

# **BARTÓK'S YEARS IN AMERICA**

**BY VILMOS JUHÁSZ**

**PREFACE BY YEHUDI MENUHIN**

**INTRODUCTION BY SÁNDOR VERESS**

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## **PUBLISHER'S PREFACE**

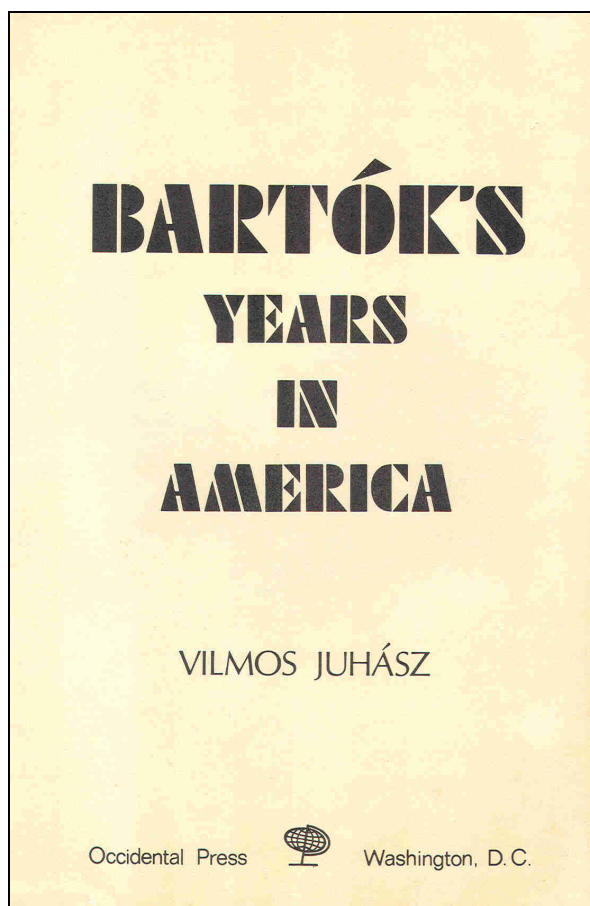
With this book we pay tribute to Béla Bartók on the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth. The volume was originally published by the Hungarian *Occidental Press* publishing house in Washington D.C. Present electronic publication is an unabridged version of the 1981 edition.

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MIKES INTERNATIONAL



"I found (the book) very touching and more than interesting ... I am an early — indeed, pioneer — admirer of the music of Béla Bartók in the United States. Béla Bartók was a fighting word forty years ago — I should know because I fought my way through that campaign, but I loved his music then, and I still do. It is wonderful how he has become first a fashion and a cult object, and now a classic. What a pity he could not have had some better recognition while he was alive."

Rome, Feb. 18, 1963.

(Katherine Anne Porter)

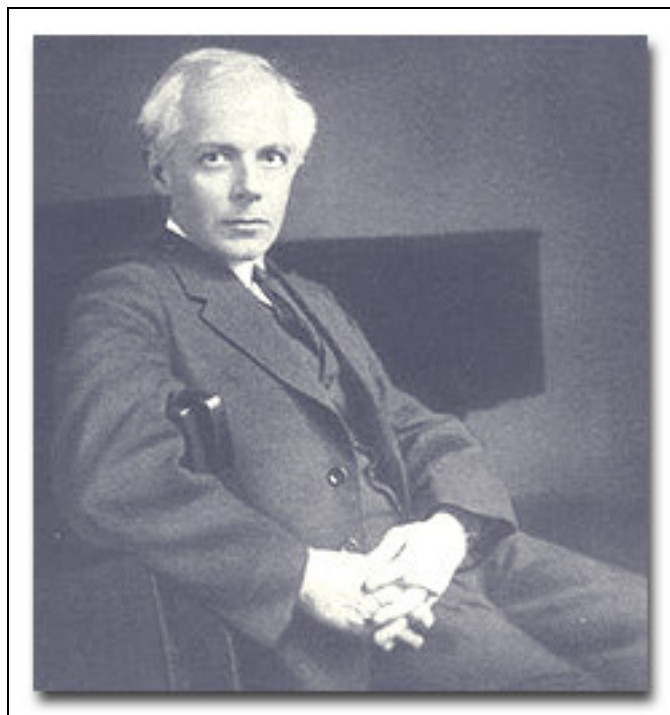
"This book ... complements a series of details to the general picture of Bartók's American years."

(Sándor Veress)

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Professor Vilmos Juhász (1899-1967) was professor of Comparative Cultural History at Szeged University and was the author of numerous works in Hungarian, French and English. He left Hungary in 1948 and subsequently pursued his academic career in the United States. He wrote several studies in English on Bartók, the Populist literary movement which followed in his footsteps, and the Hungarian literature of the same period.

His particular field of study was the relationship between religious faith and creativity in the literary arts. His interest in Bartók's music stemmed to a large degree from his examination of the elements of folk culture.



## BÉLA BARTÓK

(1881 — 1945)

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## PREFACE

I believe this book will prove a useful exposition of the true state of Béla Bartók during his American years, and of his attitude toward the United States, as well as of the attitude of his American colleagues and associates toward him.

That has as yet not been done, and the absence of this valid documentation has given rise to extravagant and fanciful descriptions, which do not correspond to the facts.

The personal description of Bartók by those who knew him is indeed, as always, illuminating and fascinating.

7<sup>th</sup> January, 1960.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Vilmos Juhász". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I extend my grateful thanks to the following persons who contributed essential information or who gave technical assistance: Ernő Balogh, István Barankovics, Péter Bartók, István Csicsery-Rónay, Ottó Déri, Mrs. Anthony Domonkos, Alex Harsányi, H.W. Heinsheimer, Mr. and Mrs. Julius Holló, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Kecskeméti, Mrs. Salme Kuri, Robert M. Pierson, Israel Rappaport, and István Sugaar.

The main purpose of this book — a modest contribution to the Bartók literature — is to record the experience and reminiscences encompassing Bartók's years in America. The recollections are those of persons here in New York who were closely associated with Béla Bartók, the man and composer, and who prefer that their identities not be publicized.

Vilmos Juhász



## FOREWORD

This little collection of interviews on Béla Bartók was first published in Hungarian in mimeographed form at the beginning of 1956. It originated as a reaction to the baffling fact that Béla Bartók was given the Communist International Peace Prize posthumously in 1955. This was especially surprising, as — up to that time — Bartók's music has been criticized in the most derogatory terms behind the Iron Curtain.

Professor Juhász, incensed by this hypocritical expropriation, embarked on an extensive consultation with Bartók's surviving acquaintances — most of whom are no longer living. Ten of Bartók's friends, pupils, fellow-musicians and doctors were interviewed. An exciting picture of Bartók emerges from their testimony. His opinions, private passions, and weaknesses are discussed as well as his "transcendentally humanistic", "prophetic", but also "distinctly provoking" personality.

Now one of the most popular modern composers, Bartók in his youth was called "a crazy genius, but a genius" by a friend of Wagner and Liszt. It was in America that his creative spirit reached its final flowering which could be broken only by his long, mortal illness.

The interviewees also dispel the bolshevists' claim in the fifties that Bartók was a precursor of their "socialism", and, had he survived he would have seen his ideals fulfilled by their regime. "A world of terror and lies", this was Bartók's verdict on bolshevism.

After the 1956 Revolution the estimation of Bartók changed fundamentally in Hungary. Today research on him has attained a very high level. Even so, nobody can resurrect Bartók's deceased companions. This little piece of oral history can greatly enhance the composite picture of this noble Hungarian genius.

THE PUBLISHER

## INTRODUCTION

It looks as though this world has become a place of an ever increasing flood of human migration. It began in Europe towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and lasted well into the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup>, when masses of people — mostly peasants and handworkers — left their homes in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Poland, Ireland and went, under great economic pressure, to America where the prospect of finding work was more promising than in their homeland. This was a movement of desperation to escape starvation and poverty in their native country where the economic situation and social conditions were for them a living death. Thus the motive of this migration of hundred of thousands was a social-economic one.

Then came World War I which tore Europe to pieces, producing the Russian October Revolution (1917), with that the first act of political emigration began. Only at that time there were not the peasants and workers who sought better living conditions elsewhere but the nobility, the royalty and intellectuals who tried to escape — if they could — execution or imprisonment simply because of their social standing or nonconformity with the new regime. Ironically there was also another emigration in the opposite direction during the twenties, that of those idealistic communists who, being persecuted in their homeland because of their political activities, sought refuge in Soviet-Russia or in countries where they were granted political asylum. Still, even more ironic is the fact that after Lenin's death a group of Soviet leaders, who fell in disgrace under Stalin, were forced to run along the same road to exile exactly like those whom they, a few years previously, had condemned to the same fate.

With Nazism, the situation in Europe began to deteriorate dangerously. Again thousands of people were forced to leave their homes in order to save their lives. Then, for the first time, there emerged another type of émigré: one who, though not directly endangered physically, but because of an ethical-moral conviction unable to tolerate an inhuman political doctrine had chosen the way of voluntary emigration. Generalizations are never expedient but one might say that this kind of emigration is perhaps the most painful, most conflicting one, because it depends solely on an individual, spiritual-rational — or irrational — decision based alone on idealistic motives of a humanistic attitude. There were quite a number of great personalities from the intellectual, artistic, literary and political world who took this step demonstratively, like for instance Pablo Casals, Picasso, Madariaga, De Falla of Franco-Spain, Thomas Mann, Hindemith, Paul Klee of Hitler-Germany, Toscanini, Carlo Levi of Italy and so forth.

However, truth always has a counter truth. To persevere under adverse political circumstances and take upon one's self an inner emigration can be equally heroic and demonstrative. In a dictatorship this might end with the total spiritual destruction of the person as in the case of Shostakovich, which illustrates this so tragically.

Finally, the last War with the lunatic "peace" agreement of Yalta towards the end, which brought upon the world in its consequences an even bigger catastrophe than the War itself, created a situation in which practically this whole planet became the scene of a never ceasing emigration for millions of people.

It was necessary to make this short survey about emigration as a global phenomenon in order to establish the background for Bartók's move which was also the kind of voluntary emigration we discussed above. He himself never considered his leaving Hungary as an "emigration", for he hoped to return after the victory over Hitler. Destiny decided differently and his step alas, actually became an emigration forever.

Bartók's decision to leave Hungary voluntarily was not a primarily political move, although it had, in so far, a political implication as it was triggered by the growing danger of a possible Nazi-occupation of Hungary, or at least the possibility of forcing upon the nation a foreign ideological doctrine. However, in both cases the outcome of such an event would have meant a severe curtailment of individual freedom, the loss of all forms of natural law, especially the freedom of speech and movement, which for Bartók meant the freedom of musical speech as well. Truth and freedom were the two main pillars of his character in which he did not accept any compromise and the mere thought of being robbed of these basic values of human life were for him unbearable.

Between a decision for emigration and putting it into practice lies a long road paved with pain and sorrow. It took Bartók more than a year of bitter inner struggle before he finally left Hungary with his wife on October

12, 1940, to reach one of the last ships at Lisbon which took them to New York. A letter he wrote me to London in the summer of 1939 speaks clearly of that grave spiritual conflict posing the question of whether to stay or to leave:

Of course it is another question whether one should emigrate (if possible) or not. One could speak on this subject from different points of view. If somebody stays, albeit could leave, people might say that he agrees tacitly with everything happening here. And one couldn't even deny this because it would only cause trouble and staying thus would lose its purpose. On the other hand, one could also say that into whatever tangle the country gets, everyone should remain and try to help as he can. The question is only whether one could hope that within a measurable space of time an efficacious effort of help could be possible. Hindemith tried this in Germany for 5 years but then, it seems, he lost confidence. I — but this is purely a personal matter — have no confidence at all. But certain works I can do only here (for at least one more year) because they are connected with materials in the Museum. Conversely I see nowhere a country where to go would be worth while if one expected more than sheer vegetating. So for the time being I am entirely without counsel although my feeling tells me that anyone who can should go.

