on them, namely television and radio programmes, films, language schools, books, and periodicals. But what will happen to the traditions and languages of small communities? Maintaining technologies that support these civilizations will never become a competitive business enterprise. The small nations have to decide if they are willing to spend extra sums of their "tribute money" on saving their languages and traditions, if the states should undertake such non-profit actions. (In our view, the latter solution would be the best alternative.) So it is a matter of decision. And not simply a matter of preserving national traditions but also a matter of human rights. The mother tongue is, namely, the means of everyday communication, obtaining information (about law, regulations controlling activities, the organization of work, etc.), and attaining a basic cultural level, as well as the means of expressing emotions. The emasculation of the language involves the emotional and intellectual degradation of the society in question and the decline of the competitiveness of the individuals.

Are the national principles of the state still tenable in our region? Our answer is "no". In the past few decades we have been trying to call attention to the fact that the boundaries of the administrative units, i.e., the states, in this part of the world never coincided with the territories where the nations in question lived. The inability of the leaders of Europe to solve this problem greatly contributed to the outbreak of the two world wars. (They tried to adjust state boundaries to the national ones and resettle the remaining minorities to the state territory where they constituted a majority.) A solution has to be found for the relationship of nation and state in this region. (Our suggestion is that a minority codex should be drafted for Central Europe. Its putting into practice is, however, not quite certain.) The old type of nation-states is, however, not tenable because of the global tendencies in economic life and in the field of security. Similarly, capitalist investment does not tolerate tax and other economic regulations

differing from state to state. The seven decades of nation-states in this region were far from being favourable for people living, among others, in the Rumanian, Slovak, and Hungarian national communities.

So what should the states do in this region? First of all they should stop setting limits to economic activities and become more active in supporting cultural life, social welfare, and integration.

Is the political elite of East Central Europe able to adjust the territorial administration of the region to the demands of globalization, i.e., to the demands of international security, the free flow of money, labour force, and culture? A logical alternative would be to do away with the boundaries of the small nations created in 1920, so that they should not be obstacles in the way of larger systems of production and trade, and the free flow individuals and cultures. It is, however, similarly logical that the administration capable of preserving the local communities and maintaining their functions should not cease to exist but be transformed as a means of local administration and keeping up public order, as well as creating social balance and preserving the civilization of the nations in question. The question is whether the state and political administration, i. e., the decision-makers are capable of choosing and executing the best of the possible alternatives on behalf of a society. In certain cases they might even be forced to make decisions damaging the interests of their own officials called "national" in character.

Are the international military and economic organizations like the European Union and the NATO, as well as bilateral agreements able to eliminate the storm-centres of the region, i.e., the national states in conflict with one another? Is it a reasonable alternative to stay away from the integration of security organizations, as is suggested by many? Would it not cost much more than joining them would? Are local administrations alone able to relieve tension between nation-states that has already given rise to two world wars? Experience has shown that this kind of uncertainty warns off international capital. Foreign investors are likely to refrain from investing their money or locate their factories in this region, which would hinder the modernization of the region and the development of its economic and cultural strength. These East Central European crisis zones may reproduce social misery.

Globalization will not tolerate the inner structure of these states reminding one of the Iron Age, based on the traditional preponderance of executive power. The governing elite has tried to transplant western lifestyles and institutions to this region by force of the administrative power ever since the eleventh century. This is what we call modernization. The Industrial Revolution and the eastern extension of Enlightenment formulating its consequences in the sphere of ideology from the second half of the eighteenth century relied on administrative power, similarly to the Soviet regime after 1945. Its modern features are the unbelievably large ministerial and special apparatus, and extremely strong

centralization. Globalization and integration, its organizational instrument, shake the nation-states of this region not merely as territorial units but also as administrative ones spreading themselves out upon the societies in question with their exaggerated hierarchy.

The peoples of the region should admit that this kind of tradition has to be broken. Villages and small regions ignoring state boundaries, these international joint ventures, are likely to become the natural fundamental units of the larger integrative ones. The continental and intercontinental cultural and developmental projects support targets and the groups realizing them instead of local governmental organizations. These groups can be those of producers or entrepreneurs in the villages or international companies. Also the boundaries of the nation-states are ignored from this respect. So it is a reasonable alternative to bring about a reform of the state and support the local and regional administrative autonomies.

