

## FOURTEEN YEARS AT THE INSTITUTE OF SOCIOLOGY

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On 1 January 1975 a period began in my life when I could be unambiguously a social scientist without any camouflage. I had time for doing research into the topics chosen by me, to deepen my knowledge of the literature, I could teach young people at the university, I had good partners for discussion at the Institute and at the University chair, and such a working relationship with my immediate boss, Kálmán Kulcsár the like I never had before. I highly appreciated the fact that the Institute of Sociology was located in a lovely environment, at the Castle area, and every time I climbed the Castle Hill from the Taban and walked along the western path to the Institute, I concluded that the view was worth the financial loss caused by my shift from the Statistical Office.

My arrival at the Institute coincided with some dark hours of the history of the Institute. In the last months of 1974 the communist authority got fed up with the activities of sociologists openly turning against Marxism and arrested Iván Szelényi, the most eminent associate of the Institute, and György Konrád who published writings jointly with Szelényi. All my empathy was for them, but I did not agree with them right from the outset that there was any sense in challenging the Marxist view of society in the mid-1970s. It was not only the different assessment of political opportunities separating me from them, though this was one factor, but I did not regard Marxist orthodoxy worth challenging it. At that time my aim was to promote the consolidation of a branch of social sciences, namely sociology which would put it beyond doubt even in details that the ‘blessed’ rule of socialism for 25 to 35 years would still leave social problems in abundance, and would offer foundations for a more suitable handling of them once the political situation changed. In respect of the latter one I was not an optimist after 1956 and the suppression of the Prague Spring.

I found that there was a great understanding between my new boss, Kálmán Kulcsár and myself in the assessment of the situation of sociology and in outlining its tasks up to 1987. The difference manifested itself in the field of personal ambitions. They were much bigger in him than in me, and he was ready to make significant compromises for realizing them. It, however, did not pertain to the standard of scientific production. He developed his legal training by profound reading, and took up the director’s position of the then most prominent institute of Hungarian sociology with full justification in the 1970s and 1980s. I had known and appreciated his professional achievement already before I joined the Institute, just as he also had a good opinion about my products. We discovered our human values and limitations during the course of years. He proved to be a wise boss with keen eyes, from whom I received several wise professional remarks even in relation to my own topics. There were periods when our relationship was nearing true friendship, but his natural rigidity

hindered total melting. He was not jealous, but did not like juxtapositions to his intentions due to his vanity. This was the cause of a deterioration of our relationship after 1987.

I had known the majority of my new colleagues from earlier times and they cordially welcomed me. Though my transfer from the Office to the academic Institute was totally independent of Szelényi's disappearance, the majority of my colleagues regarded it as a consoling sign for future prospects. None of them had a formal sociological training, for wherefrom could they have it? But in 1975 they could be considered as Hungarian sociologists after more than a decade of sociological work. Szelényi left the Institute officially in 1975, and went to the West upon the instigation of the communist authority and to the sorrow of colleagues. He was very much missed to the development of the discipline, and I also felt it. I asked Kulcsár to be allowed to serve in the Institute as a commoner, but he appointed me head of the division dealing with lifestyle and the associates of the department accepted it. Good relations evolved with them and with most of the associates of the Institute, but no true friendship developed with anyone. My new friends came from the Department of Sociology of the University: Tibor Huszár, Péter Somlai and Pál Péter Tóth. Huszár saw an ally in me for strengthening the domestic position of sociology. Professionally he navigated on different waters, there were not many contacting points in our research, but we remained loyal allies in the issues of science policy for a long time. I appreciated his success in making sociology accepted and that at last he succeeded in consolidating the place of sociology at the University, which, in my reading was indispensable to the unfolding of Hungarian sociology as a specialization. A warmer human relationship evolved with Péter Somlai. It took time until we got closer to each other. I tried to involve him without any jealousy and reservations into my research in the field of the problems of the family which was a common terrain of interest. He proved to be a good partner and a warm-hearted friend. Pál Tóth got in touch with me at first as a student, and it influenced our relationship later on, too, and I realized only with delay that 'children grow up'. I recognized him fully as a partner in the 1990s, and his readiness to help became highly significant to me at the time of my decline.