Bartók was not the only one who has been confronted with this ghastly problem in those times. But for him who was rooted so essentially in the deepest layer of Hungarian culture through his life long research into the ancient strata of folk music tradition, a parting from this late artistic vintage meant a great existential risk. He was fully aware of this fact and had no illusions about the future.

The question whether the USA had been the country for him worth while to settle down in, became the center of a futile controversial debate pro and con after his death. The fact that Bartók did not find full acknowledgment in war-time America has been exploited politically by the ill-famed Hungarian communist regime of 1949-1956 up to the absurdly hypothetical point that if Bartók had lived he would not hesitate to return to post-war Hungary. There exists a letter by Bartók dated July 1, 1945 to the composer Jenő Zádor in which he wrote: "The news coming from Hungary are extremely appalling: frightful devastation, terrible famine, menacing chaos.... God knows how many years it will take before the land can recover (if at all). I would also like to go home but for good..." This ambiguous last sentence was the subject of arguments by the communists who concluded stubbornly that if Bartók was such an ardent anti-Nazi then he would certainly be pro-communist and as such he would come home. Useless to say that the same communist authorities put most of his work on Index and according to the catechism of Marxist social realism allowed only some of his simpler folk music arrangements to be performed. So for Hitler-Germany his compositions were stamped as "entartete Kunst" (degenerated art) and for Rákosi-Hungary as bloody "bourgeois art" ! (The sad fact is that good musicians still holding high official posts in Hungary were among the propagators of this ruling while today they act as great admirers of Bartók's genius. Tempora mutantur....)

Equally controversial are the views about those last five years of Bartók's life in the States. Was he happy in the New World? Was his financial situation satisfactory? Was he successful as a composer and pianist? It is needless to ask whether he was happy in America because he was certainly not. Can one imagine a man like Bartók who once said about himself that the happiest days of his life were those he spent in villages among peasants, who lived in and with nature (dozens of his compositions have titles referring to nature), who had a herbarium, gathered insects and minerals, watched forests, fields and waters, listened to the sounds of nature, who whenever there was a chance went to Switzerland to climb mountains, being shut in a flat of a New York skyscraper in a noisy mid-town street? Certainly, there were some luminous spots in this respect when friends — and also the magnanimous actions of ASCAP — made it possible for him to spend some time in rural environments, but there were temporary occasions not altering his everyday life in New York, his permanent site.

His financial situation was more than modest, sometimes even rather precarious. The engagement at Columbia University for the notation and systematization of the big Serbo-Croatian collection by Parry brought him a small but at least certain monthly income during one year. But the extension of the assignment for another year was made possible only through a joint action of friends who donated the money because Columbia could not raise the sum for this purpose (!) and, of course, all this without Bartók's knowledge for he would not have accepted help in this form. Like in everything else he was also in financial questions extremely correct. Many people did not understand this and often complained about Bartók being a "difficult man" who couldn't be helped. Yes, every great personality is "difficult" in one way or the other, not measurable with the man in the street. Thus Bartók was "difficult" in the way that he was most reserved, buttoned-up with people who were not really near to him and generally did not speak about personal matters.

In the States, there were very few people to whom he opened his heart fully. One of them was Mrs. Wilhelmina Creel, a former American pupil of his who came to study in Budapest before the war and with whom he kept close contact also in the States. She was the addressee of many important letters of Bartók wherein he gave an account of his life, sorrows, struggles, successes and debacles — they read almost like an autobiography. In the first two and a half years of his American stay Bartók suffered many hard set-backs. In a letter (March 2, 1942) to Mrs. Creel he complains about his financial situation:

Our position is getting worse and worse with every day. All I can say is that never in my life since I earn my living (since I was 20) I found myself in such a terrible predicament in which I perhaps shall get in the near future.... My wife bears this heroically.... She tries to find some work, for instance teaching. But how can one find pupils or an engagement.... And what is your opinion about this? I am rather pessimistic and have lost all my confidence in people, countries, in everything.... Till now we had two pianos free of charge from the Baldwin Company, one "baby grand" and an "upright", I just received notice that they will take away the "upright". Of course we have no money to rent another piano. And so we will have no possibility to learn two-piano pieces.

And in another letter dated from December 31, 1942:

With the 1<sup>st</sup> of January I am "dismissed" from Columbia, it seems they have no more money for me. This is most annoying because during two years it was not possible to finish more than about half of the work (the Parry collection) and I hate anything incomplete.... However, it seems that my career as a composer reached the end: boycotting of my works by the leading orchestras continues, neither my old nor my new works are played. This is a great shame — but of course not for me.

Also his publisher, Mr. Ralph Hawkes, complained about the general disinterest in Bartók's music:

During 1940 and 1941, I spent a good deal of time in the United States and travelled extensively, with the promotion of the contemporary music section of the Boosey and Hawkes Orchestral Catalogue as my main interest. To promote Bartók was no easy matter and many were the times I met with blank refusals either to perform his works or to give him and his wife engagements to play. Apathy and even aversion to this sort of music was to be found everywhere. Some organizations and conductors who were outspoken in their refusals were noticeably prominent in performing his works after his death, when general recognition made it impossible to ignore them any longer. (In: "Tempo", Autumn 1949, No.13, Ralph Hawkes: Béla Bartók. A recollection by his publisher.)

It was an irony of fate that when at last Bartók's position began to consolidate in the summer of 1943, when the prospect of new engagements arose (Columbia, Harvard, Seattle universities), when his music appeared more frequently on concert programs and there were also important commissions, his health began to deteriorate seriously. (From this time on there is scarcely a letter of him which does not discuss his state of health.) It was primarily Yehudi Menuhin who was instrumental in improving Bartók's artistic situation. By commissioning the "Violin Solo Sonata" and performing the "Violin Concerto" in Minneapolis, Washington, Baltimore, Pittsburgh with great success, Bartók's music began to fascinate the public and catch on among the musicians. Menuhin gave the first performance of the "Solo Sonata" in New York on November 26, 1944, and Bartók, who attended the concert, wrote: "it was a marvelous performance." Also in 1944, on December 1 and 2, Koussevitzky conducted in Boston the "Concerto for Orchestra" which Bartók composed at his behest in Saranac Lake, N.Y., where he was sent by the ASCAP for convalescence. Meanwhile, he completed the systematization and the fair copies of his big Roumanian collection of 2555 melodies and 1752 poetic texts with a scientific study about this music. (The three volumes of this tremendous work have been published by the Bartók Archives and its Founder-Director, Dr. Victor Bátor, in 1967.) Also new compositions began to take shape: the "Third Piano Concerto" and the "Concerto for Viola". "We left Saranac Lake this morning" — he wrote on August 30, 1945 — "We got away sooner than planned, Ditta feels not quite well and I too, have an abnormal temperature.... In Saranac I started to write some new works but alas, couldn't finish them and I don't know whether I can continue the work in New York. And then, in September to William Primrose: "I am glad to let you know that the draft of the 'Viola Concerto' is ready.... If nothing comes in between I can finish it in 5 to 6 weeks so that in the second half of October I can send you the score..."

On September 22 he was taken to hospital and about noon, on the 26<sup>th</sup>, died.

Fortunately 1956 sowed the seed of a new cultural era in Hungary, which ramified and grew into a rich and large field of relatively free artistic, literary and scientific activity. In this frame of renewal the research work and study of the musical and ethnomusical oeuvre of Bartók reached a standard which represents a unique phenomenon in today's musicological investigation and interpretation. So the analysis of Bartók's American years, with their positive and negative sides, furnishes us with an objective reference to the last section of the Master's life with all its tremendous tensions, strains and unrest. But — "scripta manent" — what can be more convincing about the life of a man if not his written words like, in this case, Bartók's own letters in which he opened his mind and soul to persons whom he felt congenial with. Contemporaneous recollections, especially if they are not from professionals of the same genre, are necessarily subjective because people often project their own views, feelings and conceptions into their chosen object involuntarily. And even more so when such interviews are made extemporaneously. Therefore, when reading these reminiscences in this book, one should always bear in mind that their function is only to complement a series of details to the general picture of Bartók's American years without claiming for exclusiveness.

A similar book, actually the counterpart of this, has been published recently in Budapest, and it lies in the nature of the matter that it has the same points of quality as well as the same shortcomings discussed here. (Bónis, Ferenc. Így láttuk Bartókot (We saw Bartók like this) Budapest, 1981.) So at least on this level West and East have met at midway!

It is a great asset and good fortune that a rich collection of Bartók's letters (1088 pieces) could be published in Budapest in 1976 by Dr. János Demény. This volume is the result of an indefatigable, fastidious scholarly research of thirty years and with its extensive documentary references represents today a publication of utmost importance in the field of music history related to the life time of Bartók.

All our quotations from letters are taken from this book with the intention of underpinning the often divergent accounts, views and statements over Bartók's American years with a solid basis of written facts.

Berne, August 1981.

Sándor Veress

# Part I

As the introductory study of Vilmos Juhász has lost much of its timeliness during the quarter century since it appeared, we are publishing only excerpts of it, especially when these excerpts help to explain parts of the interviews.

This study deals with a great creator who in his whole intellectual and emotional make-up was an enemy of all manifestations of the totalitarian spirit, and who for this reason spent his last years in the United States.

On May 13, 1955, however, the entire press behind the Iron Curtain published the following report, along with extensive and laudatory comments:

According to the Secretariat of the World Peace Council, the International Peace Prize Committee has decided to award the 1954 (posthumous) peace prize to Béla Bartók, the famous Hungarian composer, whose works have contributed to a significant degree to the cause of friendship among peoples.

The World Peace Council, as we know, is one of the most important organs of bolshevist propaganda in the whole world. It is an organ which stigmatizes as an enemy of peace and a war-monger anyone who, anywhere, in any way, opposes Soviet power-politics, and it proclaims as a great friend of peace and an enemy of war-mongers anyone who in word or deed serves the interests of this Soviet policy. We do not mean thereby to say that everyone who receives this prize is a determined and conscientious flagbearer of Soviet imperial designs. However, the ways and errors of human intellect are infinitely complex, and it may happen that they lead from a bonafide starting point almost involuntarily into the labyrinth of the bolshevist peace movement. But the most difficult situation is that of a dead person who cannot defend himself against such a classification.

All the propaganda implicit in the Bartók commemoration of 1950 is revealed more completely and openly in the published comments during the anniversary in 1952. We quote a few characteristic passages from the September 26, 1952, issue of "Magyar Nemzet", pointing out particularly that, in the usual fashion, this propaganda is not content with anti-American negativism; it also becomes positive, extolling workers' competitions, increased production, subscriptions to loans, etc.