Market Economy, Technical Development, and Society

The transition to a market economy brought about fundamental changes in the property relations of Hungarian industry. The large international undertakings naturally bought primarily the competitive firms in state ownership. Today a considerable proportion of the Hungarian exports (70 per cent of all industrial exports) is produced by firms owned at least in part by foreigners. Modernization is not simply a matter of technological development, not a matter of importing wonderful machines but also that of raising the standard of expertise and culture. The question is what will happen to the extensive but poor-quality technical basis inherited from the Soviet zone? Are we really going to be mere outworkers in the global technical competition? At the same time, the state should support the creation of a local technological strategy based on the local labour force, the historical traditions of the individual regions, and their geographical potentialities, and international experiences of how to become competitive. This would allow us to assess objectively the future development not only of Budapest, Székesfehérvár, Győr or Mosonmagyaróvár but also of the Borsod-Nógrád region (Ózd, Miskolc, and Salgótarján), the greatest losers of privatization in industry.

Privatization is coming to an end in the industrial and financial sector. How can we promote the utilization of those industrial works that are still on a high level but have not been bought by foreign investors? Let us hope for another wave of privatization? Are there professional analyses about the course and state of privatization in Hungary and in Central Europe in general? Do we have any ideas about property relations and the inner proportions of the expected mixed ownership in the decade to come? What shall be the impact of this change of owners on the local workforce and the labour market, to say nothing of the social

position of the people? Will only the formerly state-owned firms producing unmarketable goods go bankrupt?

And what about the agrarian sphere? What will happen to Hungarian agriculture and the agrarian population? How will the Hungarian countryside be cultivated and kept in order in a country trying to find its way into the European Union? The clash of interests between local society and international production is not merely a romantic and anti-capitalist nightmare but one of the actual and ever more threatening dangers of the age of globalization. How can these conflicts be solved in Hungary and in East Central Europe?

What should happen to the losers of a society changing to a market economy? How can those generations survive that are no longer able to adapt to the market-oriented way of life and production? How can we slacken the worsening of living standards for the greater part of the population? How far are we aware of the demographic trends at the turn of the millennium, the special problems of the individual age groups, mainly those of the children and the elderly, and social mobility changing with the new distribution of working places? Can we foresee the sudden disintegration of family life that used to be increasingly consolidated in the past forty years? And what about the transformation of latent unemployment in the past four decades into an open one?

What is the impact of the market economy on mass culture? Shall we imitate the cultural policy of those liberal countries that have a thick layer of well-to-do bourgeois middle class and whose capital is traditionally active in the field of culture? Is it possible to shift the hardships and expenses of the transition and the re-education of the labour force to the individuals? And what about education in the region? The tasks of the budget should be reconsidered as regards financing activities that decrease the social and cultural deficiency of these countries and as regards supporting marketable cultural activities. Are these reasonable alternatives? They should be described and analysed in detail before we are able to give a definite answer to this question and make well-founded decisions.

Let us continue with talking about social tension arising from the change of regimes. One of the major drawbacks of the Soviet regimes in this region is that the favourable attitude to work was fatally undermined. In the period between 1718 and 1945 the industrial revolutions of the West reached this region as well, and a skilled and disciplined workforce was created as the basis of bourgeois production. This process took place first in the towns, then also in the rural areas. After 1945 the Soviet regime ruined the already existing modern system of production. The radical anti-capitalism of the age was interestingly joined with the pre-capitalist ideals of community life coming from the East. However, this mixture of communal thought soon failed. By the last decade before the change of regimes the anti-capitalist corporate spirit and attitude to work called a

“socialist” attitude and the bourgeois one based on business equally disappeared. The honour of measurable achievement was lost both at the working places and in everyday life. Interestingly, the Soviet regime followed the practice of National Socialism in this by liquidating the layer of private entrepreneurs (in agriculture, industry, trade, and cultural life alike) and all those who represented competence and skill in production and local administration. The impact of this destructive process can hardly be seized in statistical figures and it is very unlikely that it will disappear in the near future. The new attitude to work has become our second nature. The rational attitude characteristic of proprietors and the appreciation of work, i.e., material and spiritual growth cannot be restored easily. Can states do anything about this? Is it not the duty of the state to try to restore this spirit through education and extension training? The alternative we suggest is that the taxpayers of East Central Europe, i. e., the states of the region should make a much larger financial sacrifice than before and increase investment into education and scientific research in order to ensure the societies’ competitiveness in the twenty-first century. The other alternative is to copy the western models of state, maybe the American ones that have no burdens to carry from the past. The decision rests with us.