I did not regard my task deriving from my position as head of department being anything else but to be a partner in discussion for my subordinate researchers provided they turned to me. I had to work with mature and full-fledged research individuals and it would have been senseless to give them tasks. Occasionally I rather asked for their help in performing some tasks allocated to the Institute. It did not change even after Kulcsár appointed me scientific deputy director in the late 70s. This post had threatened me right from the outset, but was averted for some time because I was not a party member, something that was expected. Joining the Communist Party did not occur to me even for a moment, neither here or earlier in any of my places of work. It would have run counter to my entire worldview, therefore repeated invitations were met with my consistent refusal. My superiors accepted it, after some time they gave in and declined party membership as a precondition, and thus invited me to take up the job of deputy head of department at the Statistical Office, and later on of scientific deputy director at the Institute. In 1983 the issue was raised a degree sharper, when Kulcsár became Deputy Secretary General of the Academy and the director's job

became vacant. He immediately counted on me as his successor, but I was unwilling, for I felt better in the position of a 'chief of staff'. I was given temporary appointment as director, and even my colleagues were convinced that it was only a temporary arrangement. Up to that time it never happened that an institute of the Academy of 'ideological' nature was managed by a non-party-member director. After several months of waiting the leadership of the Academy ultimately decided for my appointment for five years. This was primarily Kulcsár's success, but the then President of the Academy, Professor János Szentágothai was also my patron. No doubt my appointment was one of the peaks of my career, but it had more disadvantages than advantages for my scholarly activities.

My own scholarly work was being increasingly concentrated on the problematique of the family. I only dealt with the general theme of lifestyle 'ex officio'. This topic put me in touch with other Hungarian institutions, such as the Central Statistical Office and the Institute for Social Science of the Party. To my surprise I had found collegiate partners sensitive and open to the problem in the latter one. It was particularly with Tamás Kolosi that a good and pleasant partnership evolved. My first longer study published in book form dealt with the family, next I completed my book entitled *Problems and Methods of Family Sociology*, which openly summarized the current works of the late 1970s, and did not strive to project their thoughts as my own ideas. Research on the consequences of divorce expanded to become an international one, was my initiative, but its results were only published in English by the Academy Press. I did not avail myself of this opportunity either to present the results obtained in a chiseled form in several publications. When the survey was completed I was already preoccupied with another topic: to learn about the way leading to divorce, to explore the issue of conflicts of married couples. This became the topic of my doctoral thesis presented for the academic doctor's title. I was granted the doctor's title on the basis of my thesis in December 1982. The chairman of the committee at the defense of my thesis was my former master, Sándor Szalai, for whom my 'glory' was also compensation. This was one of his last public appearances before his death in the spring of 1983. Later on the dissertation was also published in book form.

I was nominated for corresponding membership of the Academy for the first time in 1987, mostly as a result of Tibor Huszár's canvassing. At the session of Division IX, deciding upon the acceptance of the nomination, I did not get sufficient support, therefore I was out from among the candidates presented to the General Assembly. This was related to the fact that by that time Kálmán Kulcsár was not fully supporting me. Our relationship cooled down. Its primary reason was that as Deputy-Secretary General of the Academy he demanded from me a kind of rationalization at the Institute I was not willing to do, but rather wanted to cut research cost in order to keep my colleagues in their jobs. The fact of confrontation was irritating to him, and he was unable to forgive it even later. Our relationship cooled, and our contacts became rather narrowed in the coming years.

My director's mandate expired in May 1988, and I declared much ahead that I did not wish to extend it. This created consternation among Academy bosses of my age, to whom it did not even occur to relinquish their post for reasons of age. I, on the other hand, thought at the age of 63 that I had to consider the inevitable mental decay, and

until I did not feel it I could do something more meaningful than administration. (...) From June 1988 on I officially retired but remained a professor of Loránd Eötvös University of Sciences. I was appointed professor in July 1984, and from June 1988 to June 1995 the Institute and Chair of Sociology of the University was my chief place of work.