Seven years ago today Béla Bartók died. To the north of New York near the town of Hartsdale lies the Ferncliff Cemetery, the quiet country cemetery wedged among woods where seven years ago they buried one of the greatest geniuses in the history of modern music. ASCAP, the American composers' federation, which generously assumed the expenses of burial, chose this cemetery. The moundless grave is marked by a small memorial in the form of a slab of stone 8 by 12 centimeters in size. Upon it there is no name or even a single line of writing, just the number 470. ASCAP which earned hundreds of thousands of dollars from Béla Bartók the concert artist while he was in good health and performing, and from Béla Bartók's works before and after his death, didn't have the money for a twenty or thirty dollar gravestone. One's heart weeps upon seeing the familiar photograph: Bartók's youngest son crouches on the ground, his left hand extended as if already trying to ward off the encroachments of the grass upon the last, scarcely visible sign, the number 470....

Bartók's health was attacked by a deadly disease. With a temperature of 39 degrees centigrade (about 102 degrees Fahrenheit), this giant in the history of modern music stood amid America's stony wastes in the cold falling rain. He didn't have enough money to pay a taxi to bring a doctor to his sick wife. He would have given piano lessons had there been anyone to take them. And just when preparing to go home — how heartrendingly the string passages of the "Concerto for Orchestra" wail, how they yearn for a distant beloved homeland — Bartók died. Only a few good friends accompanied his casket. At his grave a scarcely perceptible small slab of stone — upon it the number 470.

Could we find any graver accusation against the cultural policy of the representatives of American imperialism? Hardly.... Bartók sensed the future: our present. Our present and future which, as it were, become fulfilled day after day, and all those dreams mature which Béla Bartók together with his great friend and fellow-revolutionary, Zoltán Kodály, dreamed, and for which Bartók battled throughout a lifetime studded with prodigious works.

All Hungarians are subscribing to the peace loan. Involuntarily a sigh breaks from us, the sigh that always comes as often as we think of him, remember him. Oh, if he were only here with us and could see the fulfillment of his dreams and struggles!

After all this, one cannot doubt the close and direct contact between the Bartók image invoked by Hungarian Communist propaganda and the international peace prize awarded to Bartók. It was this propaganda image which received the peace prize.

The posthumous honoring of Bartók was thus commented upon by music critic Sándor Asztalos:

Bartók remained loyal to this ideal unto death — loyal as a man, as a scholar, as a composer. He emphatically rejected every thought, attempt, or attack obstructing this great ideal. That is why he hated fascism and all forms of inhumanity. That is why at the end of his life he also came to hate the land of his exile, the United States. ("Magyar Nemzet", May 13, 1955)

— — —

In his autobiography published by the periodical "Magyar Írás" (Hungarian Writing) during the year 1921, Bartók thus refers to the first period of his calling:

I was torn from stagnation as by a stroke of lightning at the first Budapest performance of "Thus Spake Zarathustra" (Richard Strauss' symphonic poem) in 1902.... Still another circumstance exerted a decisive influence on my development. At that time there arose in Hungary a national current which pervaded the arts too. The idea that something intrinsically Hungarian should be created also in music caught my attention, directing it towards the study of folk music, or rather what then was regarded as Hungarian folk music. Under these various influences in 1903 I composed a symphonic poem entitled "Kossuth". Meanwhile the magic of Richard Strauss' music vanished. An intensive study of Liszt — especially his less popular creations like "Années de pèlerinage", "Harmonies poétiques et religieuses", the "Faust Symphony", and "Totentanz" — led me to the essence of his music and finally revealed to me this composer's true significance....

In addition, I came to realize that the Hungarian tunes mistakenly regarded as folk tunes were in reality for the most part trivial popular melodies of scant interest. Thus in 1905 I began an investigation of Hungarian peasant music, which until then had been practically unknown....

When at Kodály's suggestion — it was during this same period — I became familiar with and began to study Debussy's compositions, I noticed with astonishment that in his melodies, too, certain pentatonic tones corresponding to those in our folk music prevailed. These quite certainly must be ascribed to the influence of eastern European folk music, probably Russian. In Igor Stravinsky's work we perceive similar tendencies. So it would seem that our era is affected by this current, even in regions geographically distant from each other. We see art music enlivened by the elements of peasant music which the creations of the last centuries have left untouched.

At this point we must to some extent deliberate on the aspect of Hungarian life which influenced Bartók and thereafter developed with him, coming to no small degree under his decisive influence. In those days Franz Joseph ruled over the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. His rule created a balanced form of life whose counterpart could be found only in Victorian England.

However, these times also manifested signs of social tension fostered by the strict stratification of the classes; a tidal wave of peasant immigration to the United States; the first strikes by industrial workers and peasants; and the first real peasant movements which strove to improve the lot of the agrarian strata. At this same time the national independence movement was greatly strengthened.

In the cultural field an entirely new spirit began to develop around the turn of the century. The younger generation of artists, and especially of writers, sought to break away from the heritage of classicists, romanticists, and sentimental epigones. Modern Western arts and literature turned mainly towards Paris. Yet this was no hinderance to, but rather an intensifying factor of, the reappraisal of the Hungarian spirit, of the rediscovery of the true values inherent in the Hungarian people.

Endre Ady was the greatest literary personality in this double movement, whose periodical "Nyugat" (The West), launched in 1908, indicated by its very title its program. Ady's volume of poetry, "New Poetry", published two years previously, proved a revolutionary literary bombshell. In these same years the great novelist Zsigmond Móricz was the protagonist of the non-romantic anti-sentimental portrayal of the peasant in literature.

These spiritual movements matured almost exclusively in Budapest, the national capital, where they were spearheaded by a broad intellectual stratum, European in culture. These intellectuals of Budapest also extended this spiritual revolution to problems of society, economics, history, and politics. These endeavors were brought to focus in the periodical, "Huszadik Század" (Twentieth Century) edited by the eminent Hungarian sociologist, Oszkár Jászi, later resident in America for many decades. These movements were not on just a single plane; after World War I more and more spiritual elements mingled with the, until then, strongly empirical spirit. This revival was manifested in the field of religion as well (Bishop Ottokár Prohászka, etc.).

Young Béla Bartók lived in this atmosphere, being closely linked with the "Nyugat" and "Huszadik Század" circles. At the same time, however, he also was alienated to a certain degree by this culture's almost exclusively metropolitan coloring. He was searching for a deeper and more universal reality and found this more genuine and true essence of reality in an unbroken contact with the people. His folksong collecting, apart from its great musical significance, represented direct contact and even living together with the peasantry — he called it the greatest and happiest experience of his life.

The fourth string quartet (1928) won him one of the highest musical awards of those years, the American Coolidge Prize, and with this began his very significant contact with America.

In connection with his acceptance of the Coolidge Prize, Bartók made an extensive tour throughout America lasting from December 1927 to February 1928 and including concerts in New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Portland, Los Angeles, Seattle, Denver, Kansas City, St. Paul, Boston, Cincinnati, and Chicago in which he performed with great success. This was an era of rebirth in American cultural life and Bartók was most favorably impressed.

In 1938, Barzin conducted for the first time in the United States Bartók's "Music for String Instruments, Percussion and Celesta", which received huge acclaim. His "Contrasts", commissioned by Benny Goodman, America's most famous clarinetist, was introduced by Goodman, Joseph Szigeti and Bartók himself. The Violin Concerto was played in the United States by Joseph Szigeti and Yehudi Menuhin. In a letter, Bartók made touching reference to the enthusiastic reception of his Solo Violin Sonata by soldiers on Kodiak Island in the Aleutians, where it was performed by Menuhin in June 1944.

In 1929, Bartók visited the Soviet Union on a concert tour. His willingness to undertake it may be attributed primarily to his desire to gain a personal impression of the "new world" developing there. Uncompromising objectivity was ever a Bartók hallmark; never would he allow himself to be led by slogans or predetermined concepts untested by direct experience, even when they corresponded to the truth. The Soviet world at that time had a mixed effect upon him. He was repelled by the terror which comprised the essence of this world....

Then came the "Axis" era, with its increasing political, social and cultural adaption to the National Socialist power and ideology in Germany. Bartók was plunged into despair by this fascism whose progressive encroachment threatened Hungary not only physically but spiritually. From 1938 on, he considered the prospect of fleeing this tyranny. His second journey to America (April-May 1940) was instinctively



"exploratory". He clearly foresaw how hard it would be for one so deeply rooted in Hungarian soil to forge a new existence in a wholly different world. In this regard he cherished no soaring hopes. "This trip actually is a leap from the intolerable into the uncertain", wrote Bartók on October 14, 1940, to a Swiss friend....

Bartók's American period, that is, the four years of his battle against mortal illness, resulted in four great compositions: the Koussevitzky-commissioned "Concerto for Orchestra" written in 1943 (to this day his most popular work), the "Solo Violin Sonata" for Yehudi Menuhin (1944), the "Piano Concerto No. 3" written secretly for his wife and the "Viola Concerto" commissioned by William Primrose and completed by Tibor Serly (1945). These large compositions reveal the full scope of his creative powers. Musicologists refer to this last period as his "melodic" or "idealistic" period. Both terms have many facets and for this very reason they say little, especially the latter, which is often abused.

Tibor Serly thus evaluates the place of these four last compositions in Bartók's lifework:

Béla Bartók's last four major works — all composed in America — represent Bartók at the peak of his creative maturity. Much of his music, unlike many of Bartók's earlier works, seems by comparison disarmingly warm and mellow. To some this has given rise to the impression that Bartók had made certain compromises. I do not hold this view. On the contrary, I believe that, along with the ever-widening appreciation of Bartók's greater output, in the end it will become obvious to all that the last four works, more so than all the others, will exert the greatest influence upon future trends in music. ("The Long Player", Bartók issue, October, 1953.)

How were people affected by this personality which, while deeply human, was at the same time "inhumanly" distant? In "The Long Player" (Bartók issue) Yehudi Menuhin thus describes his first meeting with Bartók:

I shall never forget my first meeting with him, it was in November, 1943. Already attracted by the score of his "Concerto for Violin" before I had even met him or heard his music I had performed this work with Dimitri Mitropoulos and the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra. Some two weeks later, having programmed his "Sonata for Piano and Violin", in Carnegie Hall, New York City, I was anxious to play this work for Bartók to receive his criticism before performing it in public. I had arranged to meet with him at a friend's home. Immediately, I was transported by his burning eyes and fascinated by the meticulous, immaculate air of this small and wiry person.

Without further ado, he sat down, produced his spectacles and a pencil, laid out a copy of the "Sonata" which he had brought along and as there were no further formalities, we began. Though I had no preconceived idea of his manner or appearance, his music had already revealed to me his innermost soul and secrets. A composer is unable to hide anything: by his music you shall know him.

Let us supplement this by Yehudi Menuhin's impressions after two years acquaintance with Bartók:

His knowledge and memory were staggering. His appearance belied the unfathomable fire and power of his character.... His presence gave no evidence of the barbaric grandeur or the mystic vision of his innermost self.

Only his eyes — those fantastically piercing eyes — gave him away. They betrayed his burning soul, while his body, almost consumed, jealously guarded its last strength for the most essential tasks. ("The Long Player", Bartók issue.)

The conscious or unconscious jealousy of creative spirit is an almost general phenomenon. Bartók, by contrast, was so generous towards his contemporaries that there is perhaps but one other such composer in the history of music: his model and artistic predecessor, Ferenc Liszt. Bartók devoted himself heart and soul to advancing the cause of his great composer contemporaries, while to propagate himself was an idea completely strange for him. He took the part of many who may have considered him a rival — reminiscent of the old masters for whom creation took precedence over their persons, and who at times hid their own works under assumed names.

The most striking characteristic of his outlook was a deep national consciousness which we cannot even characterize by the word patriotism, because it was not the cultivation of some abstract ideal but an instinctive elemental phenomenon evident in every breath he drew. From Gmunden on Sep. 8, 1903, he wrote his mother:

For my part I shall always serve a single aim throughout my life, in all fields, at all times and in all ways: the good of the Hungarian nation and of our homeland.

