

INTERVIEW WITH ISTVÁN KEMÉNY ON HIS CAREER

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The interview below originally was not made with the purpose of publication. In late 2007 I reached István Kemény in relation to the volume prepared in honour of Teréz Laky. During the course of our talks I wished to learn more, out of personal interest, about sociology emerging in Hungary after 1945, and how it was seen by a person who was an active participant, but at times only an onlooker of this history despite his own will. To my greatest luck István Kemény was ready to tell me mostly about his professional career. The interviews were given three times between 15 November and 3 December 2007, and as shown by its fragmentary nature we planned further discussions. Unfortunately it was not to be.

By publishing the interview we pay homage to the memory of István Kemény.

– *You were born in Kaposvár. Would you speak about your parents? What was their occupation?*

– My parents moved to the capital with me when I was four years old. From 1929 on my parents lived in Pest, so I had no connection with Kaposvár. My father graduated from the technical university with flying colors as a civil engineer. Civil engineers are those who deal with roads, water and railway networks. My father found employment with the Hungarian State Railways and was a railway engineer to his retirement. My mother was Croatian and she studied at a teacher training college, obtained her diploma, but married my father at a young age and I don't know precisely, but presumably she taught only for a very short time. Then came the marriage and my parents had five sons including me, and she would not have had the time to go and teach with five children at home.

– *And how did your father find himself in Kaposvár?*

– My father was of Budapest and the Hungarian State Railways posted him to Károlyváros in Croatia, which was called Karlovac in Croatian; it was there that they met, fell in love and got married. He was transferred to Kaposvár from there, when the Monarchy still existed, so he was transferred and this is why I was born in Kaposvár. He was transferred to Budapest as part of his professional career and I was brought up in that city.

– *And which schools did you attend?*

* I wish to thank Krisztina Passuth who has consented to the publication of the interview.

– It was a secondary school of a long name. There is a street in Buda, called Szabó Ilonka Street, at the foot of the Castle Hill, in those days it was called Ilona Street, and the name of the grammar school was Royal University Catholic Grammar School of District II. The strange name was due to the foundation of the school by the then Minister of Culture Loránd Eötvös, who, for various considerations had the school linked to the university, to the Ministry as well as to the Catholic Church.

– *And what kind of teachers did you have?*

– I didn't like my teachers; I liked only one of my teachers called Urbán, he taught maths, but only in the final year when I attended the 8th form of the grammar school. I didn't like the others, because I found them unpleasant and ignorant who did not even know much about their own branch of knowledge. It was a grammar school of bad spirit. When Loránd Eötvös founded it he wanted to create a grammar school of liberal mentality, but by the time I got there it did not radiate liberalism but the spirit of the age.

– *Under what influence did you start reading Hajnal and Erdei at the age of 16?*

– Well, surely it was not my teachers who gave me those writings to read. I cannot explain how I hit upon Hajnal, Erdei and Zoltán Szabó, but if you asked how I got hold of Attila József I wouldn't be able explain that either.

– *Was it perhaps from home?*

– It did not come from home or from the school either. It had no identifiable factor of connections.

– *Why did you choose the Medical University?*

– I wanted to go to the Medical University because of two reasons. Partly an apparently strong interest emerged in me in physiology and the secrets of human body and organism. At that time I thought that it was to be a life-long interest, but it was subsequently very much pushed into the background, partly due to the events of the war. The second reason was that if anyone went to the Faculty of Arts because interest in sociology would have rather meant that direction, had the perspective of teaching but I did not wish to teach, I didn't want to become a teacher.

– *Did your interest in sociology link itself to a political view?*

– In fact political interest developed in me under the influence of social scientists and writers. Whoever reads classical novels is definitely oriented towards political issues because a very passionate approach to the social issue is recurrent in classical literature. Referring to the literature of novels, let's say Tolstoy's oeuvre can be interpreted as the oeuvre of a man for whom standing for the poor was most important. Thus it was not only Erdei, Zoltán Szabó or Hajnal, but the influence of Tolstoy that also oriented my interest towards the poor, forming rather a kind of social criticism. The writers focusing on simple people also guided me in that direction. I read Zoltán Szabó's book the *Window-dressing* before I developed an interest in politics. It was under the influence of these books that interest in politics emerged in me. But it could originate from other sources too, for instance from the fact that Hungary was involved in World War II.

It was before Hungary declared war on the Soviet Union, and before Hungary allowed the German troops to cross the country, at the time of Prime Minister Pál Teleki, when Yugoslavia was invaded. Hungary was very much a participant in that

Yugoslav affair. One could see German tanks along the banks of River Danube in those days. At that time we lived in 11 Fő Street, a house with one side looking to Fő Street and the other one to the bank of the river. One could see the German tanks roll along the banks of Danube and it was a very negative experience. I had a friend in the grammar school, Péter Veres, whose father was a chemist. When I saw them the two of us wrote a pamphlet expressing our outrage against the Germans marching through, and we could get it somehow printed and multiplied in 100 copies. We purchased the envelopes and the stamps and posted it to various addresses. The result was obviously the appearance of plain-coat detectives in a couple of days, at first in the home of Péter Veres and family, and next in ours. The detectives treated us most forgivingly, were friendly and well meaning. In those days the commander-in-chief of the political police and the Home Minister, Mr Keresztes-Fischer¹ were both strongly anti-German and thought that we were very decent boys who should not be hurt but warned us seriously not to continue.

When we wrote it the Hungarian population was either not interested in politics, or the overwhelming majority of those who did were pro-German.

– *And what did your parents say about all this?*

– I cannot tell; my mother spoke to me when someone came over from the Vereses calling me to go to them. Naturally my mother was informed, and she loved me dearly and was much worried for me and expected me to get into trouble if I continued along the same lines. I don't know what my father said but I guess that my mother kept the whole issue a secret. My father was not pro-German, it was out of the question but I think horrible fear would have emerged in him, but it may also be possible that she told him.