Ecology, the River Danube, the Great Plains, Technology, and Infrastructure

Globalization means being open to the world. Not only the productive, commercial, and cultural spheres of a given state or nation are open but its landscape, the infrastructure necessary for its maintenance, as well as its system of settlements. It would be desirable to provide the political elite with alternative projects promoting the utilization and protection of the local and regional potentialities before they make decisions concerning integration in the region. These alternatives should be made available in a clearly formulated written form so that the large investors and decision-makers in matters of integration could see how the natural potentialities of East Central Europe fit into the structure of the European landscape. Decision-makers in local administration should also rely on these documents. As far as Hungary is concerned, concrete plans should be formed as to the Danube, one of the longest waterways and natural resources of Europe. (We have not examined the possibilities of the utilization of the largest river of the region ever since Széchenyi’s days.) We should reconsider the potentialities also of the Great Plains, one of the most versatile middle-sized regions of East Central Europe, and the whole of the Carpathian region (north-eastern Hungary, eastern Slovakia, south-eastern Poland, western Ukraine, and the north-western corner of Rumania) suffering from a number of social and economic drawbacks due to the territory’s being divided among different nation-states. It is necessary to examine thoroughly and from an

integrated point of view the cultural, ethnic, and traditional diversity, the opportunities for recreation, the problem of irrigation, energy-supply, traffic and transport. Projects concerning the management of the Danube and Tisza valleys are still missing from the ecological concepts of the region. The districts suitable for hunting, fishing, and touring should also be determined. Plans for international colonies of artists and local cultural initiatives are similarly missing, just like propositions for the solution of the problems of water management in the region between the Danube and the Tisza Rivers. There are no ports, at least no considerable ones, between the western border and Budapest that would meet the demands of cargo-vessels, passenger-boats, and water buses alike. The preliminary talks of the European Union on integration beginning in 1998 will inevitably put this question on their agenda. Are we prepared for this? Have we formulated the possible alternatives and our local interests? The River Danube and the formerly famous and professional institutions of Hungarian water management (today already in ruins) fell victim to struggles around the political takeover, people postponing important decisions about the power station and well-intentioned but amateurish civil movements. As those in power made the remaking of nature a political issue and took the River Danube for a mere energy-producing natural resource in the spirit of "socialist technocracy", also the movements of the opposition considered the matter a political one. What experts could then prepare a concerted programme for the management of the Danube after consulting the social, economic, and political leaders of the region? How can we preserve our precious water supplies in the Carpathian Basin for the next century? We shall invariably need them for food-production, the management of the landscape, drinking, recreation, or the utilization of waste.

Rehabilitating water management in Hungary is necessary from the point of view of Central European integration. The drainage areas of rivers in Hungary lie in the neighbouring countries. In other words the foul outlet waters of our neighbours run together in Hungarian territory. I wonder why regional alternative plans for a new concept of water management in the Carpathian Basin are still missing? It should not be a matter of appointing government commissioners and the tug of war between ministries.

Why are there no general concepts for the preservation of the environment in Central Europe? Our Parliament has passed a law considered by experts a very good one. But it should fit the regional regulations of Central Europe, as not only outlet waters but also winds and insects are unaware of state boundaries. So dirt, pollution, and all kinds of impurities meet and whirl in the territory of the Hungarian state.

Integration and the development of a global market economy give rise to a number of conflicts between the small regions concerning social problems and development. For example, the southern part of the Great Plains has been a

successful small region for a century and a half. But what will be the fate of the central and north-eastern parts? What will be the impact of the three or four kinds of boundaries on these small regions after our association with the European Union? (These are going to be our boundaries with EU member states, associated states, ones in the phase of negotiations, and ones outside the European Union.) This will be the time when the drawbacks of the overwhelming power of the executive branch and special administration will emphatically manifest themselves. As a consequence of this and the Peace Treaty of Trianon Budapest has an excessive weight in the development of the country and there is no efficient elite in the provinces that would be competitive abroad and could determine the interests of the various regions, exploiting the possibilities of financing tasks and regions from the point of view of integration.

We should take notice also of the new system of railways and motorways between Western and Eastern Europe that is going to characterize the maps of the 21st century. As a member of international commissions, I have kept repeating for years that the population of the regions coming into contact with important railways, waterways, and roads will have a very good start. The large European and Euro-Atlantic firms and organizations will concentrate their investment on such territories, because they finance first of all technical and intellectual infrastructure. They will be followed by investments of both large and small private capital, joint ventures, and the sphere of consumption. These small regions will be able to maintain their full structure of production, sell their industrial and agricultural products, and increase employment.