Béla Bartók, through his strong national consciousness, discovered the inner identity of peoples, particularly the universal forces controlling the life of the peasantry beyond all national conflicts and differences, and became one of the great promoters of mutual understanding among the East European peoples. While the official world of these same peoples sought to maintain a state of perpetual war, he paved the way for rapprochement and friendship among these peoples, so similar in their way of life, in the realm of the spirit.

"Please, accept in friendship these three Hungarian books", wrote Bartók in 1917 to the Roumanian teacher Ioan Busitia. "I send them to you as a token of future Hungarian-Roumanian friendship." He then spoke in his letter of his resumed study of the Roumanian language, and of his latest reading in Roumanian literature.

He protested, however, against those who turned his rising above national hatred, his relentless work devoted to mutual understanding among nations against his identifying with his own people. The fact that he collected the folk music of other Danubian nationalities and that he used in his own musical creations Roumanian or Slovak folk musical treasure just as well as the Hungarian one, was exploited by certain Roumanian and Slovak circles to qualify him as a Roumanian or Slovak composer.

"I consider myself a Hungarian composer", he wrote to Octavian Beu, a Roumanian musicologist (Jan. 10, 1931), "The fact that the melodies of some of my original compositions were inspired or based on Roumanian folk songs is no justification for classing me as a compositorul roman, such a label would have no more truth than the word 'Hungarian' applied to Brahms or Schubert, and is as inappropriate as if one were to speak of Debussy, as a Spanish composer because his works were inspired by themes of Spanish origin.... My real guiding principle, however — of which I have been fully conscious since I found myself as a composer — is the brotherhood of peoples, brotherhood in spite of all wars and conflicts. I try — to the best of my ability — to serve this idea in my music: therefore I don't reject any influence, be it Slovakian, Roumanian, Arabic or from any other source. The source must only be clean, fresh and healthy! Owing to my — let us say geographical — position it is the Hungarian source that is nearest of me, and therefore the Hungarian influence is the strongest. Whether my style — notwithstanding its various sources — has a Hungarian character or not (and that is the point) — is for others to judge, not for me. For my own part, I certainly feel that it has. For character and milieu must somehow harmonize with each other.

His relationship to Hungary and supra-nationalism was perhaps best characterized by an American admirer, H. W. Heinsheimer, whom we shall encounter at greater length further on: "He was Hungarian not more than St. Francis was Italian. The laws that governed his life were as eternal as the laws that move the stars."

To stand up uncompromisingly for the oppressed, the weak, in the everlasting struggle between oppressors and oppressed, was a basic attitude with him. It may be regarded as a cornerstone of his philosophy. He never hesitated, with the consistency typical of him, to take the consequences resulting from such an attitude.

What is more important, I scarcely can imagine any collaboration between the notorious Axis and the Western countries. One is bound to think it would have been best to get the painful operation over with now. Did you read carefully Chamberlain's important speech (after Godesberg or Gottesberg or, perhaps even better, Teufelsberg)?

...After this the influence of that regime of lies will spread even further and it will be held in even greater respect. One ought to leave for somewhere, but where? (Letter to Mrs. Müller-Widman, October 9, 1938)

It was his desire that this rebellion against power in the defense of the oppressed should not ease even after his death. A much quoted passage in his will — drawn up in Budapest on October 4, 1940, just before he emigrated to America — bears witness to this:

Let my funeral be as simple as possible. If after my death it should be proposed that a street be named after me or a memorial plaque set up in a public place my wish is this: so long as Budapest's former Oktogon and Körönd are named after those for whom they are now named, and further, so long as any square or street in Hungary is or will be named after these two men let no square or street or public building in this land be named after me, nor any memorial plaque set up any public place.

The two busy squares, Oktogon and Körönd, were in those days named after Mussolini and Hitler. After 1945 they were swiftly renamed after Stalin and Lenin. However, the Russian occupation, which felt that the transference of homage, from the two fallen dictators to their two dictators indicated a lack of consideration, quickly eliminated the two latter names and had the two squares reassume their original names. However, shortly afterwards two of Budapest's main streets received the names Lenin and Stalin. A third street, somewhat less important than the other two, was named after Bartók. How did this square with Bartók's last testament... when not only the Stalin statue — evoking the maneating giants found in fairy tales — but the whole series of Soviet triumphal monuments glowered over Budapest?

Béla Bartók was born a Catholic, and, as he himself revealed in his letters, was a faithful Catholic in his childhood. His inner, radical break with the church took place in his high-school years. He felt that outward show dominated over inner content in the highly conservative church of those days, and also that the church had identified itself too closely with the viewpoint of power politics and represented the interests of the poor and oppressed only to a minor degree. Later he made the break formally too, becoming a Unitarian on the grounds that this religion was hewn closest to the essence of faith and was least concerned with its trappings.

Let us conclude this first part by quoting an appraisal of the present and future significance of Bartók's music. Yehudi Menuhin, one of Bartók's most devoted interpreters, says:

The cumulative effect of these mysterious creations of music is incalculable. These great edifices of sound, demanding the utmost in dedication from those who would each time rebuild them, translating them into living sound according to the indicated plans in the score—these structures of sound are as the mirror to our changing cultures and to our constant passions wherein we may discover ourselves.

Truly, in the music of Bartók our age, our world, may discover itself. I use my own case as illustration, and I feel particularly privileged to have known this great man during his last years and glad to have been able to bring him the fervent reverence and devotion of a young musician.

This may have, in some unconscious way, assured him that his work and his music will be carried along with the ages, to inspire and illuminate humanity along its difficult and stony path. ("The Long Player", Bartók issue.)

## Part II

Rather than unfold a detailed memoir from a single viewpoint, we shall report on Bartók's years in America via conversations conducted with persons who were closely associated with him and enjoyed his confidence during those years. Those we shall hear from are most diverse as regards personality, interests, and outlook. Consequently, their discourse possesses the advantage of illumining the subject from different angles. Each sees Bartók according to his own personality and his own philosophy of life, adding individual color to the total picture. Subjective refractions cancel out at the end, and surprisingly enough, though inevitably, these multiple mirrors provide an amazingly unified semblance of Bartók. Our interviewees are persons of perspicacity and emotional balance, able to render objective judgment while revering the composer's memory, which still glows with the radiance of his singular personality. Each strives conscientiously to speak the truth, and thus their composite opinions of Bartók yield a valid portrait.

Absolute truth is naturally not theirs to give, for absolute truth is not for any of us to give with respect to another human being, particularly to a genius of Bartók's stature. In any event it is not our present task to furnish a definitive picture of Bartók's years in America. We are content to summarize in good conscience those details which the eddies of recollection bring to the surface. That is why we make no attempt to retouch these conversations, which naturally contain contradictions, but it becomes evident that such contradictions almost always refer to accidentals and not to essentials.

We identify our interviewees by letters — and for two reasons. First, for those who shared with him those years in America, Bartók is still living not only as a composer but as a man, directly and palpably. Secondly, quite a number are of Hungarian origin, with close relatives back home, who might be adversely affected by one or another statement.

### 1.

The first interviewees are the A. couple. We do not differentiate between husband and wife, because their pictures of Bartók coincide completely. The couple emigrated to America early in 1942, after having fled from Hitlerite Germany to France, where the husband was a leading member on the staff of a large American news agency. He is a well-known philosopher and sociologist; at present he fills an important post at a research institute. His wife is an artist adept at the piano and the harpsichord — in her youth she was Bartók's pupil and maintained her acquaintance with him until he left Hungary. In New York this couple maintained an intimate friendship with Bartók. For a while they lived in the same house. During the most difficult times, when the health of Bartók's wife also broke down, Mrs. A. did everything she could to make his life easier.

Shall we speak first of Bartók's view of the world? You're right. After all, much that seemingly resulted from outer circumstance arose from it. On the basis of my own experience, I might describe him as a spiritual rationalist — with emphasis on the second word rather than on the first. He was fanatically devoted to reason. In many respects the spirit of the Enlightenment animated him. I should mention his strong antipathy to authority. I assume you know what I mean. He despised and condemned all authority that sought to rule by fact of authority rather than by its own merits. This explains he would speak ironically of aristocracy as a caste. Of course, it was far from his intentions to belittle an aristocrat just because he was an aristocrat. Most of all, Bartók passionately hated authority which employed terror. You probably know how he severed all contacts with his publishers, the Universal Edition, when the Nazis took it over. He forbade the German radio to broadcast any of his works. He wouldn't fill out the Society of German Composers' racial questionnaires.

He took the utmost stand, as in all questions artistic or moral. He was unwilling to cooperate with fascism in any way or manner.

Paradoxical as it sounds, he was at the same time a great Hungarian patriot and a firm internationalist, i.e., he condemned all nationalism which sought to expand by belittling other nations or cultures. He could speak impeccably the languages of neighboring peoples; besides Slovak and Roumanian he spoke Serbian, Croatian and Ruthenian, along with some Russian. In New York he maintained close contact with a scholarly Roumanian couple and conducted long and elaborate debates with them on Roumanian linguistics; they were utterly amazed at his competence.

He worried over the fate of Hungary as a mother worries over her only child. Toward the end of his life, when Russia's victory became imminent, he was as concerned about his country's fate as if he were holding a vigil at the deathbed of his nearest kin. He was afraid that Hungary would have to drink the dregs of defeat, together with the Axis. "It was Nemesis," he said, "that Hungary should be swept to the side of the fascists. We weren't strong enough to stem the Nazi tide. It would be horrible if the victors were to repeat the mistakes they made after the first world war."

Here the talk was interrupted. When we continued, Bartók's financial situation was approached.

Bartók was one of those few modern composers who could have lived on his royalties had illness and other circumstances not intervened. Everything went well until the spring of 1943. If I add up Bartók's income, you will see what idiocy it is to talk of privations. First there was the Columbia assignment which for years assured him the bare necessities. Then there were the concerts alone and with Ditta, until illness prevented them. Furthermore, he had pupils in New York. That he didn't have more of them and didn't teach regularly was a matter of own volition; naturally I wouldn't reproach one of the greatest composers of this era for not being willing to give piano lessons when he felt how little time he had to express what he felt within him; and I also quite understand why throughout his life he refused to teach composition. After all, for him composition signified not a profession, but life, morals, everything, including his own being's innermost secrets, and if he had taught composition he would have had to disclose these. His royalties brought considerable additional sums. Then you doubtless know of the special commissions? The Koussevitzky Foundation's \$3,000 commission that resulted in the "Concerto for Orchestra", Yehudi Menuhin's \$1,000 commission for a solo violin sonata, and also Primrose's \$1,000 for a viola concerto. And finally, there were quite unexpected sources of income: a \$500 award or the undreamed of New York Times honorarium in connection with an article on Bartók. Generally speaking I should say that everyone he came in contact with zealously strove to help him either openly or secretly — but preferably in secret, because he would accept no help without rendering a corresponding service. A recording company sent him several times the amount of royalties due on a record. In this respect Americans and Hungarians living here treated him alike. And their helping hands were extended less to the great composer than to the man who after a few moments' meeting could arouse a singularly moving rapport, even in the most stonyhearted businessman.