– *Ultimately parental fear was justified...*

– It was justified, because I was jailed in 1944. I participated in the resistance of 1944, which was difficult because there was no resistance. Or just a grain of it. One may speak about it in different ways. There was something little and I participated in it. At that time my parents were not in Pest any more. In the house where we lived there was a Polish group, a so-called Polish Cultural Institute but no Polish state of any kind stood behind it. They had an office on the ground floor and they obviously got that room because it was an Andrassy palace and the Countess who was the owner of the building was anti-German so she gave the room to the Poles out of political sympathy. We lived on the third floor, quite at a distance from that ground-floor office. On 19 March, when the Germans invaded the country, a German detachment came to the house and shot the three Poles found there. It was a terrible thing for my mother. At that time the four of us lived together, my father, mother a brother and me. On that occasion

1 Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer Ferenc (Pécs, 18 February 1881 – Vienna, 3 March 1948.): politician and minister. From 1921 he was Lord Lieutenant of Baranya County and Pécs, and the same of Somogy County from 1925 on. He was home minister between 24 August 1931 and 4 March 1935 in the Károlyi and Gömbös governments, and was an MP in between. He was home minister between 24 May 1938 and 22 March 1944 in the Imrédy, Teleki, Bárdossy, and Kállay governments. The political police was under him, he directed police terror against the left. During World War II he belonged to the conservative group of Bethlen and Kállay, and was a representative of the Anglo-Saxon orientation. The Gestapo caught him and carried him to a concentration camp in Germany. Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon: <http://mek.oszk.hu/00300/00355/html/index.html>.

the family decided to move to Keszthely. I had no role in that decision for I wasn't even 19, so they went to another brother of mine and we stayed in the flat with my brother. I was taken away from this flat on 19 December by members of the National Reckoning Detachment, who were gendarmes, and the institute itself was called National Reckoning Board. I was taken to Margit Boulevard to the building preceding the current building of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. In those days it was an infamous prison and investigating detention jail. I was there from 19 December on but a couple of days later this building was evacuated by men of the National Reckoning Board and at first we were taken to the SS palace in the Castle area and next to the cellars of the Houses of Parliament. We were kept only for a couple of days in each place.

– *How many people were detained there?*

– Political prisoners, all of us in detention were about eighty. Most of the resisters could not be caught, but there were some in that building, who had been resisters. There was an Arrow Cross building in St Stephen Ring road, I was taken there too, but during transportation from one place to the other I fled. I could get home somehow and lived in Buda when the city was liberated. When I got myself free sometime in 10 or 12 January, the bridges were still there and one could go from one side to the other, but from the angle of the Arrow Cross lot order had so much disintegrated that it was not absurd for me to go home to our flat in Fő Street, hoping that they would not come for me because they were preoccupied with their own escape.

– *How did you participate in the resistance?*

– There were two kinds of job, one was to prepare and the other one was to distribute leaflets. They were anti-German leaflets which naturally did not have any effect on the course of the war, and did not in any sense weaken the German military might; so this activity had a rather dubious value.

– *After liberation did you go back to the Medical University?*

– Not immediately, because the University did not open its gates in February, when the Germans left and the Russians came in. Later on, naturally I did continue my medical studies and decided only after the completion of the third year that I would give it up.

– *In 1991 in the interview made with you by László Györffy and published in Magyar Nemzet you said that “from the spring of 1946 on I did not want to become anything else but a social scientist.”*

– One says such a sentence easily, absent-mindedly, and does not even consider whether it is true or not. But I think the year 1946 is right. From the age of 16 I constantly read the books and writings that belong to the history of Hungarian sociology. Here I should also mention people who had a tremendous influence on me. István Hajnal, who, perhaps excessively influenced me and I thought everything perfectly true what he described in those issues. Ferenc Erdei and Zoltán Szabó also had a great effect; the latter one wrote a uniquely exemplary book on Hungarian social relations in *Window-dressing*. It is sure, however, that reading István Hajnal, Ferenc Erdei and Zoltán Szabó did not decide my choice of a career; though deep in my soul they may have done that job. In 1945, after 15 March I set out and travelled through Szabolcs County, but that was not sociology yet, only I was interested in what was happening there and in some way I did participate in the job of the committees

preparing land reform. In those days I was on good terms with István Márkus who is a remarkable figure of the history of Hungarian sociology. I was with him for one or two weeks in Kecskemét because originally it was to be his task to prepare the land reform in Kecskemét, Nagykőrös and the adjacent regions, but somehow he was squeezed out of it. In principle the land reform committees were organized on the basis of coalition, but where the communist functionaries were adequately aggressive they did not allow anyone else to have a say in that activity. One could be present and participate in the village meetings. One could observe what was happening, but in that county which is Bács-Kiskun County today, one could not actively do business, because there the people were sent by the party. At any rate, it was an illuminating experience. I did write something about the Hungarian conditions at that time but it is lost and it would not be reasonable to recall what I had said.

When did I participate in or carried on autonomous sociological research? After 15 March 1945 István Márkus conducted some research in Szabolcs County and I did participate in them, and they could be called sociological researches. There was a research conducted at Galgamácsa and I also participated in it. Therefore the statement that I decided about my career in the spring of 1946 is not unfounded, because I had participated in researches of a sociological nature previously. At any rate, the change took place in 1946.

At that time István Kristó Nagy, who was a sort of advisor to the Independent Smallholders' Party, invited me to elaborate the programme of the Independent Youth which was also founded in those days. At first there was only MaDISZ,² and subsequently MaDISZ split up into various youth organizations. I did write that programme under the title *The Way of Our Peasantry* ([1946]1992) and it was published under my pseudonym of Áron Máté. In those days I was thinking about the issues of Hungary as it can be found in that little bulletin. At that time I was of anarchist attitude which was not an attitude of lifestyle but I was an advocate of the anarchist ideology and theory, and the first Hungarian elaborating on it was Tibor Kolossa³ and Attila Batár,⁴ who were my friends. The three of us were engaged in the issue that

2 Federation of Hungarian Democratic Youth (MaDISZ). It was founded on 31 December 1944 in Szeged upon the initiative of the Hungarian Communist Party with the objective of making it a mass organisation of non-party member youth between 15 and 24 years of age. Its members were mostly young peasants. In March 1948, when the various youth organisations were eliminated, it was united with the membership of SZIT and then it merged into DISZ in 1950. Its weekly papers were Magyar Ifjúság and Ifjúság.

3 Kolossa, Tibor (Budapest, 23 March 1922 – Budapest, 6 October 1982): historian, candidate of historiography (1979). Abandoning his legal studies he studied at the composer's course of the Academy of Music as a disciple of Zoltán Kodály. He was to become a folk music researcher, and studied between 1940 and 1946 and graduated from the Department of Ethnography of the Budapest University. In 1947–48 he worked at the East European Science Institute, and later on for NÉKOSZ. In 1948 he was a trainee of the Museum of Ethnography, and from 1950 onwards he was a subordinate researcher and from 1954 onwards a regular researcher of the Institute of Historiography of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. His work as a historian was mostly influenced by István Hajnal, and he focused his research mostly on the history of Hungarian agriculture during the dualist period. Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon 1000–1990: www.mek.iif.hu/porta/szint/egyeb/lexikon/eletrajz/html.