The peoples of East Central Europe will have to express their local interests in this great continental and intercontinental rearrangement of priorities. Then they will have to enforce these interests at the all-European forums.

Expertise and Erudition

On the basis of experiences gained in other countries we have kept repeating for years that the fate of the region will be decided in the next few years probably for centuries to come. Not the fate of this or that country but that of the whole region. Our race for extra support from the western powers possibly to the detriment of the neighbours between 1990 and 1995 was completely senseless. Czechs, Slovaks, Rumanians, Hungarians, Slovenes, and Croats tried to do their best to revive their western relations remaining from the period prior to 1945 in a bitter competition. This is, however, not the way to reach our goals. We must march together.

Similarly, it has been a mistake to replace highly educated and open-minded experts in economic and administrative posts in state administration due to political reasons in the years of the political takeover. (Nearly all of them went to work in the private sector. The newly declared anti-elitist demagogy,

according to which those who wish the traditional competence and skill back long for the return of the old political elite is totally mistaken.)

The proficiency of the local elites has to be appreciated also because they cannot be replaced by experts from the West. Neither the Western European, nor the American organizations of integration are prepared to handle the military, economic, and political conflicts of the region. It will take Brussels a decade to recruit officials and experts with sufficient knowledge of regional matters.

We should therefore formulate our ideas about the future of the region based on a reasonable assessment of our situation and the tendencies prevailing in the outside world. In that case we shall have the opportunity to take part in shaping the future of our continent and our country. (A Europe of twelve cannot be identical with a Europe of fifteen or thirty.) This is the only way of enforcing our interests in the face of a European Union based exclusively on the West. In that case our interests will also be met by an integrated Europe. By that time we shall have to prepare our society for integration, modernization, and competition. If the public remains passive and leaves everything to the political and financial leaders and good luck, they will remain unprepared for the new challenges.

It has to be decided whether the political elite is going to make its decisions alone or relying on science and its research institutes. Is it possible to outline reasonable alternatives of technological development in Hungary without physicists, chemists, and other scientists? Is it possible to make reasonably supported statements about the future of the society without consulting sociologists, historians, physicians, or psychologists? No, it is not.

These are only some of the questions and alternatives the decision of which will be the duty of the local political elite.

III. Strategic Research and Strategic Thinking

Strategic considerations are absolutely necessary, similarly to the exploration of valid alternatives. It is absolutely necessary to raise the questions we have mentioned above. These are the last hours for us to try to shape our future. At least the plans of it.

Integration has no alternative. It is thoughtless to use the term "integration" only as a political slogan and ignore its difficulties and ruthless requirements. The other extreme is, however, similarly thoughtless in saying that globalization is avoidable and has only disadvantages that destroy our national characteristics. The representatives of this view even speak of a new phase of colonial subjection. The two evils are interdependent: if integration remains a subject of fierce political contests among the parties, and the demands of efficient preparation, as well as the formulation of reasonable alternatives will be omitted, and our priorities will not be enforced, it is really to be feared that the

local societies and their environment will remind one of colonial times. The leading elite capable of comprehending the demands of Europe and the possibilities of the future will be missing. One of the great dangers facing our region is the lack of strategic thinking.

Strategic research means outlining the factors that influence the fate of a community on the long run. Strategic thinking keeps these long-term factors in sight while realizing short-term goals.

Who will constitute the team (of at least fifty to one hundred experts) that is going to express the essence of these questions and acquaint the decision-makers with them both on local and on national level? The only possible answer is that this should be done by the intellectuals of our region.

The New Compromise of the Political and the Intellectual Elites

I have discussed the necessity of mobilizing the intellectuals in several articles and interviews in the past two years. Let me repeat some of my arguments.

Should the members of the political elite formulate the alternatives lying ahead of the nation? There are at least three arguments against this.

First, the political elite is the operator of modern democracy and the institutions of political life. Its members operate the multiparty system, national and local parliamentarism, national and local administration. Their job is demanding. Responsiveness to strategic issues can be expected of them, but proficiency in the details cannot. They can be expected to find strategic thinking necessary and take its results into consideration in their daily activities and decision-making. There is, however, a danger of replacing a totalitarian system dominated by a single party with one dominated by several parties in a multiparty system, as happened in the political democracies of Western Europe.