If you add up all these sums, you can see for yourself that they could have provided him with a very comfortable living. That it didn't turn out that way was caused, directly or indirectly, by the commencement of his mortal illness. Bartók always lived in the most modest and unassuming manner; at the same time he utterly lacked a feeling for money. His wife's condition at the time did not allow her properly to care for their existence. Again, and I can't stress it enough: it was difficult to help Bartók. You remember Shaw's saying that he who wants to become a millionaire inevitably will become one, despite all obstacles. Bartók in no way wanted to "earn well" and "live well." In those last years he was a veritable genius in warding off the possibility of a secure existence. He wouldn't accept anything even from those closest to him, but always wanted to give. At the time of his fatal illness, his son Peter was an American soldier. And inasmuch as Peter was provided with everything and knew of his parents' situation, he sent home the full amount of his substantial pay. But when he was discharged from military service in 1945, just before his father's death, Bartók handed him the accumulated pay, to the last dollar. And there's something else we shouldn't forget. America was expending her forces in a life and death struggle. Meat and eggs were hard to procure; important staples were lacking almost entirely. In such difficult times a certain juggling is almost inevitable for the maintenance of an undisturbed life. And the shrewdness necessary to successful juggling was utterly lacking in Bartók and in his wife. So much for the material aspect. But if you like we can come back to it later.

He was a veritable genius in languages. Actually he spent little time learning them, just as he practiced only a little on the piano; but almost within days he mastered the structure of any language that interested him. His knowledge of languages extended not merely to those of the neighboring peoples, the Slovaks, the Serbs, the Croats, the Roumanians, and the Ruthenians. He knew English very well. To us mid-Europeans English seemed an irrational "tribal" language without fixed rules. Bartók's lucid, logically constructed English

sentences astounded his American friends. Look, here's the English text of the "Cantata Profana." He translated into English the text of this work which perhaps was closest to him of all his creations, and in which perhaps he revealed most of himself. I always knew that he spoke good French. He read French literature in the original — Proust in particular had a great influence on him; I don't wonder at this since there is much kinship between Debussy and Proust. Still, when at our home he met Jean Waal, Professor of Philosophy at the Sorbonne, I was astounded to see with what idiomatic finesse he discoursed with him on the most profound subjects, so that the French philosopher asked him how many years he had lived in France. He knew German well too, but after the Nazi victories he ceased using the language. He also spoke Turkish and concerned himself with several other Oriental languages.

Speaking again of his philosophy, I believe that in our times there are very few examples of such a prophylactic yet at the same time irrationally motivated exile as his. This is easy to understand, however, if we consider that his spiritual sensitivity and moral integrity were so highly developed that he already felt Hungary to be hopelessly infected by Nazism at a time when Nazi influence on public and private life was still only indirect. He was aware that he would have to live in a Nazi world, and that he couldn't. He was as shocked by the anti-Jewish laws promulgated under German influence as if they directly affected his own person. In the Musicians' Federation he moved that the Federation protest against musicians of Jewish descent being thrown out of their jobs, and when his motion was voted down, he resigned from the Federation.

His attitude towards bolshevism?

We should remember that at that time this was less a topic of conversation than Nazism; after all the Soviet Union was close ally of the Western powers, and public opinion held in abeyance much that it instinctively surmised with respect to the Russians. This reflection refers not to Bartók alone, but rather to the general atmosphere, which, as I said, was characterized by more talk about Nazism than about the later enemy, bolshevism.

In 1944 Bartók showed me an objective American magazine article which reported on the Russian composers' farms in a rather favorable manner. Bartók was greatly aroused by the article. He elucidated to us upon the absurdity of collectivized composition and the impossibility of accomplishing creative work in the atmosphere of a sort of cultural kolkhoz. It is quite incomprehensible, said he, how under such circumstances Prokofiev could have returned from Paris to the Soviet Union. In this unequivocal judgment there was also the implication that Prokofiev's stand in the face of bolshevist totalitarianism should have been identical to Bartók's stand in the face of Nazism. This composers' farm, said he, explains the inferiority of Shostakovich's output after the bolshevization of musical life. In other respect he thought highly of Shostakovich as a composer; but he sharply rejected as "wishy-washy epigon music" the works composed after he was branded a formalist by Stalin and Zhdanov and executed self-criticism. This explains how he — who in appraising the qualities of other composers was always so infinitely considerate that he practically put his own personality in brackets — could sharply take issue with Shostakovich via the language of music.

For there is a movement in the "Concerto for Orchestra," the "Intermezzo Interrotto," which is an unmistakable parody of Shostakovich. Its main theme suddenly breaks off to be replaced by an utterly banal, sharply stressed "alley tune" which continues to repeat itself trivially without the slightest variation. The contrast jolts the listener, as if after wondrous vistas he were shown incredibly cheap stage props.

This "Interrotto" alludes to Shostakovich's "Leningrad Symphony," where a theme is repeated unimaginatively and ad nauseam some twenty times. Thus Bartók suggests the mechanized conformity of life on a musical farm and the contemptible standards of its directors. As he himself said, the "Interrotto" parodies "cheap straitjacket music."

There were three reasons for the unbridgeable gulf between Bartók and bolshevism. I need not stress his strong personal reaction against all forms of totalitarianism. A second reason was his concern as to what would become of Hungary if this new totalitarianism were to take over? You know how enthusiastically he supported the Hungarian ideal of independence even in the face of Austria and the Habsburgs. And by the end of the war he was quite aware that this new tyranny would enslave Hungary, and that his country would become a Russian colony. The third reason for his disquiet was his concern regarding the fate of European culture. Bartók belonged to the great generation grouped around the periodical, "Nyugat," for whom Western culture was the very breath of life. He saw clearly that bolshevism meant a break with Western culture. On more than one occasion he declared that he would on no account go back to a bolshevized Hungary. This was all the more singular because at that time neither Hungarian public life, nor Hungarian culture were as yet completely bolshevized, and many well-meaning intellectuals abroad hoped for a long-awaited revival. Bartók, however, was just as pessimistic as when he foresaw Nazism's temporary victory in Europe. Thus, as early as in 1945, he saw conditions in the light of what they became years later.

Did he hate America, as the bolshevists claimed? In the truest sense of the word he was a friend of the American people and often spoke of this feeling for them as simply and naturally as a man would say, "I am going out for a walk" or "My hair is turning gray." He rated very highly America's social democracy, the lack of which so much affected him back home. He felt that in American society there was no such thing as condescension and that the man for whom things "go badly" at the moment feels no less a man than one enjoying prosperity. So, along with countless other arrivals from abroad, he felt in no way declassed while lunching or dining at the familiar automat, seated at a table with people he didn't know, or making a small hotel room do as a temporary domicile. To a certain degree he even rather enjoyed it.

On the other hand, there were some things that were hard to tolerate. One was insecurity. At that time lack of security was much greater in the United States than today. For a cultured European a feeling of security meant more than a somewhat higher income. Then, too, he couldn't come to terms with certain idiosyncracies of American life: the exaggerated role of advertising, with its persistent emphasis on money values, a thing he referred to as "clamor," meaning not just physical noise.

His circumstances in New York? We spoke about his sources of income during those American years. When he and his wife came to the States they lived in a large four-room apartment in Forest Hills, but in a fairly noisy district. Back home in Budapest Bartók had never lived in the center of the city but always in the tranquil Buda sectors or in the suburbs of Pest. After 1941 they moved to Riverdale, renting a six-room house. Here it was quiet; he could see trees and flowers and the sky; this completely satisfied him. Riverdale, as you know, is a rather high-class residential section in New York, mainly favored by the fairly well-to-do intelligentsia. Toscanini also lived there.

His sickness put an end to his tranquil existence. While lecturing at Harvard University he fell ill. The University, assuming all expenses, had him examined by the most famous of heart specialists, Bernard S. Oppenheimer, who placed him in one of the best equipped American hospitals, Mount Sinai, where he soon recovered. But a few months later, in the spring of 1943, he suddenly took a turn for the worse. That was when ASCAP stepped into the picture. These few months between the first and second illness, a time when his income was at its lowest and before ASCAP came to his aid, comprised the most difficult period of Bartók's life. It was the one time that he lost hope. You will understand how he couldn't bring himself to ask the help of others. Such help, which lesser talents regard as something they may rightfully expect from society, meant for him a mortal uncertainty. His sensitive nerves already felt death's nearness.

From that time on, the great American Musicians' Federation provided for him with unflinching generosity — and we mustn't forget how difficult it was to be generous to Bartók. That winter, ASCAP sent him to Asheville, North Carolina, and in summer to Saranac Lake, a delightful recreation center among the hills of New York, where he had excellent accommodations. Similarly, when he needed hospital treatment, ASCAP secured a separate room for him at the first-class Doctors' Hospital. All this of course, didn't help, for he had leukemia. He himself did not know this, believing that his illness was the recurrence of a serious case of tuberculosis dating back to his youth. Gradually he became thinner and thinner.

Upon his return from Saranac Lake he leased a small apartment for his wife on 57<sup>th</sup> Street near Central Park, while he himself took a small room in a modest hotel, the Woodrow, a few blocks to the north. Thus, the outer framework of his life alternated between the comforts of Asheville and Saranac Lake and the very modest New York hotel room. He was no more at home in one place than the other. You ask why in his illness he should choose that small hotel, and why he lived separately from his wife, whom he loved tenderly? The second question can't be answered, though we met constantly with them both; I presume no one can answer it. He was with his wife daily and I know it to be a fact that never a sharp word passed between them. The answer to the first question, however strange at first glance, is very simple. ASCAP paid the rent for both Bartók establishments, and so Bartók, despite all pleas on the part of ASCAP directors, would not move into a more expensive hotel.

Meanwhile, whenever his condition improved — and especially at his summer quarters in Asheville and at Saranac Lake, where no "clamor" disturbed him — he worked on his compositions. At Asheville he noted down the bird songs that find an echo in the slow movement of the "Third Piano Concerto". There too he composed the "Violin Sonata" for Menuhin. When he returned to his old hotel, illness again assailed him. But X-ray treatment brought temporary improvement. He was able to go to Saranac Lake where he could live and work under optimum conditions.

In the fall of 1944 he moved to his last New York home, into the same house where his wife had her little apartment. Now they rented a two-room furnished apartment on the fifth floor of that 57<sup>th</sup> Street building. That winter he worked a great deal, especially on Yugoslav folk song materials, which were as important to him, as his own composition. At his home he also taught a few favored pupils. He spent a week in Boston, where Koussevitzky conducted the first performance of the "Concerto for Orchestra". Bartók was delighted by the

orchestra's conscientious work, noting with appreciation that the musicians became so much interested in his music that they took home their parts for further study. The "Concerto for Orchestra" was a huge success.

The early winter passed more leisurely. He spent much time in libraries. He finished the "Violin Sonata". At this time Yehudi Menuhin was spending a few weeks in New York. At Menuhin's home the composer and the violinist carefully went through the Sonata. Menuhin requested a few weeks in which to learn it, and then they checked through it again. The Sonata's premiere in New York was the highlight of one of Menuhin's concerts. Its success was no less than that of the Concerto in Boston. By then Bartók had a tremendous name here: he could not but perceive the growth of American appreciation for his music. In March he contracted pneumonia. ASCAP sent a nurse. Aided by penicillin injections at three-hour intervals, he recovered within a few days. I mention this because of war needs, penicillin could be obtained only by special permit. Whoever acquired penicillin for him I do not know.

Here is a characteristic illustration of Bartók's puritan simplicity. We celebrated his sixty-fourth birthday in an intimate circle of friends chosen by himself. That was when he was recovering from his illness; but he went afoot to the party, because he would never take a taxi.