4 Batár, Attila (Budapest, 1925 –) architect. He studied at the Technical University of Budapest and graduated from there. He started his architect's career in Budapest, and later on worked in France and in the United States. Prior to his architect's career he studied at the Faculty of Arts of ELTE University and

anarchism, anarchy, the abolition of authority was the solution of social issues. This was a naïve idea on our side. At any rate, if anyone reads the paper entitled *The Way of Our Peasantry* would see that it was the political programme of a man of anarchist conviction even if it was not expressly stated. It can be considered as a sociological writing, and later on it was published in the volume entitled *Szociológiai Írások* (*Sociological Writings*).

– *Were you a university student at that time?*

– At first I was a medical student, which I decided for in the 8th grade of the grammar school in the academic year of 1942–43. The university started in September 1943, when I went to the Medical University and it was precisely in 1946 when I left it, this is why the above sentence is right. At that time I thought that I should graduate from the Faculty of Arts, but it did not attract me in the form it existed at that time, though there were eminent people there until they were not sacked. One of them was István Hajnal, whom I have already mentioned, and the other one was Tibor Mendöl,⁵ the founder and greatest figure of human geography in Hungary. At that time the two of them were the most important from the angle of my interests.

– *When in 1946 you went over to the Faculty of Arts, could one sense the presence of the Institute of Social Science of Szalai? Did you have any contact with it?*

– Sándor Szalai joined that department, in theory in 1945, but actually only in 1946, for it takes time until one is appointed. In principle the university was autonomous, but presumably Szalai was not invited by the then legally employed professors but he was forced upon the university by the government of the day. This forcing is possible not only by order but also by persuasion. He joined the university in 1945–46, and was a talented man of sharp intellect, but he could get the job primarily because he belonged to the left wing of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party, to the left which, so to say, sold the Social Democratic Party to the communists. He was properly rewarded for it, because he was jailed and spent many years there. The sociology represented by Sándor Szalai interested me, I read his book immediately, as soon as it was published, but it did not attract me because I was more attracted by what may be called Hajnal's sociology. Once I wrote about this and I think it is also included in the *Szociológiai Írások* (*Sociological Writings*) ([1976]1992: 175–200).

graduated as a teacher. Initially he participated in sociographic research and he even worked as a teacher. During the past one and a half decades he has regularly published writings on architectural topics. His papers and books were published in Hungarian, English, German and French. Homepage of the *Ab Ovo Publishing House*: .

- 5 Mendöl, Tibor (Nagyszénás, 5 May 1905 – Budapest, 21 August 1966): geographer, university professor, doctor of geographic sciences (posthumously in 1967). He studied at the Pázmány Péter University of Science. In the early 1930s he was a scholarship-holder of the Sorbonne and travelled all over a large part of Europe. His papers of a new spirit, shedding light on interrelationships between morphology and functional structure of the Hungarian cities were published from the second half of the 1930s on. From 1930 on he was regular professor of the Human Geography Department of the University of Science and was Vice-President of the Hungarian Geographic Society. After WWII he wrote the geography of the Carpathian Basin and next of the Soviet Union for a volume entitled *Soviet Union*, together with Béla Bulla, and he also wrote university notes. *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon 1000-1990*: <http://mek.oszk.hu/00300/00355/html/index.html>

In 1948 sociology was practically banned and from then on no one could become a social scientist. As far as I am concerned I found myself at the Department of Pedagogy of Pázmány Péter University called Eötvös Loránd University of Sciences later on, where György Lázár⁶ was the professor of pedagogy, but I spent only a few months at that department, I joined there in September or October and was sacked in spring, in March next. Before Lázár was transferred to that department and me with him I was a boarding school teacher at the Apáczai Csere János Grammar School and Students' Hostel and I lived on that work. Prior to that I was a boarding school teacher at the College of Coral Art and taught history there. I also worked at the Teleki Pál Scientific Institute in the academic year 1947–48, where István Bibó was the director and István Márkus was the head of a section. Bibó invited him and István Márkus invited me to be his assistant and associate. The name of the institute was altered at that time, the name of Pál Teleki was dropped and it became the East European Scientific Institute.⁷ When I was at the Teleki Institute I started my own research in 1947. I went to work at the textile mill of Kispeszt. KISTEXT was its name where I worked as a trainee, doing manual labor so that I may obtain information by the so-called participant-observation method. That period had a great influence on me though it did not fit me to do participant-observation this way because I was physically weak even at that time. I learned things which could not have been learned from books written by eminent researchers trying to approach the world of workers from outside. There are things one could learn from outside about KISTEXT, or about textile industry in general. The larger part of workers was women at KISTEXT, but it was known that the majority was young girls who worked there before getting married and when they found someone they left the factory. There were older people too, who had to do that kind of job not requiring qualifications for their livelihood. There were men too, who were skilled workers and the foremen were also males. This could be learned even from the most common methods, from statistics. There are things one can learn from the outside, but the way of thinking, conversations when they go out to smoke a cigarette at the toilette, well, that could not be learned from outside. I was greatly affected by learning from inside how the workers were thinking and not only textile workers and young girls but also those who handled the machines to which one had to be a skilled worker and I could personally get acquainted with their way of speech and

6 Lázár, György (Nikolsz – Usszurijszk, 13 January 1924 – Budapest, 28 August 1978.): editor, teacher, literary translator. He studied at the Pázmány Péter University of Sciences as member of the Eötvös College, and graduated as a secondary school teacher of Greek and Latin in 1945. He was head of the secretariat of Deputy Prime Minister Mátyás Rákosi between 1945 and 1948. In 1948 he initiated the foundation of the Apáczai Csere János Experimental Grammar School within the framework of NÉKOSZ. He was secretary of the Committee of Free Education of the Central Leadership of the Party of Hungarian Workers up to 1950. He was Reader and Head of Department of Pedagogy of the Faculty of Arts of ELTE between 1950 and 1952. He was an associate of the University Library between 1952 and 1958. He was unemployed between 1958 and 1960 and lived on translations, next he was a petrol station operator between 1960 and 1964. From 1964 to his death he was responsible editor at the Editorial office of Encyclopaedias of Academy Press.