After I joined the Institute my international contacts offered less opportunities for personal meetings, for establishing new ones and for travels abroad than the possibilities created at the Central Statistical Office, but it was only a transitory situation. In 1975 once again I could go to Vienna and got acquainted with Professor Erich Bodzenta, Head of the Department of Sociology of the University of Vienna, and this fact became highly significant in my years of retirement. My participation in the international time budget studies was not wound up either: I became one of the editors of the volume containing the results of surveys taken in the sixties, and this is how I got into closer touch with Pierre Feldheim, Secretary General of the Sociological Institute in Brussels. I went to Belgium for the first time upon his invitation. Feldheim was an excellent organizer and good administrator, and what was most important to me, he was open minded and ready to accept me not only as a colleague but also as a friend. Our contacts became closer afterwards when in 1983 I became the Hungarian representative delegated to the Coordination Centre for Research and Documentation in the Social Sciences of UNESCO in Vienna. Feldheim was Chairman of the Board of Editors of the Centre and soon he had me elected as Deputy Chairman, despite the suspicion of the representatives of the Socialist camp. After 1983 most of my trips abroad were financed by the Vienna Centre up to 1992. At least one stay in Vienna annually was financed by them, and I could once again go to Oslo the similar way, then to Athens, Madrid, to Sterling in Scotland, Dubrovnik, Warsaw, Amsterdam, Aix en Provence and Moscow. I cannot complain against the Academy either for any missed foreign missions. Though it is true that I could go to Sofia and Warsaw only in 1975 as a delegate of the Academy, but in 1978 I already participated in the World Congress of Sociology held in Uppsala in this capacity, and next in a similar event in Mexico City in 1982. Due to budgetary considerations only a small Hungarian delegation could travel to the latter one, and I as well as Rudi Andorka was left out of the proposed membership of the group. Later on, due to political considerations realizing that the idea of being kept deliberately from the Congress as non-party members could not be justified, we were sent after the delegation that had already gone by a chartered flight in the last minute. The cost of our business-class ticket on the regular KLM flight was several times as much as a seat on the chartered one we had to miss. The Mexico Congress primarily enriched me by tourist experiences, but in addition it strengthened my acquaintance with the Boston Professor John Moge which later on developed into friendship. Moge was not a great scholar but a good organizer; he was the main assistant to Hill in organizing the Committee for Family Sociology of ISA and an exceptionally kind man. Our friendship survives and he is a regular partner in correspondence. In 1984 I went to the US for discussing the American-Hungarian comparative research launched with him in Minneapolis, when he took me for a three-day drive from Washington to Minneapolis through the Appalachian Mountain, the plains of Ohio and Indiana, and Chicago. After the discussion I went to Los

Angeles where I was guest of Mrs Baló Éva Bolgár for a couple of days. The Academy paid for my participation in seminars on family sociology held in Helsinki and Leuven respectively. I participated in these seminars already as the Chairman of the Committee for Family Sociology of the International Sociological Association elected for four years. It was related to this new function that I was invited to Melbourne, Australia to the conference held there. The cost of my travel was covered by the hosts. My 26-hour flight was terribly tiring, and this is my most enduring memory, together with being seated next to the Governor-General at the opening banquet and standing listening to God Save the Queen. So, I could tick off Australia, too. My trip to China a year later was far more interesting, where I went as a member of the Academy delegation headed by Kálmán Kulcsár. We went along the route of Beijing–Chengtu–Lhasa–Hsian, and the Tibetan section was particularly unforgettable. My presentations in Hungarian were translated by a Chinese colleague who had graduated in Hungary. In Lhasa his translation was further translated into Tibetan by another interpreter. I had Karinthy's relevant writing in mind there. It was in 1985, when efforts toward reform could be felt in the statements of some Chinese partners.