In the spring of 1945 he worked on the Primrose "Viola Concerto", and, secretly, on the "Third Piano Concerto" intended as a legacy for his wife. Early in the summer he returned to Saranac Lake. His condition again improved, and he intended to take care of his own expenses. He rented a small cottage there.

I should like to mention two important documents of this period which especially characterize his stand with regard to bolshevism in Hungary. Though his state of health forbade it, he journeyed for a day to Canada in order to facilitate his application for American residency, which, as a matter of form, required re-entry from Canada. Here is his letter of July 7 in which he reports on this. Remember, those were the first months of so-called liberation in Hungary. However, his own "political sensitivity" and the letters from Hungary convinced him that the struggle still more or less undecided between freedom and terror will soon end with a complete victory of the latter. You can imagine how averse he was to return to this Hungary, if at this very time he found it so urgent to apply for an American immigrant's visa.

Don't misunderstand. It was not his ambition to transform himself into an American, any more than he would have considered building houses or writing short stories in the event that his music fell on deaf ears. His whole personality was so fused with his music and was so one with his Hungarian spirit, that he never could have or would have torn himself from his country. His application for an American visa was a break not with Hungary by any means, but with the regime entrenching itself there, exactly as was the case in 1940 when the Nazis started to build their system.

On what sources did he base his views concerning conditions back home? They are revealed in a letter, one that also appeared in Hungary in the second volume of Bartók's letters, edited by János Demény and published in 1951 (the letter was printed but the section dealing with the barbaric destruction of his precious folk song collection was omitted). As he writes in the letter, "the dress of the robber horde evidently bore a close resemblance to the Russian military uniform." Thus he was quite familiar with the Russian-type liberation of Hungary. He concludes, "Now at least you know, Paul, how robbers dress."

Late in August he suddenly had to return from his summer cottage. His health swiftly deteriorated, he ran a fever every day. This was when the Japanese War ended and his son, Peter, returned from the Navy. Moreover, his wife became ill when they arrived home. Meanwhile, in secret, he worked incessantly on the piano concerto. On September 21 he had to be taken to the nearest hospital, the West Side Hospital. ASCAP took care of all expenses. Before the ambulance came he asked for a sheet of paper, noted down the instruments in the score and wrote, to avoid possible misunderstanding: "Vége" (The End). Perhaps the word also had another meaning for him.

By then he suffered great pain. From September 22 he was fed with grape sugar. Only occasionally was he conscious, but everyone at his bedside had the impression that his spirit was fully present. This dissociated manner seemed not unusual to those who knew Bartók for actually he would bow thus on the concert stage even before an audience of a thousand. In his face there no longer was anything suggesting man's physical nature. It seemed like a death mask at the moment of resurrection, when the first trumpets sound. The last day they kept him alive under an oxygen tent.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, when they inserted a needle in a vein, he cried, startled: "What are you doing to me?" On Monday the 24<sup>th</sup> he said to a doctor friend: "The trouble is that I go away with a full trunk (i.e., full of creative spirit)." Those were his last words.

ASCAP arranged for his funeral at Universal Chapel, 52<sup>nd</sup> Street and Lexington Avenue, New York City. The little chapel was crowded with friends and admirers. The official world was not represented, but in America there is no such world in the mid-European sense, and particularly in the totalitarian sense. Thus, there were no delegations, no orators. But everyone present was linked to Bartók by a personal contact — or



by a musical contact: we saw many mourners whom we did not know, though I may say that we knew Bartók's entire circle of friends.

It was indeed a ceremony in the ancient sense of the word, where everyone present joined in a mystic act whereby a community accompanies one of its members to the gates of the other world. Yes, it was a modest funeral as compared with the elaborate official funerals, and even more modest by comparison with totalitarian state ceremonies. But everyone there shared Bartók's obsequies. He was buried at Ferncliff Cemetery in Hartsdale, New York — a so-called exclusive cemetery with ancient trees as in old Hungarian village cemeteries, except that there are no gravestones. Above the graves are bronze markers. Such a marker, the sole form of memorial permitted by the cemetery rules, was affixed over his grave in 1950.

According to the Communist press, his grave is marked only by a stone slab with a number. At the installation of the marker it is true that only those were present who had something to do with him. From all that was mentioned here you can see everything the Communist press reports relating to Bartók's last days, his death, his burial and grave is gross falsification.

This falsification, however, can be understood. A totalitarian system regards the deceased as its own, in every sense. And the trappings of such expropriations are gaudier than the obsequies any great man receives in America. Here death is not an affair of state, nor burial a political ceremony. Here the last steps to the grave are taken by those who really have a personal relationship with the deceased. And there were many of these, Americans and Hungarians alike. Naturally no one was ordered out to Bartók's funeral.

## 2.

The initial B. likewise stands for a couple, the Bartók family's old doctor and his wife, a brilliant helpmate. The B. couple emigrated to the United States in the 1930's. B. was a famous doctor in Hungary and is a noted one here too.

He is a quiet, soft voiced man, no more gifted than Bartók was in turning his vocational knowledge to financial profit. Husband and wife are equally characterized by a feeling for justice: they are true humanists, hostile to all twisting of facts, unconcerned with either social prejudices or the vagaries of so-called public opinion — and more apt to hide than flaunt their broad culture.

I was often at the Bartóks' villa at Pasarét. I remember the villa's Transylvanian furnishings. Peter then was four or five years old and his father was teaching him to play the piano; it was for him that he wrote the "Mikrokosmos". Outside my usual medical obligations toward the Bartóks I also had a singular assignment: it was I who made out the medical certificates Bartók used in declining one or another official invitation.

He maintained few personal contacts, but he wasn't unsociable. He liked groups composed of people spiritually close to him, and liked to join in conversation with them. All assumptions of superiority was utterly alien to him. I wouldn't have you think that close contact with him was any too easy to attain. He had strict moral viewpoints admitting of no compromise, and I needn't say that everything concerned with art belonged, for him, in the moral sphere. Never did he hide his opinion and not infrequently this man, so infinitely tactful and polite, could say most uncomfortable things. I remember one instance when I happened to find a well-known singer with him — they were running through some of Bartók's songs. At the conclusion of one, the singer, who was of German descent, launched into a grandiloquent strain: "Master, when I sing this song my Hungarian spirit glows, incandescent!" Whereupon Bartók, glancing at him in his singularly penetrating yet quiet way, softly remarked: "Don't tell me you suspect your dear mother of a faux pas".

One manifestation of this refusal to compromise came when, to the vast consternation of the official world, he rejected the musical grand prize (Greggus Prize) offered him, on the grounds that in that year a far more important composition of Kodály had been introduced. The incident also served to point out the fact that it was not the "ultra-modern" and "destructive" Bartók that was being honored by official Hungary: because the prize was for a piece written in his youth.

Just as he despised social prejudices, so he despised national prejudices. The Roumanian couple with whom I acquainted him was amazed at his splendid grasp of Roumanian. With the woman who was a philologist, he carried on brilliant debates on linguistics. He was especially interested in everything relating to the peasant peoples of Eastern Europe. I remember that in New York he was absorbed by a book, "Black Lamb and Grey-Falcon", dealing with Yugoslavia.

In general he read a great deal, being acquainted with the Hungarian classics no less than with the ancient and modern writers. He showed keen interest not only in linguistics and the arts but in the biological sciences, botany, zoology, and in anthropology; and he followed the latest developments in physics, particularly in connection with the atom (the atom bomb had just been invented).

His relation to people was the same here in America as back home. His illness caused little change in this. Naturally, it affected his moods, but he was able to avoid the posture of a "sick man" through incomparable self-discipline. In small companies here, too, he was gracious, often humorously derisive. There was a certain sly mischief in his smile. I could characterize him by saying that the finest qualities of the folk manifested themselves in the fashion in which he handled others. In the peasant attitude there always has been a certain elegance and this characterized Bartók on a higher artistic plane. He hated all things artificial. It was characteristic that he couldn't eat cake made with artificial vanilla. He lived very simply and this wasn't just a matter of principle with him. Nothing could hold his interest which had anything in the way of prestige value. He was utterly indifferent to material comforts. It was quite impossible to wrangle with him. He was patient and understanding. However, there was a great deal of distant reserve, and I can imagine that this often pained those who loved him. Despite his modesty and courtesy, he was completely aware of who he was. He hated to accept anything from anyone. It was a veritable art to give Bartók something, and all the more interesting that this was aspired to by many whose spiritual nature was entirely different from his own. I noticed, for example, that quite simple musicians, who didn't understand his music, who in fact were for the most part not even familiar with it, and who with jazz music earned many times what he earned, at once felt deep respect for him, even after only a few minutes' acquaintance.

His illness? He himself never knew the nature of it, but I am convinced that he was quite aware of his impending death. The idea that some sort of poverty may have had to do with his illness and death shows a degree of stupidity and misinformation that can only be explained in terms of malice. Leukemia is one of the worst forms of cancer — even today medical science can do hardly anything about it. A millionaire can die of it in as short a time as a pauper. As it happened, Bartók received every attention that any millionaire could have expected. Harvard University, and then ASCAP, had him examined by the world's top specialists — by the hematologist, Dr. Rosenthal, and by Dr. Oppenheimer. Leukemia that sets in during maturity is no more related to the effects of overintensive spiritual work than it is to those of any sort of overexertion. On the contrary, as a doctor I must say that his feverish tempo of work actually delayed his death.

His whole spirit recoiled from any endeavor to play the "great man". As a rule, he created with utmost ease. On his own compositions he spent but a small fraction of time he devoted to research and to folk music collecting. He would scribble his musical thoughts on scraps of paper, and by the time he transposed these to the actual manuscript, the composition was in final form — he almost never made corrections. He was intensely concerned with questions of form, and also interested in jazz, seeing in it the possibility of new forms.

Among his favorite composers were Beethoven, Bach, Liszt, Debussy; but we shouldn't forget Schubert. He loved the purity of Schubert's mode of musical expression and of his whole outlook as a man. "If I didn't detest the word so, I'd say he wrote very charming music," said Bartók to me.

He did not compose at the piano. Music lived in him fullblown — he had no need of intermediaries. He practiced only before a performance. When for a time the Baldwin Company took away the piano it had placed at his disposal — because of cutbacks — he missed it only on his wife's account, because now they couldn't practice two-piano pieces together. Somehow, whatever he was concerned with lived within him as though the work of creation require no contact with the outer world. Characteristically, he always learned languages alone. He never went to plays or movies, and even attended concerts but rarely. He loved to walk in open country and, if possible, to climb mountains. He often visited New York's zoos.

Perhaps his most characteristic quality was his unspoiled taste. Everything cheap and fashionable repelled him. Music was a religion for him. He so abhorred things mechanical that he didn't listen to the radio or even to records. More than once he noted the lack of artistic comprehension on the part of those who expected the art to amuse them or "make their lives pleasant". His severest judgment on a composer was: "He speaks much more than he has to say."

You, like many others who have inquired about Bartók's latter years, are surprised at the very modest hotel where, in failing health, he spent such a relatively long time. You should know that he didn't feel at ease in an elegant hotel. There in that little one he had peace. Then too, a bit of defiance may have been part of this. Certainly he was sensitive about receiving help, a not unusual attitude on the part of ill persons accustomed to giving not to receiving.

Now let's consider his views on bolshevism. This is very easily settled. There were two things his heart deeply abhorred: tyranny and untruth. And since he discovered both in bolshevism, a deep gulf naturally resulted. But I should tell you that in judging bolshevism he was always concrete. He had no use for such

expressions as "the Reds" and "satanic bolshevism", etc. He always considered questions with utter objectivity: thus, how was this or that in Russia? And in the end it always turned out that it was never the reforms which brought him up short, but always the twin aspects of terror and untruth.