7 On 15 February 1948 Sándor Szalai wrote his farewell address to Teleki Pál Institute in *Népszabadság* and announced that the new name of the institution dealing with historical research was to be East European Institute.

thinking. When much later I was writing about Hungarian workers and earlier I did research about the topic I considered it important. One may learn about their way of speech and thinking if one goes to a factory, to the workers, befriends them a little and can make an appointment with them when one talks to them for 2 or 3 hours. Things people tell on those occasions they would never tell in a survey by questionnaire. If I may say that I have a method of my own then its basic principle is that one can learn through personal talks how people think and then, starting from it, one may produce sociological writings and analyses.

– *And where did you get the idea to do participant observation?*

– At that time it was somehow in the air. I thought that one should do research about workers and that too by participant observation. But I was wrong because it would have been simpler and more comfortable if I just went to KISTEXT regularly and agreed with the people there to get together and talk sometime. If one goes with a tape recorder in a way it can be an obstacle to some extent. In a politically precarious situation people were afraid of such conversations in Hungary, because they feared that the tape would somehow end up at the Ministry of Home Affairs. In 1947–48 people were already afraid but not so much as later on. But it happened already at that time that someone was interned without trial on the basis of the arbitrary decision of the internal affairs authorities.

– *Why did you leave the Teleki Institute?*

– I dropped out of the Teleki Institute when István Márkus told me in spring 1948 that I had taken up a place. He thought fair if that place was not given to me but to Tibor Kolossa, a friend of both of us and I that should go to the movement of NÉKOSZ⁸ for learning about the country, where I could also get a salary for my work. I had to accept this offer by all means for István Márkus was the boss. I was very young and inexperienced and did not understand that a placement in the Teleki Institute would be very useful later too, and one should not be so heedless that it made no difference where I was, because that was not really the case. But I did not think in the way as I do now. So I went to the movement of NÉKOSZ for learning about the country, and parallel to it I went to teach history at the College of Coral Art and was a boarding school teacher there. From there I went to the Apáczai Csere János Grammar School and Students' Hostel which was an experimental grammar school founded by György Lázár who imagined it to be a joint enterprise of the students of Eötvös College and of Győrffy College, that it should be the school for these young people where that the revolutionary heat of the Győrffy College-students and the scientific erudition of the Eötvös College-students should be united.. At that time I liked it and went over willingly. Not only I went but my wife too also came with me, whom I married in June 1948. Lázár's idea was naïve because the revolutionary enthusiasm of the Győrffy College-students was actually serving the Communist Party.

I was at the Apáczai for a year, next I taught at the Kindergarten Nurses' Training School of Huba Street which was the institute of Erzsébet Burchard Bélaváry.⁹ It was a

⁸ NÉKOSZ (National Federation of People's Colleges).

⁹ Burchard-Bélaváry Erzsébet (Székesfehérvár, 9 November 1897 – Budapest, 17 August 1987.): educationist, a theoretical and practical representative of kindergarten pedagogy. She graduated from a teacher's college in 1916 and went to Vienna in 1919, where she got acquainted with Montessori and her

state-owned institute but at the same time Erzsébet Burchard Bélaváry was an experimental educationist, so what she was doing there did not correspond to any official trend. Next I went to the university, to the Institute of Pedagogy to the side of György Lázár, from where I was sacked because I gave a talk at a course of the Office of Labor Reserves. I gave lectures there and my students reported against me that it was not proper what I was saying. A procedure was launched against me and as a consequence I lost my job. At any rate, it was impossible to deal with sociology in those days.

– *When was it precisely?*

– I joined the university in September 1950, and was sacked in March 1951. One may speak about sociology for the next period only that one could read books, but it was not only impossible to conduct sociological research but I do not think that Hungarian publishers brought out foreign books on sociology in translation up to the 1956 revolution.

Next I was employed in an economics secondary school in those years, right up to the years prior to the revolution because it was preceded by Imre Nagy's governmental programme of 1953, which did truly transform the Hungarian political life either with the support or the objection of the Soviet leaders of the day, because it let out those who were illegally incarcerated. Many people went home and not simply went home but there were those in whose case a law court procedure was ordered. Many people were in jail without a judge's ruling, only they were locked up. Others were victims of conceptual procedures. If not in the case of all but it was done for many that a new judicial procedure was taken up between 1953 and 1956, and it was found that the previous ruling was false and they were acquitted and even compensation was given to them. The fact that these events had taken place meant that the attitude of people to the world changed in the entire country. Because it is a revolutionary change if political prisoners are released and rehabilitated. The result was that the way of thinking and attitude of people to the state authority of the day became totally different. I went to the Municipal Council and achieved to become a grammar school teacher instead of one in a primary school at the Grammar School of Pestlőrinc from 1 September 1956 on.

– *What was the effect of 1953 and Imre Nagy's politics?*

– The workers and the peasants reacted to it differently, and university students and intellectuals also had different reactions. Individually everyone reacted, but there were typical patterns of behavior. Those who were disillusioned with Rákosi's style of leadership could become the followers of the Imre Nagy-type leadership. Imre Nagy let the co-operative members quit the co-operatives, and it was a significant change for those who could get out.

I was a supporter of Imre Nagy to a large extent but was also an anarchist. My attitude was full of contradictions. Naturally, I kept my fingers crossed for Imre Nagy.

pedagogy. She returned in 1926 and opened a private school. From the 1930s onwards she organised extension courses and trainings at the State College for Kindergarten Nurses. She was closely attached to the working class movement. In 1941 she closed her private school; in 1945 she became Head of the Kindergarten Department of the Ministry of Popular Welfare, and pressed for the nationalisation of kindergartens. She was director of the Training Institute of Kindergarten Nurses of Kecskemét between 1959 and 1962 until her retirement.

When on 23 October 1956 I also joined the demonstration I was just shouting the same slogans as the others did. In May 1957 I was arrested and condemned for 4 years of imprisonment; I spent two years in jail and was released in 1959. At that time my views were different from the ones of 1953 or of September 1956. What the invading Soviet troops did after November 1956, what was present in Hungary in those days provoked hatred in me and I had the worst possible opinion about everything.