Second, strategic questions determining the life of communities on the long run cannot be governed by party preferences. The political forums still became ones of struggles among political parties. It is, however, to be expected of all politicians in a political party that they should realize the importance of strategic thinking in the society, which is to their own interest. The more so because the essence of democracy is the versatility and well-foundedness of opinions.

Third, these long-term factors do not coincide with the period between two elections. These processes take place during decades, and their outcome cannot be seen in just a few years. Hastening results easily involves confusion. However, the approaching elections demand a "propaganda of success" already in the third year of the cycle, as well as a "negative propaganda" on the part of the opposition. This is a characteristic feature of the multiparty system that may stimulate political life but, at the same time, makes the objective evaluation of long-term processes difficult. This is acknowledged by all honest "professional" politicians belonging to any party both in the West and the East.

It is to be expected of the political parties that they should formulate their programmes along the interests of the community as a whole.

The only alternative is, therefore, the activation of the scientific, economic, technical, and administrative elites, and the institutions of scientific research, the activities of which are able to support our arguments.

With this end in view a new type of compromise, better to say, a new type of alliance should be concluded between the political elite taken in the narrow sense of the word and the scientific and economic elites, i.e., within the intellectual elite.

A New Type of Public Life

The political elite must admit that the autonomy of scientists and scholars is also a matter of efficiency. A scholarly intellect is the more useful, the less it is forced to follow direct (i.e., political) or indirect (i.e., economic) ready-made concepts. It is to the interest of the whole community, as well as of the political elite that intellectual creativity should be present even if the conclusions it draws do not support this or that political trend.

The political and intellectual elites take notice of the fact that the community can meet certain challenges of the day only if they create institutions dealing with strategic problems and working independently of party politics. These forums will be able to represent the welfare of the community as a whole. Party politicians, university professors, and officials can equally participate in their activities to clear up questions determining the fate of the community on the long run. (The ones we have mentioned above.) The political elite and its symbolic institution, the Parliament, should place orders and grant financial means to these forums for selecting those intellectuals working in various scientific workshops who are willing to place their professional expertise at the disposal of these public purposes. They should find topics determining the fate of the community that can be explored completely only with their special knowledge. They should raise questions, give the synthesis of partial results, and open up new fields of research.

This is why the Hungarian Academy of Sciences as an institution representing the scientists and scholars working in Hungary offers to cooperate with the political elite, i.e., the highest political forum, the Parliament and the government in power as the depositary of executive power. By this the Academy wishes to become a new type of forum aiming at cooperation between the political and the intellectual elites. The scholars and scientists rallying behind the Academy would name the topics they consider important from the point of view of the state and the society. They are ready to elaborate them and find the possible alternatives. They would not offer programmes but alternatives and would not serve the interests of this or that party either supporting the

government or in opposition, but the whole of Hungarian society and the whole of the political elite. The suggestion seems to be welcome. The government have accepted our theoretical recommendation and invited us to elaborate the project. I sincerely hope that both the political parties and the members of parliament will understand its importance. Then it will be up to the communities of scholars and scientists to tell if they are willing or able to undertake such a role in public life. If they approve of this kind of activity they shall have to find out in what ways they will be able to meet the requirements and if our organization, the Academy, created for quite different purposes is able to play a role in organizing public life.

IV. The New Role of Science (Recommendations for New Forms of Organization)

The Hungarian Academy of Sciences was founded not by a prince but by the community. It was created not as a community of court scientists or as a “pride of the Crown” but as a scholarly society the members of which were ready to play a role in social life by promoting scientific activities and culture in Hungarian. It is a result of the determination of a few intellectuals and members of the economic elite, similarly to the process of bourgeois transformation or modernization a century and a half ago. This small group worked in alliance first with the conservative, then with the liberal political elites. Through their activities the Hungarian society of the day became capable of receiving the achievements of industrial revolution. So our initiative, i.e., the possible new role of the Academy, is not without antecedents and not alien to the Hungarian soil. (Let me remind the readers that our Academy undertook similar tasks serving the whole of the nation also during the Soviet regime.) If our undertaking is finally approved by the government and Parliament, we shall have to reconsider our principles of organizing research, as well as our targets.