### 3.

C. is an elderly doctor, most highly reputed. His vocation takes up practically all of his time; as he modestly declared, he does not concern himself with music and could not, at that time, assess Béla Bartók's musical significance. Later it came to light that in his youth he was an enthusiastic adherent of the spiritual movements Bartók was so active in.

I came into contact with Bartók when ASCAP, through an eminent pianist and pedagogue, began inquiring about him and asked me to take charge of his medical treatment. To begin with, I should say that the relationship between Bartók and the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers was most unusual. The supporters of this organization are mainly practitioners of light music. Despite this, ASCAP took Bartók under its wing as it perhaps took no one else. I am not referring to the amount of money spent — though, as you will see, it was considerable — but to the relationship which was the reverse of that customary between an institution and those in need of aid. The first few minutes' contact with Bartók, modest, polite and extremely reserved, sufficed to win over the heads of ASCAP's welfare division, Mr. Fred Ahlert and Miss Sylvia Rosenberg, completely. ASCAP desired to do everything possible in an endeavor to restore Bartók's health. I kept in constant touch with Miss Rosenberg regarding the expenses which ASCAP most graciously assumed.

My general impression of Bartók? Curiously, in my remembrance his figure fuses with that of Gandhi. I often saw him in his New York home, wearing shorts, his torso just as thin, frail, almost unsubstantial as was the Mahatma's. He always spoke quietly, softly and, what also reminded me of Gandhi, when hungry he liked best to nibble at apples, nuts or dry crusts of bread. For all his geniality and loveliness, his tongue was often sharp, though his keen irony turned as often against himself as against others.

His feelings towards America? Perhaps it stemmed from a sense of justice and from an aesthetic sensibility both so highly developed that he was very painfully affected when America was maligned by those who owed practically everything to "the enemy". He often stressed the significance for mankind of America's unselfish entry into the war against Hitler. Fascism's excesses filled him with horror. "Can such things exist?" he would ask with unaccustomed emotion, when German death camps were spoken of. As a doctor I might characterize him thus: in every respect he defended the sanctity of human life. More than once he told me what an ineradicable impression he had of the post-World War I excesses he personally witnessed in the villages. He didn't like to talk politics, personal politics obviously didn't even interest him; as he said: "Politics barges into a man's life."

To return to ASCAP's relationship to Bartók, in a period of two years and some months it expended thousands of dollars on Bartók. This was actually considerably more than the sum represents today. I should emphasize that Bartók never was an ASCAP member. He was disturbed at having to accept ASCAP help, as he would have been by any similar gesture. Characteristic is the letter he wrote me on October 9, 1943:

"Dear Doctor, I have received the letter written by Ernest B. at your instance. From this I see that the ASCAP matter involves extremely great difficulties, making this in any case painful situation still more painful for me. Consequently I must emphatically and decidedly relinquish all ASCAP aid and ask you to kindly suspend all steps in this direction. I shall arrange my affairs in whatever way possible. I extremely regret to have been the occasion of so much annoyance. Be assured that I shall always regard your efforts, and ASCAP's aid thus far, with the deepest gratitude. For all this, please accept my most sincere thanks."

There were no insuperable difficulties whatsoever, no grave obstacles of any kind, any more than there was any sort of painful situation. ASCAP rushed to eliminate these non-existent obstacles and painful situations from Bartók's imagination.

When he had to return to New York from his summer vacation, ASCAP was most anxious to place him in a more expensive hotel. Mr. Ahlert literally waged a campaign to induce him to move, but he wanted two domiciles at that time and felt even as it was, ASCAP was taking on too heavy a burden, so Mr. Ahlert didn't dare intervene by force in the life of the sensitive artist.

In the beginning we suspected that his old tuberculosis had recurred. We noticed minor irregularities in the lung. That is why he was sent to Saranac Lake, where he was placed in a nursing cottage. The doctor at Saranac Lake visited him constantly, which was also necessary because I doubt whether of himself he would ever have called a doctor in no matter what the pain or danger. In the fall, to spare him from the cold, ASCAP sent him to Asheville, North Carolina, where he was given similar aid.

He detested hospitals in general; because he was so much a man of work, hospital life depressed him. Besides, his individual habits were so set that he was unwilling to relinquish them even in sickness. For a long time ASCAP had wanted to have him treated at a hospital, but he wouldn't hear of it. He was examined by the most eminent specialists including the hematologist Rosenthal and the roentgenologist Feinman. Both were highly cultivated connoisseurs of music, who regarded it an honor to treat Bartók.

What did we speak of during our frequent meetings? We spoke a great deal of Endre Ady, the great revolutionary poet of his generation, whose significance in literature parallels that of Bartók in music. I was an assistant doctor at a sanatorium where Ady came before his death, gravely ill. Bartók listened with much interest to my report on conversations with Ady. He was most amazed by Ady's great philosophical background — for example, his knowledge of Spinoza's works was encyclopedic; and Bartók was much interested in Ady's commentaries of the great thinker's teachings. In general, all scientific questions attracted him, especially in the field of chemistry, physics and medicine. He liked to compare the laws of music with those of nature. At that time quite a stir was raised by the "Orgon theory" to the effect that thought is a kind of, thus far, unknown energy. Bartók was quite taken by the theory and debated its pros and cons with considerable warmth.

As one who visited the Bartóks often, I was impressed by his model home life. There was never a loud word to be heard. He dearly loved his son Peter and taught him acoustics and the musical criteria of recording. "I live for my son and for music," said he on one occasion, very softly. His wife, Ditta, to my mind, always remained a child, and he, to a certain degree, filled for her the role of a solicitous father. She was charming, all smiles, the most wordless woman I ever saw. She might have been Peter's elder sister.

Though Bartók was the epitome of balance and reserve, his movements were often of a marionette-like simplicity; yet a curious animation lit up his face, as if hinting, "These physical things, these every-day problems, mean nothing. All that matters is the everlasting alertness of the spirit." It was this wondrous spirit that made him seemingly immune to physical annoyance or pain. Just as he had an aversion to hospitals, so he would barely endure medical treatment. There is a type of patient who regards sickness as normal, veritably delighting in it, making a hobby of symptoms and doctor's visits. Bartók regarded neither sickness, nor treatments, nor doctors as important. One literally had to run after him. He neglected his physique as if his body were some sort of alien matter. This too may have a connection with his withdrawal from the outer world, which anyone who knew him couldn't help noticing. He used to put ebonite plugs in his ears when working, so outside noises shouldn't disturb him. This I somehow always regarded as highly characteristic. I may be talking nonsense, but can only express what I mean by saying he wrote music as if it were a poem. It was as if he himself was the music in the sense that a poet becomes one with his verses; indeed it was as if he had no need for instruments, musicians, performances or anything else. I guess you know that he composed in bed even when desperately ill. The doctors, myself included, attempted in vain to dissuade him.

Perhaps there was just one luxury he sought for: tranquillity. He was veritably in love with tranquillity. By this I mean not the opposite of vitality or life, but the opposite of noise in the broadest sense of the word.

He was perhaps the most extreme individualist I ever met. Not an anarchist. Rather a man, who would accept nothing in the world on the say so of authority, but would undertake everything that was dictated by inner command. As he told me, "Individuality is the dearest treasure of nature". He deemed that America had given him this possibility of living according to the laws of his individuality, and for that he was deeply grateful. He had vast respect for American freedom, quite apart from any political concepts. I believe there are two kinds of individualism: the one an ingrown individualism that might rather be called anarchism — affected by those who exist for themselves alone. The other, which I would call outgoing individualism, creates an individual form of life with the object of radiating its light towards all and sundry. Bartók's individualism in truth radiates love of man.

Naturally he wanted to return to Hungary. Even to someone entirely ignorant of Hungary it was enough to exchange a single word with Bartók to grasp the essence of that nation. But whenever anything was said about returning he consistently put it off to the hazy future: "Yes, when..." Usually he didn't even finish the sentence, or if he did, it would be "when conditions change." He had said exactly this when the Nazi era ended in Hungary and conditions seemingly changed. They had not for him, however; thus was his return postponed to a time which he knew he would not live to see.

He was aware that he was mortally ill. Whenever there was talk of future possibilities his wondrously expressive eyes always seemed to say: "You can't do anything with me anyhow. Why don't you leave me in peace?"

He often spoke of bolshevism, and with exactly the same scorn as of Hitlerism — the work of some political gang, a dark and suspect rabble that emerged from the same depth as the Hitlerites. More than once he said emphatically: "We cannot use their methods." On occasion he voiced the question which doubtless often plagued him: What is the solution? Sadly he ascertained that there was none, and that, as he put it, "civilization will go down in the slime." Civilization was for him the western world with its many thousand years of culture. "We cannot fight with their weapons: Can the Whites be made to exterminate the Reds and vice versa? How will this end?" Sometimes he characterized both by a single word: brigands. "This two-fold battle against two tyrannies can only lead to misery." He was always speculating about the future of civilization, and in the most pessimistic way. "How can we escape these two extremes?" was the question he put on many an occasion. "I doubt whether it's possible."

He held the bleakest possible view of the future, and perhaps this nourished his desire for death; or was it the other way around? During the last days he was mostly unconscious. But even on the threshold of oblivion, while they were taking him to the hospital, he kept jotting down notes.

I always felt that he was innerly conscious to the last moment. And to speak to myself: it was rather he who was sorry for me than I for him. Even in advance he tried to console me for my inability to help his condition. He accepted the knowledge of his near death with utter peace of mind. He had quietly provided for his wife and son, taking steps to clarify certain financial questions with his publisher — for their sakes alone. Previously, such questions had scarcely concerned him.

#### 4.

D., whom we looked up next, is the third doctor among the interviewees. He, however, never treated Bartók. He was a young doctor when he first met Bartók; his speciality is cancer research. D. is very cultivated, at home in music. By contrast with B. he is temperamental, passionate, constantly on the move. He takes an active interest in everything. His opinions are very decided.

All that the bolshevists wrote about Bartók's poverty and abandonment is just rubbish. Don't forget that America was at war then; that Bartók already carried the seeds of death within him when he arrived; and, finally, that getting acclimated to this utterly different world is no simple matter even for an ordinary man in his later years, not to speak of one who carried the European tradition within him like life itself. When I met the Bartóks they were living in Forest Hills. He couldn't bear the noise. Their many vicissitudes had made him even more sensitive to it than usual. I often visited them at their Riverside home, which was far better suited for their needs. They had five fine rooms and a special verandah where the two pianos stood.

Did he want to return home? He himself answered this question in a letter to Eugene Zádor, a musician who had made a name for himself in Hollywood. Perhaps you knew of his esteem for and devotion to Bartók. He sought commissions for him with a view to helping him financially and, in connection with a curious musical idea, sent a 250 Dollar check which Bartók returned when he saw that illness would prevent him from fulfilling the assignment. I believe this is the only case where anyone ever returned a Hollywood advance. Here is the letter of July 1, 1945, addressed to Zádor:

"As things look for me, the very thought of returning is, for the time being, out of the question. Even if it were feasible, it would seem advisable to await developments. God knows how many years it will take till the country can recover to any degree, if at all. Yet I, too, would like to go home, and for good."

This "for good" means the same as another phrase often used by Bartók: "if eventually..." As he saw it one could return definitively only to a different Hungary, not to a bolshevist Hungary.