– *Could you speak about how it was like when you were condemned in 1957?*

– What I can tell you about it can be learned from István Eörsi's book (1988), where he precisely describes the size of a prison cell. What I remember of was 1.70 metres wide and 3.40 metres long. When the court ruling was made we were the two of us with István Márkus in the cell. Prior to that I was in detention for 15 months, I spent altogether 24 months that is 2 years in jail, 15 months of it in detention as captive of the Hungarian political police, and most of it in solitary confinement. Then detention was changed and I became a prisoner of the prosecution, and my cell was not changed. It lasted for a couple of months.

– *Was it a deliberate decision of the political police to lock you up with István Márkus in the same cell?*

– That was a dirty trick. I disappointed the ÁVO people, we called them like that, because the department for the protection of the state was dissolved, but the people remained the same. I behaved unpleasantly, I did not make a confession and they were upset. Their main problem was that when I stood in front of the jury, Vida's council, which condemned Imre Nagy too, the judge said that once I confessed to the investigating officer that I had participated in White Aid, a supporting organization after 4 November giving assistance to those in whose families there was someone wounded or a death occurred, and we could support those people out of the collected donations, so I said yes, but I was persuaded to make that confession by inadmissible means. They became very upset to hear me say so. I did confess about White Aid because others had already confessed that I did play an organizing role in it. And I only mentioned the "inadmissible means" which was unjust on my part towards the policemen, because I acknowledged it because it had been proved. This was a nasty trick because previously István Márkus informed the political police about all of my issues, and that too in a passionately anti-revolutionary, or counter-revolutionary style, as we were called in those days. It was mostly due to István Márkus that I was caught because not everyone was jailed who participated in the '56 events. One could get off by being once or twice interrogated but did not spend years in jail. I was furious about István Márkus. When I was condemned it was the same political police that distributed the convicts, and I was placed in the Small Jail of Kozma Street in Kőbánya, which was a notorious building because most of the executions were done there. And there we were put into a two-person cell with Márkus, suggesting how well we would enjoy ourselves there.

– *What was the atmosphere like at the time when you were released in the late 1950s and early 1960s, prior to Kádár's consolidation?*

– I was released in 1959, and lived on translations. I had to do translations from German, English and French for the National Office of Translations and Authentication. I mostly translated technical texts of which I did not understand a

word. It was commonly said at the Office that one could translate texts best which one did not understand, but then they should be translated in a way that no one else should understand them.

In 1963 there was yet another change in Hungary. There was a period of absolute terror from 4 November 1956 to 1961–1962–1963, it is difficult to say precisely. The reform was introduced in 1968, but the top leadership under Kádár was for reform already in 1963. It was also in 1963 that many people were granted parole, and it was also in 1963 that procedures were launched against those who were the chief criminals in the Rákosi period. This was intended to be very strict, but there was also great fear of the Russians that the KGB may not like it. This was once again a complicated situation, both the releases and the rehabilitations. Some people were released but were not rehabilitated to the extent they should have been.

In 1963 György Péter was the President of the Central Statistical Office, an old communist from the illegal movement who became a communist at the age of 19 or 20, may be sometime in 1920. As President of the CSO he played a leading role in the economic reform and published two major papers. These writings announced what was non-existent, namely market socialism. He was a very bright and brave man because he thought that he could do a great deal with the past he had had. But he miscalculated.

At any rate, it was already decided in 1963 that there would be reform, but there were debates about exactly of what kind. The survey entitled *Social Stratification* conducted by Zsuzsa Ferge, Mrs Aladár Mód, and Mrs Láng, was commissioned by György Péter with the aim of finding out what the actual situation was and to get prepared for what the reform would bring about. I was responsible for mobility in that research.

– *Would you speak about that survey of stratification?*

– It was a multi-factor statistical survey. We wanted to build a model. Its results were published in a book. The participants, Zsuzsa Ferge and I were far from wanting to arrange reality into Marxist categories. Naturally, this was also not a flawless research, but it was a good one.

In those years there were income surveys in every five years, and there was one in 1963, formally conducted by Mrs Aladár Mód, who was Head of the Division of Living Conditions in the Statistical Office and Zsuzsa Ferge worked under her as Head of Department or Group. That income survey was conducted by Zsuzsa Ferge and Mrs Láng and I participated in it, and naturally we could not write anything we wanted under Mrs Mód's supervision (Mód et al. 1966). In those days the Statistical Office told lies even in issues that were indifferent from the angle of the stability of the system.

– *And how were you involved in this survey?*

– Zsuzsa Ferge invited me, but earlier we did not know each other. Somebody told her to call me, but I don't know who. She invited me to participate in the survey. She had called me earlier too to the CSO, but only as part time, or with some contract but not as a full timer. The first work I did at the Statistical Office was a survey related to reading. *Who Reads and What?* was the title of my paper which was later on published (Kemény and Horváth 1965a, 1965b). Originally I was not engaged for this one

because the survey related to reading was linked to an earlier income survey which made it possible to put such questions like what the respondent read, how much, when, etc. Judit Bárdos, one of Zsuzsa Ferge's subordinates had the task of processing this survey but was unable to write it up. Finally, I ventured to write it in her place. But by then the stratification survey was launched and we already discussed my participation suggesting that I should do the mobility part. I wrote the chapter on mobility in the volume published by the CSO, but possibly whatever I had written Zsuzsa may have added her part to because her opinion differed from mine in this question. The results of the survey showed that there was less social mobility in Hungary than in the United States and Western Europe when we studied generational mobility between strata. It was inevitable because at those big categories where only the ones of workers, non-manual laborers, intellectuals, people of leading positions, etc. What mattered was only that the overwhelming majority of the members of the society were physical laborers, agricultural or industrial workers at dates prior to the survey. One could not make white collar workers out of so many people as it could have been possible had there been the same rate of mobility as in the West. The result of the survey showed that social mobility was smaller than in the West. To me its interpretation was that these statistical data were determined by the social composition of the previous generation as well as the social composition of the survey at the time it was made. In other words, I did not attribute so great significance to the fact that Hungary was worse even in this respect than the West. At any rate, it was important to Zsuzsa Ferge, because she was a supporter of the system; she was very much a person of the opposition but an unconditional follower of socialism as an idea. When we wrote our papers it was already the second half of the 1960s, and her attitude was also critical to the society we lived in but she regarded socialism better than capitalism. She thought that somehow we should demonstrate that mobility was better than in the Western countries and she even wrote an article in *Valóság* about it upon Tibor Huszár's invitation (Ferge 1969). There was a difference between us in this respect, but otherwise we were on friendly terms at that time.