Strategic Research as a Business Order

My first remark in this field concerns the practice of the leaders of organizing research. It is basically the organization of research that has to be based on brand new principles. Our assignment to conduct strategic research is at the same time a business order. We present our suggestions and they place their orders which we subsequently fulfil. They do not place orders for research in general but for a definite task. We then either give a synthesis of already existing partial results or conduct new research. (Let me mention here that the lack of a sober science-policy and the unsettled state of financing research and paying decent salaries has led to a number of negative phenomena. Scientists and scholars can hardly make both ends meet, and there are hardly any concrete topics or orders to work

on. On the other hand, some researchers have been spoilt by their being paid regularly without being forced to achieve concrete results. Others were forced to hold a plurality of offices and burn the candle on both ends. I hope that in the course of the consolidation of our network of research institutes that is going to take place in the next three years we shall be able to enforce modern principles of planning and financing research, the separate financing of basic research, target-oriented research, and comprehensive projects. The distribution of funds between the first two categories from the budget of an institute will depend on the discipline and the institute in question and will differ also according to the given period.)

Strategic research will involve a new principle of financing research, namely, that of financing concrete results. The committee in charge of the programme in question will pass judgement on the plan prepared to order, its time limits and the assessment of costs. It will then grant a sum in advance for the elaboration of the plan and pays the rest only when the detailed study and its summary are ready. Deadlines will have to be observed, which we have fallen out of the habit of doing, and the studies will have to be written in a language understandable also for decision-makers. (This demand will probably help us realize the obstacles in the way of a higher efficiency of research.)

Democracy and the Attitude of the Intelligentsia

My second remark refers to our attitude as researchers and intellectuals.

In the past forty years researchers working in the network of academic institutes were highly critical and passive in social life, i.e., in political and public life alike. Their attitude tended to be rather negative and manifested itself both in their writings and in their activities. Their indifference went back to the 1950s when optimism was compulsory. When they became disillusioned, they kept clear of the Soviet-type goals of the former regime. They were very cautious in choosing objectives to work for, as they were supposed to serve the nation and the public. This attitude of reserve contributed to their remaining relatively intact in those years and forced those in power to gradually adopt a policy of tolerating real values and make compromises characteristic of the last two decades of the regime.

In the present democratic era the relationship of the political and the intellectual elites should be reconsidered, as we have suggested before. A new compromise and a new type of alliance is needed. This means that while doing it we shall have the opportunity to reconsider our attitude to public affairs, as well. A positive attitude is needed instead of sham enthusiasm and all kinds of movements. The critical attitude of the intelligentsia is a real value in itself, but it should be complemented with a positive attitude that concentrates on reaching solutions. Intellectuals should undertake to find and formulate alternatives, and

their participation in this should be voluntary, based on their individual decisions.

The Values of Our Scientific Thinking

My third remark concerns the basic principles of our scientific thinking. The requirements of the age of computers and the elaboration of strategic alternatives strangely coincide.

Let us speak first about the requirement of a synthesizing view. Computers help us mobilize a far larger quantity of partial research results than before. Our data base has been extremely extended. Consequently the ability of the researchers for a synthesizing approach and their capacity to gain a comprehensive view has become more important than ever. In the past decades an excellent army of specialized experts has been trained to work on details. These people, in turn, created their own narrow groups and organizations even within the same discipline. These groups became the basic units of large-scale institutions of science and depositories of a minimum of professional expertise. This role of theirs is very important in itself but at the same time gives rise to fragmentation and an exaggerated concentration on details. This was the way our scholarship developed in the second half of the century. Not only our system of qualification but also the academic institutions are based on this principle. However, in the age of computers synthesizing minds are better appreciated than ever. It is important to realize these contradictions of our development.

The new challenges at the turn of the millennium also demand synthesis. The main objectives of mankind are related to the preservation of life on Earth, so the dividing lines between physics, chemistry, biology, and even the social sciences tend to disappear.

A new equilibrium is needed between specialized research and the writing of comprehensive works. Let us mention biology as an example. A quarter of a century ago the keywords of biology were molecular biology, gene, and cell. Without the development of the institution of molecular biological research it would be impossible to plan the agriculture of the 21st century and there would be no biotechnologies based on microorganisms and the manipulation of genes. However, the demand of "unlimited growth" is being replaced these days by that of "sustainable development". We start speaking of ecosystems and biospheres, and the rate of fenwood and arable land with monocultures. This means that the role of a synthesizing approach has greatly increased in the thinking of biologists, chemists, physicians, and in the planning of economy and settlements alike. Molecular biology goes side by side with the research of the diversity of life. Preserving the great variety of the forms of life on Earth has become a priority. Mother Earth and the conditions of human life make it an absolute necessity.