The cultural attaché of the British Embassy repeatedly visited me as director of the Institute, and even the Ambassador invited me to his residence. My wife had prominent success with him because of her excellent English pronunciation. As a result of this contact the British Academy invited me for a three-week stay in Britain in 1985, which I utilized in spring. I could go to the British Isles once again after 12 years, this time not only to London, but as a result of the excellent organization of my hosts I could visit Brighton, Canterbury, Hull, Birmingham, North Wales, Bristol, Oxford and Cambridge, and could get in touch with British colleagues involved in the topics of the family and ageing. As regards the subsequent period the most significant visit was the one in North Wales, where I got acquainted with Clare Wenger and her husband Roger Headley, with whom a profound friendship developed with Kati's participation. Clare was and is still an expert researcher into the problems of ageing; she is an intelligent scholarly partner, and a warm-hearted, helpful woman. Roger is one of the best known thinkers in social science I have come across in my life. Social network is his main area. His broad knowledge in history and arts was staggering. In 1988 we were the guests of the Wenger-Headley couple in North Wales, in a small village called Gvlyog when we went to Britain on our own, and we could go to Carnarfon, could see Snowdon, the highest peak of Wales. Next summer we welcomed them at Révülöp at Lake Balaton. Later on I would return to our connection. I could spare some amount during my official tour so we could go back to Britain with Kati in summer as tourists.

I had yet another memorable journey in the colors of the Academy. In 1987 the Japanese institution organizing cultural relations invited me to Japan for three weeks. I had to give presentations in Tokyo, Hiroshima and Osaka. My presentations were honored by fabulous fees given to me besides a sizeable per diem, and I could put aside my earning for our private tourist trip planned for 1988. In Japan it was a surprise to me that the knowledge of English of most of the Japanese colleagues was rather poor. It was only the demographers who were "in full command of the English language". I had lots of lovely tourist experiences, but this trip was not much profitable

academically. In Japan what really lends prestige is if someone is involved in the history of learning. Hence the main topic of Akimoto, a professor of the noted Waseda University was the early work of Karl Mannheim, therefore he contacted me with great interest while I was in Tokyo, and next he came to Budapest for a visit of several months. We developed cordial relations with the Akimoto couple, but I had little to say to Professor Akimoto professionally. I had more in common with Professor Ms Hiroko Nishimura, who was also a member of the Presidium of the International Committee for Family Sociology, and with Dr Simizu, a researcher into deviancy. Both of them were our guests at Hegyalja Street. Thanks to Simizu, one of my presentations was published in Japanese, too.

In the spring of 1988 I organized the seminar of the Committee for Family Sociology by way of my farewell, where my family sociologist friends also came, John Moge, Bernie Farber and Bob Lewis from America, Jan Trost from Uppsala, Weifried Dumon from Belgium, Hiroko Nishimura from Japan, Peter Lasslet from Cambridge, Hungarian researchers like Andorka, Somlai and many others. The seminar had a pleasant atmosphere: everyone could speak about his or her hobby. Kati was the hostess, contributing to the development of the favorable atmosphere. The invitation coming from Lasslet was also due to her, so that during our private visit planned for the summer of 1988 we should be his guests as well as of the Trinity College, Cambridge (...)

Though I did learn a great deal between 1975 and 1988, and have put my name down in several new areas, these years were more of collecting and harvesting the fruits of seeds sown earlier. The greatest acknowledgement of my activities up to that time was undoubtedly my appointment as director, but I did not underestimate my professorial appointment either. My academic publications also meant satisfaction, which were numerically lagging behind my friend Rudi's output, yet I am convinced that they did introduce some new ideas to Hungarian thinking and disputes in social science, or became useful in mediating ideas and research practice emerging in the international literature in a systematized way for the Hungarian readers and users. I have preserved the integrity of my worldview based on religious morality as it developed during my upbringing. I saw its acknowledgement in that the Calvinist congregation of Pápa elected me honorary presbyter on Pentecost 1981, though I was aware that the honorable title was directly attributable to the fact that I declined an inheritance after the death of my aunt Katalin, her house in Pápa which was to become the joint property of me and Erika, and bequeathed it to the Pápa congregation.