– *How far were the categories of social stratification novel that were applied by the survey?*

– Up to the completion of that survey and the related publications the situation was that there was the Stalinist image of the society, namely: workers, peasants and intellectuals. The survey did not reflect it. We conducted a multi-factor statistical survey and it contained such strata like blue-collar workers, white-collar workers, white-collar workers in leading positions, etc. These social strata had to be created and constructed; the volume was about their lifestyle, about the homes they lived in, about the size of their income, and, among others how big mobility was between strata. The strata presented in the publication had to be created by us. And prior to that we had to give a list of occupations to those who coded the data and from which we subsequently worked.

– *To what extent was the development of strata linked to the theoretical debate carried on in Valóság in the 60s, or was the survey conducted in the CSO much more adjusted to the categories of stratification and occupation elaborated in the West?*

– It was natural that we purchased Western publications and worked on that basis, we took them over. Ideological discussions were a separate topic, what Hegedűs and Ferge wrote about.

The effort made in the publication of the Statistical Office was to use categories of strata which figured in the Western publications.

– *What was the relationship of the employees of the CSO to the Sociological Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences?*

– I don't know what Hegedűs thought of Ferge and what Ferge thought of Hegedűs, these are individual things. But it can be stated that they represented similar trends without being on friendly terms. Ferge's survey and the group of sociologists under Hegedűs wanted something that was hitherto forbidden. Ferge's background was granted by the fact that the survey was commissioned and supported by György Péter, and God knows what gave some background to Hegedűs, but he represented a stand that differed from the official one of the day.

– *How did poverty and the Roma emerge as research topics?*

– This stratification survey was commissioned by György Péter who wanted reform and had a great role in that reform was realized in Hungary. He was aware that if reform was introduced they would create market economy, but neither he, nor Tamás Nagy, the ideologue of that reform clarified how far the market would go. Would there be capitalism or something mixed? He wanted a market society and the survey was to find out how people lived until there was no market and what would subsequently happen to people. This was the aim of the commission, but inside it there was talk about the need for the study of poverty which Mrs Aladár Mód as well as Zsuzsa Ferge wanted, but György Péter didn't because of tactical considerations. He thought that it could be a point of attack because there was a communist country where the Communist Party decided about everything, and the CSO was also a state institution which, if it started to study poverty it would suggest that it was a system where poor people could be found. This was something he did not want.

The idea was to have a survey of poverty under the pretext of the stratification study which was born ultimately, but it was a separated survey and the poor were not mentioned in the stratification study. In the income survey of 1968 those who are called poor on the basis of their income were already earmarked.

– *When you participated in these researches did you work full time at the National Széchényi Library?*

– When I was writing about mobility within the stratification survey I was an employee of the National Széchényi Library up to 1969. I edited a library periodical on bibliography there; it was entitled *National Acquisition List of Foreign Books*.

– *Then you went to the Institute of HAS in 1970...*

– I went to the Institute of HAS for doing a survey of the Roma. It became possible because there was a department, the home affairs division of the Council of Ministers which commissioned the Roma survey. In those days there was some intention in party leadership to solve the Roma issue somehow. As part of that effort they started to liquidate Gypsy colonies in 1964 the plan of which was drawn up in 1963 when 70% of the Gypsies lived in colonies or under even worse conditions, in full segregation. There was a strong effort to integrate the Roma into the society. The background of that

objective was that there was shortage of labour in the country in the 1960s, in the mines, in heavy industries, in building industries and at road construction. It was clear that the Gypsies represented an enormous reserve that would not be able to commute from those colonies in the midst of nowhere. It was thought that housing conditions were to be altered so that Gypsy labour may be utilised. Parallel to this there was the objective among communist leaders to do something for those who lived under the worst conditions, for simply it should not be imagined that every leader of the communist system was heathen all the time. It was a basic objective of part of the leaders of the communist system. The Gypsies were also among the poor and they were even poorer than the poor. This research was born as a consequence, and the Institute of Sociology of HAS was commissioned to do it. Kálmán Kulcsár was the Director and I was invited to do the survey because formerly I dealt with the poor. I was totally free to decide who should be the subjects of the survey, who are the people among the Gypsies who should be studied.

– *In other words, despite the fact that the survey of poverty was banned and there were measures taken against you, had it bring some acknowledgement to you?*

– When we started the poverty survey we were not allowed to study the poor, so we examined the low-income strata. The research had a beautifying name. Each year there was a session at the Academy, so it was in 1970, somehow linked to Lenin, perhaps to his birth centenary. There I gave a talk about the living conditions of the low-income people and the talk had a fantastic effect. Partly on my destiny, because several people reported on me to the Party Headquarters and an order was issued immediately so that Kulcsár should sack me from the Institute, and partly it had a social effect among those who were still university students. That talk could not be printed at that time; it could be distributed only in manuscript form as I myself did distribute it¹⁰. It contained nothing extraordinary, but the regime wanted to project itself as a lovely one which was impossible because it was not lovely but not only because of poverty. It thought to be able to keep it secret that there were people who lived in poverty. In that lecture I said that it was mostly blue-collar workers who were poor and it was particularly painful, for had it been shown that the aristocrats were poor it would have been more pleasant for the leaders of the system.

Kulcsár told me that he was ordered to dismiss me, so I called the head of the Department of Science of Party Headquarters and told him that it was fine to sack me but the Gypsy survey was in progress under my guidance and I was the one to decide what to do, so I asked him how they imagined it. I visited the Party Headquarters where the head of the department decided that I could stay on in my job under condition of signing a work contract with me on the first of each month which would last to the last day of the month. And this was the case until the survey was completed. When I finished it, naturally my employment was also terminated.

Meanwhile Miklós Lackó of the Institute of Historiography, whose task was to prepare a volume on Hungarian workers, ordered a survey of the Hungarian labour class from me. I did it and wrote it, this is the book entitled *A magyar munkásosztály* [The Hungarian Working Class] (1974). The Party Headquarters organised a

¹⁰ Later on that contribution was published, see: Kemény [1972]1992.

discussion of it at the Institute of Historiography where Zsigmond Pál Pach, Iván Berend T., György Ránki and many others, about 40 people were present. It was meant to be a trial for execution, because those people were on the top within the Party in 1972, who wanted to return to the earlier and harsher dictatorship, and they were the rules up to about 1977 and 1978. Subsequently it could not be continued, for the economic situation of the country made it impossible to carry on dictatorship as earlier.