Also our strategic programmes make this new type of equilibrium between the research of the details and a synthesizing approach necessary. The Rivers Danube and Tisza, ecological monitoring, regional and local development, the efforts to make the transition to a market economy less painful, and the recommendations to reconsider technical development all need the presence of both analytic and synthetic research. (Even in the sphere of the social sciences the tendency is to see man as a unit, functioning as a historical, biological, intellectual, and social being. This is the approach both anthropologists and psychologists tend to adopt these days.)

Second, let us discuss the dividing lines between disciplines. The sudden extension of human knowledge and recent discoveries in the various fields of science equally urge us to confront the disciplines divided so far by definite dividing lines. (It is almost a commonplace that nearly all new discoveries come from frontier zones of the disciplines in question. Computerization increases the demand for a complex approach on the part of scholars and scientists, so we cannot help inferring that the age of computers will be an age when the dividing lines between the various disciplines disappear. Even those between animate and inanimate nature, as well as the social sciences tend to dissolve.) Let us turn back to our example in biology. Determining the correct ratio of original grass, washland woods, and cultivated land producing, let us say, cabbage demands the simultaneous knowledge of physics, geography, economy, and even sociology and history. Soil, water management, meteorology (i.e., chemistry, biology, and physics), as well as the conditions of the market (economy, labour force economy, etc.) and the local traditions of production have to be taken into consideration at the same time. Without seeing these disciplines comprehensively and without a proficiency in all of them one can contribute only partial data to the subject. (Another example is the introduction of the concept called the "science of the matter" in physics in the course of the theoretical debates in the past two decades, which is an open negation of the traditional division of physics, chemistry, and biology into different disciplines.) The extremely specialised experts concentrating on a narrow field of research are mistaken similarly to those who cannot see anything outside their own discipline.

Around the turn of the millennium researchers will have to have a general knowledge and an IQ that make them capable of following the results of other related disciplines. (For example, historians of the 21st century will hopefully be at home in physics, chemistry, and biology, since without this they will not be able to understand the environment of man in the 19th and 20th centuries. They should also have a basic knowledge of economics, psychology, sociology, and cybernetics in order to understand the aims of man in that period. Similarly, physicians and chemists will be expected to construct their machines and make plastics with keeping an eye on the preservation of nature and human society.

Consequently they will have to have certain knowledge of the social sciences and adopt their points of view.)

My third remark is the necessity of expressing what we have to say clearly and understandably. The primary precondition of saying things clearly is to see problems clearly. This ability together with seeing the world as a complex phenomenon and putting it into words clearly are interdependent qualities. Only those are able to express their thoughts clearly whose minds are in perfect order. This means that they have “digested” the acquired knowledge intellectually and are able to make a synthesis of it. Not everyone is in the possession of such qualities and not everyone can develop them in himself or herself. However, the challenges of our times force us to let such qualities break to the surface.

Strategic research is done to order. It is a “business agreement” between researchers and users. The abilities of expressing themselves clearly and adopting a synthesizing view have to be coupled with a target-oriented organization of research, and a passionate effort to do something useful. In every case the first questions should be: what, why and what for is the issue we are dealing with useful for the community? If this does not go through, we shall be working for the drawer and our efforts will be senseless.

V. The Possible Benefits of Our Enterprise

What can the society and the community of researchers expect from strategic research?

Publications for the Political Elite

First of all they can expect treatises. We have already formulated our suggestions as to the topics to be discussed, namely, the general economic and institutional preconditions of integration in Hungary, as well as the insufficiency of our preparations for integration. Attention should be paid to the connection of and the challenges presented by the economic, political, and social factors of the change of regimes, with special regard to the possibility of mitigating the deficiencies in the social and cultural spheres, the impact of the changes in ownership, and the functional difficulties of political institutions. Further subjects could be the strategies of various branches leading the process of modernization, i.e., the development of settlements and economy on regional level, technical development with special regard to traffic and the development of infrastructure it involves. Then there are the chances of agricultural production and the means of improving its quality. The realization of international standards for the development of the environment, the means of preserving it in the Carpathian Basin, and enforcing the local interests with

special regard to the formulation of a regional programme of ecology and the improvement of water management are also important issues to be discussed. We have suggested to sum up the preconditions of the survival of Hungarian-speaking culture in the age of computers at the turn of the millennium, the image of the Hungarian state and people in the world, and to prepare a volume introducing the country in an authentic way. We wish to lay special emphasis on the future of the Hungarian language in the age of the computers and globalization, as well as on the possibilities of preserving and modernizing the culture of Hungarians living abroad.