I enjoyed and appreciated the broadening of my international relations. It was rewarding to know that noted foreign researchers have also accepted me as their partner and treated me as equal. To that the support of my superiors and primarily of Kálmán Kulcsár was also needed to overcome the mistrust of the omnipotent party organs towards me and to let me travel in the world in the colors of Hungary, without any political restrictions. Whenever I expressed myself most of the Western partners realized in no time that I was speaking primarily on my own behalf, and at the most represented the Hungarian sociologists, but was in no way the mouth-piece of the authorities. This had become clear sooner or later even to the agents of science policy in the socialist countries, but they tolerated me, and I never heard of their protests

against my appearances. I did not demonstrate openly my views different from their outlook, but it was perfectly unambiguous in discussions of specific issues. In most of the so-called socialist countries I could find colleagues who acknowledged it with agreement, but I could not expect their support. It was revealed primarily at the annual meetings of the directors of socialist countries, where I had to be present already as a deputy director. (...)

My income ensured a peaceful, stable and balanced livelihood and way of life. I was not motivated by desire of acquisition, I was satisfied with preserving and keeping the inherited objects in good condition, and I particularly did not wish to acquire real estate. We primarily spent our savings on holidays. The one-month holidays at Révfülöp consumed quite something. (We had to pay rent for the rooms; we were eating in restaurants daily, and had other expenses without economizing.) Foreign incomes were all spent on tourist trips. I did not buy a car either. When in the 70s I could have already afforded it I felt it was too late for me to obtain routine as a Sunday driver, when I would endanger myself, the life of my relatives and of others when sitting behind the steering wheel. There remained the taxi, which we used with moderation. We fully agreed on these issues with Kati.

(...)

The greatest acknowledgements were conferred on me for my academic career after my retirement. It was at that time that I was invited to teach at foreign universities; that I was awarded the Széchenyi Prize, was elected member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, József Antall invited me to be a member of his cabinet, and I was awarded the highest governmental decoration at the age of 75.

My year in Vienna as a university professor was completely successful. The lessons required hard work and profound preparations, but the enduring presence of the students proved that they felt they were getting something new from me and that my lectures in German could be understood. Our flat was in an inner district of the city and we had all comforts. My greatest joy was that Kati felt happy. With her clever economy she could walk around the department stores at her pleasure and shopped for her grandchildren for whom we regularly went back to Budapest monthly for one or two days. We could even receive guests: Gergely and Marci spent a week each with their wives, and my aunt Ida also spent a few days with us. Our relationship with Erich Bodzenta and his wife Martha became friendly to such an extent that they offered toughing which we readily accepted. It is not a minor thing in the Austrian-German culture in the case of people belonging to the older generation!

While still in Vienna I received an invitation to Uppsala. I spent there two months to do some research together with Jan Trost and to give some lectures to the sociologist students of the university. Trost arranged for our invitation to Sweden and he worked out also the financial background of our stay. The Swedish scholarship was quite meagre, and the flat rented for two months could not be compared to the one in Vienna, but it was located in a pleasant wooded environment. From our window we often saw hares on the grassy space in front of our house. There was ample opportunity and time for strolls and exercise. Kati was in high spirits here too, though her English was rarely appreciated in the Swedish shops. It was an unpleasant experience for me to find that the audiences and even the colleagues at the university had poor English. I attribute it

to this fact that save Trost I had no significant partner during my two-month stay. But a close friendship evolved with him and his friend, Irene Levin, who was a professor of Oslo University. Trost was highly respected not only in the international community of family researchers but also at home. The Swedish government employed him as an adviser to making decisions on family policy. He was not readily opening up but after we got to know each other better and he recognized my good traits, he became an intelligent and helpful friend. We stayed in Uppsala between 15 March and 15 May 1990.

In the autumn of 1990 I got a call telling me that next day I should visit Prime Minister József Antall in his office in the houses of Parliament. The idea of forming a government was in the air. I guessed that Antall contacted me in this issue. As directors of institutes we were in touch but one could talk about friendship only between our fathers. I had great sympathy in every respect towards the younger József Antall and approved of his policy to that date, but I did not intend to participate in politics in the future either. I visited him at the given hour with this kind of firm resolution. He spoke about the planned formation of government, and requested me to accept my nomination for the labor portfolio. By that time his grave illness was common knowledge which made refusal difficult, but with reference to the 'chief of staff' kind of limitations of my abilities and my rather limited knowledge of employment policy I evaded the offer. Kati fully agreed with my decision. Later on, however, I undertook to play a role in editing the Hungarian Review sponsored by the government and I strove to perform this task conscientiously for years. (...)