– *How could you explain the contradiction that the Party gave commissions continuously and permitted even commissioned researches on the one hand, next those researches were banned and reprisals were exercised against researchers?*

– There were ups and downs in that respect. That authority was created on 4 November 1956, it was a continuation of the Rákosi system yet it was not identical, because it was preceded by the event experienced by communist functionaries when everything collapsed. After 4 November 1956 they knew that it should be done somewhat differently. Part of the functionaries wanted to continue as it was under Rákosi's system, another part wanted to find some transitory solution in between the capitalist and the socialist systems. The slogan of "socialism with a human face" was invented in those days, not in Hungary, but in the West, some of its Western inventors really meant it, whereas others thought it was a fake. In Hungary too, part of the leaders wanted to do something like that, and György Péter also belonged to them, but one could list other names, too. This struggle between the leftists and the reformers was in progress from 4 November 1956 up to 1990. The struggle was uneven and was influenced by events in the Soviet Union. There were more and less favourable periods in it. One issue was that of the Gypsies. Formerly I stressed its labour force side, but undoubtedly there were people among the party functionaries who wanted to improve the situation of people of grave destiny and who thought that a socialism improving the people's life should be created in Hungary.

Those who commissioned the Gypsy survey did not fully consider what they wanted with it. There was a publication born in 1961, a material of the Politbureau, the publication of the topmost organization, where it was written that there had been three kinds of Gypsies in Hungary: the first one is the group the members of which are such as if they were not Gypsies, then there is the other extreme, and in between the two there is a group of Gypsies in a transitory state. This classification was an invention but they believed in it and the aim was to make members of groups 2 and 3 similar to the integrated Gypsies of the first group.

There was much prejudice and malevolence in it but also a lot of good intention. When the Gypsy survey was commissioned it was not expected to get results unpleasant to them, and it was thought that whatever would be revealed by it would not be unpleasant for the stability of the system.

– *How was the survey itself built up?*

– At the beginning of the survey I sent word around that I am looking for people who would participate in it and whoever came I would receive him or her. I gave questionnaires to those who came and told them to look for Gypsy families, fill in the questionnaire then come back and show me what they have done. Most of them returned saying that they were unable to do it, and there were some who didn't say but seeing their work I thought that they would not be suitable. This is how a small team

was built up. I regarded the county as the basic unit and I needed approximately so many participants as many counties the country had and practically that many people co-operated in it.

In those days the major part of Gypsies, 70% of them lived in colonies, but 4% more should be added to them who lived in even much worse and more distant places than the colonies. It was difficult to go to them in the mud, snow and frost. Those huts where the Gypsies lived were in an extremely bad condition, and some of the people lost interest. Many of them dropped out, but there remained a team and we completed the survey with them.

– *Was it a representative survey?*

– It was representative, a 2% one. Everything I did in the Gypsy issue was representative.

– *And the criterion of being Gypsy was that a person was Gypsy who was regarded as such by his/her environment...*

– Yes, this is the only possible manner, and we did it that way in 1971, 1993 and in 2003, and if I am alive and get a commission in 2013 too I would not be able to do so, because it met difficulties already in 2003.

In 1997 János Ladányi and Iván Szelényi wrote an article in the monthly Hungarian periodical *Kritika*, and the title of the writing was: *Who Is a Gypsy?* It was a very bad and stupid article. It was ridiculous when Szelényi narrated that when he had been in Milan he was shown where the Gypsies lived. It is ridiculous if somebody believes that the experiences of a touristic trip can be utilised in such a debate. They said that every one was involved in giving a scholarly definition of who a Gypsy was. This is not true, because the surveys I did in 1971 and 1993 did not contain even a grain of effort towards making an academic definition of who a Gypsy was. I stated clearly in the introduction of both articles that there was no way of studying the lifestyle of Gypsies otherwise but to set out from the opinion of their environment, because very rightly there was no record of Gypsies in Hungary. Therefore it is impossible to say whether the data of one hundred thousand or one million Gypsies was available and we would select every fiftieth of them, which was impossible. It was simply a practical pressure. One could give a theoretical supplement to it, but mostly it was the pressure of practice. In the future, however, it would be increasingly impossible to do a survey this way, because the Gypsies move to cities, to settlements where the others would be unable to say that they are Gypsies. We may go to a settlement and inquire where the Gypsies lived, but people cannot tell. In a small settlement people will be able to tell even fifty years later but only a small part of the Gypsies would continue to live in such villages.

Returning to the practical method put in the foreground: it is impossible to find the Gypsies otherwise even if we invent a refined method of some kind.

– *Was this the topic of discussion in the 70s?*

– When we conducted the survey in 1971, there was some discussion, but to a very small extent. Some people were preoccupied with this question. They said that one should not trifle about it, for those whose mother tongue was Roma were the Gypsies. This was a very minor fragment of the Gypsy population, clearly it could not be considered. There were others who argued that everyone had the right to declare him- or herself a Gypsy, Hungarian or Turk, and this would be in conflict with the research.

In fact this conflict did not exist, because the person asking the questions had to inform the respondents that he/she went to them because we hear that you are a Gypsy but if you do not want me to fill in the questionnaire you just tell me and I would go away. Questionnaires were filled in only about people who regarded themselves Gypsy.

– *Lifestyle as a topic was accorded a significant role in the Gypsy surveys too. Apparently lifestyle is a central issue of your career. You held seminars on this topic, at first in the Institute of HAS, and next, when you were banned, in various flats.*

– A regular seminar was attached to Gypsy survey as well as to the one on poverty, each week I met participants of the study and discussed our experience, and obviously we did discuss theoretical issues, too, but its written traces cannot be found today. The entire research was published in 1976 by the Academy which included the results and papers written by participants of the survey (Kemény 1976). That book reflects to some extent what we had dealt with at those seminars.

When I gave that talk in 1970, I was banned from the Academy and agreed to renewing my contract each month. Next we reached an agreement between Kulcsár and me that I would hold the seminars in my home and not in the Institute. Kulcsár thought and he was right that Home Affairs would take to it badly and would regard it an illegal seminar. The seminars were conducted in relation to all of my researches and Home Affairs always took it unkindly but did not do any house search, I was not called in and it had no unpleasant consequences.