There are subjects the details of which have already been investigated. In their case merely the summing up of partial results is missing. In some cases further research will be necessary, and the list of subjects may prove too short. We plan to set up a committee in charge of the subjects to be investigated. Its duty will be to judge if a subject matter is sufficiently investigated or further research is needed, and to determine the direction of further investigations. The smaller programme committee is going to control work concerning the individual subjects, determines the necessary funds, and supervises the activities of the apparatus planned to be small in numbers. This will naturally take place only if the government and the Parliament accept our recommendations.

Our aim is to publish workshop studies (a series) for the experts of the various branches and for groups of politicians, as well as shorter preliminary plans or summaries consisting only of 10 to 15 typed pages in 40 to 50 thousand copies. (The latter will take the form of a supplement to periodicals written for intellectuals under the title "The Turn of the Millennium".)

Besides this we find it important to organize conferences, workshop meetings, and meetings open to the public to which members both of the political and the professional elites will be invited. Finally, we hope to be able to publish the volume "Hungary and the World in the Year 2000" by the turn of the millennium, based on the series of workshop studies.

Strategic Thinking in General

Our second goal is to convince or even force politicians and other representatives of social life (members of the new civic public life still in the bud) to discuss strategic issues concerning the fate of the state and the nation.

The first phase of the change of regimes has come to an end. The process has become irreversible. In the past five or six years manoeuvring for position in the first phase of the change of regimes demanded shrewd tactics. The second phase should be that of the beginnings of consolidation during which time the institutional framework of a new life could be stabilized. In this period politicians and other public figures should be able to see local potentialities and the chances in the world simultaneously, and be able to realize their ideas.

Instead of or besides tactics strategic thinking should be developed in that part of Hungarian society that is concerned about politics. Our aim is to achieve that the issues discussed in speeches in Parliament, political party programmes, and everyday polemics should be the ones that determine the future of our society on the long run. We must help the society in this and push its development into the desired direction. Narrow-minded campaigns at discrediting one another are unworthy of a reasonable leadership. The actual key questions should be formulated and political activities should concentrate on them. (The affiliations of the present-day political parties will presumably change along these lines in the future. Now they are still governed either by the ideological preferences of the Soviet regime or the nostalgia for values prevailing before the Soviet takeover, and not by the actual demands of our times or the years 1989-90 when these parties came into being.)

Public Thinking

Our third aim is to restore the reputation of long-term thinking and public activities in public thinking. It has to be restored, as it has been at stake many times in the past few decades. Public life was discredited by the dictatorship of the proletariat through its exaggerations and interpenetration with politics. The private and the public spheres were mixed. During the period of consolidation in the Soviet regime civil initiatives of the new generations were forced between the narrow limits of the existing institutions. Our being squeezed in between two world systems did not urge us to think in alternatives and long-term programmes. It forced us to think only of the present instead. Then came the years when the change of regimes was already round the corner and public life became livelier after 1988. However, the increasingly active participation in public life was kept back by the restoration of an overall party politics, i.e., by the fact that the political parties did their utmost to obtain all important posts in all walks of life for their followers and supporters. The parties of the day, i.e., the ones of the period of the political takeover, were still far from adopting strategic thinking. The chances of future generation in the economic and cultural spheres, improving the quality of their lives as individuals and as members of a nation, increasing the local population's capacity to work in an expanded world, and the development of new civil attitudes are issues that might increase the activity and participation of the population both on local and national level. Unless they are too tired of the trivial political struggles...

Neither treatises nor the newly founded institutions will, however, be able to measure the level of public activity. By winning the mass media over to our cause we could have an unnoticed impact on everyday life, which would serve the community to the highest possible extent.

Finally, also the community of Hungarian scholars and scientists could greatly benefit from the undertaking outlined above, let alone the whole of scientific thinking in Hungary. (Let me remind my colleagues of the reflections in Chapter IV.)

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Strategic thinking is our duty as citizens of this country, as human beings, and as researchers aware of our mission. As an official of this scholarly community I sincerely hope that it will also contribute to adjusting our scientific institutions and our way of thinking as scientists to the requirements of the age. It will certainly help us accomplish the change of regimes also in our institutions and organizations still entertaining reminiscences of the Soviet regime, as we have successfully salvaged not only what is good but also what is definitely bad. It will help spread the blessings of the use of computers and create the demand for the world of information among our colleagues all over the country.

Budapest, 10 September, 1996