– *If you were so much a persona non grata then how could you get a commission to do research about the workers in the 70s?*

– The Institute of Historiography was requested by the Party Headquarters to do a research about workers. At the Institute of Historiography Pach told Miklós Lackó with the knowledge of the other leaders that Kemény should be commissioned with this research because he could do it. It was ill taken but accepted by the Party Headquarters. When the study of workers had been in progress for months someone of the Party Headquarters told Pach that they disapproved of it. Pach answered that “I was placed to head this Institute by the Party Headquarters, so if you trust me then I would continue, but if you don’t then I go.” So, Pach defended this research. When the survey was completed and I wrote the report it was supplemented by a material written by Ági Losonczi on a topic that did not affect my report but this way a joint paper was born. Next the Scientific Department of the Party Headquarters organized a discussion of the manuscript I had written. They thought it would be an execution but it had no grave consequences. Iván Berend T. and György Ránki, but mostly Iván Berend attacked the manuscript.

The Kádár era had a bad phase which began in 1972 and ended in 1978, and the excommunicating discussion of this material was between the two dates. Then they had to pull back because of the poor economic situation. When Hungary applied for admission to various international economic organizations clearly this period of persecution could not be continued. It may be said that a favorable period of the freedom of the press began in 1978.

– *And did you leave the country precisely in 1977?*

– Yes, because it was in that bad period and I could not do research, I was not allowed and I could not publish anything either.

It was almost impossible to identify what was possible and when. What is interesting whether there were researches and writings at that time that could reach a certain level? Party opinion did change a great deal, not only what could be published but also what state- owned companies having a certain number of members could be maintained which could be licensed.

– *Did you know where you were going in Paris and what was waiting for you?*

– No, there was nothing. I went to Paris and applied for asylum.

– *Did you speak French?*

– I knew more than nil, but not really well. It is a different thing if one can read a French book without a dictionary, and it is entirely different to speak and understand those whose mother tongue is French and do not care whether the other one can follow or not.

– *Your writings of the emigration are also mostly linked to Hungary...*

– Yes, I primarily dealt with Hungarian topics in emigration too.

– *What was the foreign medium like? How could one fit in?*

– There the medium was better than the domestic one; there were no restrictions about what one could publish. But I wouldn't say that everything was better in France. Everything was not good what was taking place then or now in the French intellectual life, but what one may complain about in France are problems of a different nature, because there was no dictatorship.

– *And what happened when you arrived?*

– Finding a job and a livelihood was difficult. When one arrives and nothing is prepared and was not invited then one is a refugee and he may be taken out of refugee status if there is a French university employing foreigners. I could join such a university, called L'École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) which means College of Social Sciences. Its programme included the employment of foreign teachers and researchers where I also got a researcher's job but not immediately, only after a year. I received the personal support of Raymond Aron who had not known me before.

– *Your writings were published one after the other, for instance those on the research about workers...*

– Research about the workers was published at home too, much later, and it was not published in France in this form, only in the form of articles split up into pieces.

– *You published a volume of Bibó also there.*

– The volume of Bibó was published in Switzerland as an edition of the European Protestant Hungarian Free University (1981–1984). It was done because Bibó wanted to get his writings published. Zoltán Szabó played a very major role in this issue, for he was still alive at that time and he could get it published by the European Protestants. It was his proposal that the volume should be edited by István Kemény and Mátyás Sárközi. His works were published in four volumes.

– *Did you have a personal contact with István Bibó at the Teleki Institute?*

– Yes, he was the director. I was employed there for a short time, and he was a director for a short time. When neither he nor I was there and the name of the Institute was changed I visited him once, perhaps I took a manuscript to him for reading. But there was no regular contact between us.

– *And with István Hajnal?*

– Neither with Hajnal. Only when he was teaching at the university I joined his seminar and participated in it.

– *When we started to talk you said that in your youth you believed in anarchism. Have you remained an anarchist?*

– No, I didn't, because I realized that it was a mistake. For a long time I insisted on certain features of anarchism, but I regard anarchism as such unrealistic. There is also an economic approach that belongs to anarchism which is not a classical teaching, but Georgism, the teachings of Henry George represented by Gyula Pikler M. and Aladár Sós in Hungary. These two men were of a great influence on me in the field of economics. I was an advocate of Georgism even when it seemed to be unrealistic to be realized in any part of the world. But I gave up the idea that Georgism could be maintained in a place like the European Union when the papers of Aladár Sós on economics could be published in Hungary. In my introduction to those writings I processed not only Georgism but parallel or related trends too, and then reached the conclusion that it was unrealistic. But I did insist on it for a very long time; that Georgist economy could be implemented and possible to adjust to a country of socialist, a liberal or even of a conservative set up, because essentially Georgism is just a matter of taxation and every state collects taxes. The attraction of anarchism was present for a very long time but it vanished by now.

– *And what has replaced it?*

– Liberal thinking.

– *Did you always regard emigration as transitional?*

– There is no answer to this question without contradictions. When I emigrated and lived abroad I thought that I would never return, for I thought that no conditions would emerge to which I could come back. When the Soviet troops left the country and the multi-party system was established it became clear that I would come home. May be I was wrong when I left and also when I came back. But I thought it taken for granted that if political freedom was established in Hungary I would come back.

– *When you came back to Hungary what did you sense in what did sociological thinking and discourse changed and what was the situation of sociology?*

– I had friends and disciples in 1977, and they remained as such in 1990 too. I highly appreciated what they were doing. I cannot tell whether those eminent works were made before or after 1977, because I saw continuity in them. I truly appreciated very much what they had done. I read works written by those who were in opposition at the time of the Kádár era and said that what we had done during that regime had no value but I did not agree with that view.

– *Who are the people you regard as your disciples?*

– Mostly they are my friends and I am not so sure they liked it if I mentioned them as my disciples, they are rather my friends. There is Gábor Havas, or those economists with whom I did a survey of managers: Aladár Madarász, Tamás Bauer, Mihály Laki, and many others who had been my disciples in one period or another.

– *And has the situation of sociology changed? Has not the prestige of sociology dropped?*

– Let us not take sociology separately but talk about social sciences. They were not separated either at the time of the classics, of Montesquieu or Adam Smith. Social sciences have a tremendous role today in Hungary. If we look at sociology only it also has a big role, but I would not look at it like that. Today what is written by social scientists has an enormous role, provided what they write is good. It should not be thought that social scientists produce some thoughts that are subsequently implemented by governments, though there were examples of it, remember Keynes who had a bigger effect than most of the politicians had. But in Hungary no government has accepted the dominant economic theories. This is related to a large number of factors, for instance the political attitude of a prime minister greatly influences it to what extent he would rely on social sciences.

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