He found nothing more annoying than the news reports about the composers farm where Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Khachaturian, and others composed together. He spoke with bitter irony about first-class composers — held in highest esteem politically by the regime — who might write operas, while second-class composers are authorized to write only symphonies, and third-class composers are restricted to chamber music. He considered the bolshevists criminals, because they persecuted men. So long as the bolshevists were being persecuted he unquestionably sympathized with them to a degree. He never thought in terms of narrow political categories. When they became persecutors he condemned and despised them like all other

persecutors. When I asked him whether he did not want to go home, he replied with a gentle shrug: "Under such circumstances?"

"But what about Hungarian youth?" — I asked. "For you it would certainly be a prime task to raise a new generation through music." He answered by way of an anecdote, "When we founded the Hungarian Concert Orchestra to present young talents, it turned out that one of the horn players was execrable. I suggested that we drop him politely. But he couldn't be dropped, for political reasons, as they said: he was related to some influential politician. So what could be done now back home, where political reasons decide everything?"

In roundabout ways he sent letters to Hungary, inquiring about those back home. The care he took to keep his letters from causing trouble for anyone indicated in itself his distrust of the true wielders of power. His questions and remarks in response to replies received afford further confirmation of this distrust of the Communists and those who occupied the country. He attributed robberies, arrests, and other excesses to them even before definite evidence became available. When the "Concerto for Orchestra" was played in Boston he was listening to it over the radio in my presence: at the Intermezzo Interrotto section ridiculing Shostakovich he began snaking his hips like a street walker, accentuating the cheap vulgarity of the motif stemming from that truly prostituted music. At the time, this musical persiflage brought upon him many attacks from American Communists.

Most characteristic of the picture of bolshevism formed over the years, is an episode he related to me in connection with his Russian tour of 1929. After a concert — in Odessa I believe it was — he was invited for supper to the home of a Soviet university professor where a group of intellectuals were gathered. Bartók with accustomed frankness and playful irony allowed himself a very innocent quip in connection with Stalin. At that instant the conversation froze, the company got up and left.

He attached great weight to Peter's fighting on the American side against Nazism. Incidentally he loved his son Peter with a rare tenderness. I am convinced that he was closest to his heart, after Bartók's mother.

As for the "Concerto for Orchestra", you perhaps know or have felt that it is the portrayal of Hungary's tragic fate — as Bartók himself said. In this work the nation finally rises above the chaos of destruction. Bartók always believed that even a people's outward fate can change for the better only through inner purification.

I don't know whether you've heard — because not many know — that he meant to intervene, on humane grounds, in behalf of a number of war criminals who returned home. It was too late to realize his intent, but it is highly characteristic that he was led by feelings of pure human compassion even when retaliation caught up with representatives of a trend revolting to him.

He never failed to stress how much Americans had done for him, especially before those who, humanly enough, in their abandonment and rootlessness and inability to become acclimated, laid the entire blame for all their troubles upon their new environment. He was proud of his successes here and clearly perceived the growing American appreciation for his works. But he shied at everything noisy and mechanical in American life.

However, he always avoided generalities. He never held Americans as a whole responsible for anything that clashed with his taste or judgment. In both thought and expression he strove for maximum precision. Probably that is why he usually spoke very slowly. He attributed great significance to the uttered word. His accentuation and phrasing were clear and exact. His preliminary "well" represented a moment of intellectual preparation.

What especially aggravated him was all mutilation or abasement of art. Most provoking to him were comics based on great literary creations by authors such as Dostoyevsky or Dickens.

You wouldn't forget that Bartók, like all true prophetic artists, was to a certain degree alien to the world in which he lived, and in contrast to which he helped to create a new world. Could it be presumed that he should have found his world in the realm of terror and regimentation? Merely to entertain the thought of such a possibility is a libel on Bartók's personality and works.

## 5.

E., whom I next interviewed, is a composer, a noted pianist and eminent piano teacher. In his youth he studied with Bartók; but in the early nineteen-twenties, in the days of the counter-revolution, he left for the United States. He is impulsive in character, decided in his opinion. His American wife is professor of biology

at a New York City university. Bartók is his life's great central problem; this becomes evident from his first sentence. In one or another respect he practically transposes himself into Bartók. He is a rebellious enthusiast, however, like some devotees of great men who seek to preserve their own individuality. He has, half-consciously, a bone to pick with Bartók. At time he almost intentionally reduces Bartók's stature so the likeness should not take on superhuman proportions, his intent being to bring Bartók the man within reach.

Even in his youth Bartók was solitary and distant, but his was the solitude and distance of a Prince. By that I mean that already, at that early period in his life, practically everyone in contact with him sought to render him service. When at the age of seventeen, he contracted pneumonia, his fellow students contributed the money needed to send him abroad to recuperate. Just think, — at twenty-six he became head of the piano department at the leading Hungarian music school, succeeding two great Liszt pupils, Árpád Szendy and István Thomán, though until then he had scarcely concerned himself with piano teaching. He could more or less schedule his time as he pleased. All summer he could collect folk music, and in winter he could take a vacation or leave of absence almost at will. Ödön Mihálovics, the famed director of the Music Academy, friend of Liszt and Wagner, esteemed him highly. "A crazy genius," he said of him, "but a genius."

When we speak of how Bartók lived in America, we first should look into the matter of how he lived in general. Despite his great love of order, his punctuality, and his strictness in financial matters, he never lived well or earned well: it was simply not in him to do so. Were he living today in the United States, he'd be earning at least 20,000 dollars, a year, but even so he wouldn't be living on a 20,000 dollars level. 20,000 dollars in his hands would not mean the same as in other hands.

He didn't take his first and second American trips to "earn well" or "live well." His object on the first occasion was to have his piano repaired: on the second to have his folk song collection published.

Here in New York the situation was just as it was at home. Everyone regarded him as a Prince and sought to serve him. But to do so was even more difficult here, for his circumstances and illness made him more sensitive than usual. Professor Douglas Moore, head of the Columbia University Music Department and a great admirer of his, mentions that when Columbia's Dickenson Foundation was no longer able to pay Bartók's stipend for collating the Yugoslav musical material, a good friend and adviser of Bartók, Victor Bátor, and his friends, presented to Columbia a sum equal to the stipend with the proviso that Bartók must never learn where it came from. Bartók himself wrote in a letter to Mrs. Creel dated Christmas, 1944, that his existence was assured for the next three years. Moreover ASCAP was attending to all medical expenses. It should be noted, by the way, that ASCAP, under the heading of medical expenses, was anxious to cover practically all his expenses.

He was deluged with invitations — some he could not, others he would not, accept. The university of Seattle offered him its chair of folk music. The world's wealthiest and most exclusive music school, the Julliard Institute of New York, invited him to teach composition, as did the no less distinguished Curtis Institute of Philadelphia. At either institution he would have received thirty or forty dollars an hour — at least ten thousand dollars a year. But he was unwilling to teach composition. Hindemith and Schoenberg on the other hand, did, and thereby greatly improved their economic situation.

We cannot speak at all of financial difficulties during his American years, except at the time of his grave and lasting illness, beginning in 1943. And then ASCAP took him under its wing. I was the first to bring up his case before the ASCAP people. From the time I mentioned his name, and especially as soon as they met him, I found the greatest willingness to help. Most of the directors knew no more of him than that he was a "great modern musician". The vast majority of the members, who provided ASCAP's funds, doubtless had never even heard his name. And don't forget that Bartók was a Hungarian, officially an enemy alien — a fact which the ASCAP directors did not even consider. ASCAP's welfare division, Miss Sylvia Rosenberg and Mr. Fred Ahlert, could not have cared more devotedly for their own parents. Yet, believe me, he wasn't easy to help.

When making out his next income tax report he was shocked to discover that ASCAP had by then spent five thousand dollars on him. He protested emphatically against further aid. They had to use every means of persuasion to prevail on him to let them continue helping him.

Let me tell you just one small melancholy detail illustrating the extent of ASCAP's care. After his death, they put him into three coffins, the outer being of bronze. ASCAP made these provisions for the eventuality that later his remains might be shipped home; for it is only in a bronze coffin that a corpse may be taken on shipboard.

But let's not speak solely of ASCAP. Such touching devotion to his person didn't cease with his death. In 1949 the "Musical Courier" reported that Bartók's grave was marked only by a stone slab bearing a number. Thereupon Milton Feist, the music publisher, who had never known Bartók nor published a single work of his,

started a collection. However, the "exclusive" cemetery's rules allowed only a simple bronze plaque to be placed above the grave — which I find very proper, and which I'm sure would have pleased Bartók too. This bronze plaque had a set price of one hundred and twenty-five dollars. The sums offered ran to many times this figure, so Feist suggested that contributors each only give one dollar, lest the amount be paid by just one or two persons. It is this bronze plaque which now adorns Bartók's grave. I hear that, according to the bolshevist press, even today the grave is marked only by a number, because the "authorities were unwilling to shell out twenty dollars for a bronze plaque." In America it is not the Party that provides money for such purposes — and the competent authorities here are primarily Bartók's admirers, whose contributions would have been more than enough to provide the bronze plaque that has marked his grave these many years.

It is characteristic of Bartók's scrupulous conscience that, despite his deep gratitude, he did not join ASCAP, lest he appear ungrateful to the British Composers Society, which offered him membership after his resignation from the Nazified Austrian musicians' federation. Today ASCAP handles his rights — the Bartók estate joined ASCAP within half a year of his death.

How did he judge bolshevism and Russia? As a humanist with an absolute sense of justice and unwavering ideals. He was especially indignant at the Russian attack on Finland. He became implacably anti-bolshevist after Stalin's Moscow Pact with Hitler, and since he drew immediate conclusions from every immoral act, his view of bolshevism — in contrast to that of very many intellectuals — was unequivocal. Incidentally, as regards his championing of the oppressed, he was a revolutionary. If asked about his party affiliation, he would answer: "I belonged to the Dózsa Party!" (György Dózsa led the great Hungarian Peasant Revolt that erupted early in the sixteenth century; there was, however, no such party.) On a number of occasions Bartók alluded to the existence in Hungary of two independent planets: the peasant world and the world of the ruling class.

You no doubt have heard much about his unyielding stand against Fascism. But I wonder if you heard of the incident concerning Toscanini whom, at the time, he did not know personally. When Toscanini was assaulted in Bologna for refusing to play *Giovinetta*, the Fascist anthem, Bartók at the next meeting of the New Hungarian Composers Society in Budapest, of which he was honorary president, proposed that the Society telegraph Toscanini their indignation and voice solidarity with him. This proposal was rejected because of official Hungary's close ties with the Italian government.

Bartók naturally was aware of the tragic import of Hungary's forced association with the Axis, for which he did not hold the Hungarian people responsible.

His undoubtedly over-pessimistic view of his financial situation had two causes: one being that he greatly needed a feeling of security, if only because his own helplessness in finances was quite evident to him, and his illness naturally increased his fear of uncertainty. And then there was his pride, and his awareness of his own significance. Every material discrepancy pained him as a lack of recognition: after all, he was incredibly unassuming: for years he had only two suits, and he liked best to take his meals at an automat. However, I believe, that fundamentally the proudest of men are the unassuming, the polite and the ultra-modest and the very proudest and perhaps haughtiest are the Princes in disguise.

## 6.

F., with whom we talked next, is a concert cellist of one of the best known string quartets who also teaches music history and theory at two New York City colleges. Considerably younger than E., he is nevertheless the calmer, the more balanced, the less impulsive of the two. His friendship with Bartók was of American origin. He emigrated to the United States as a young man, in the late twenties. Apart from his music, he occupies himself intensively with psychology — his wife is a psychiatrist — and has a lively interest in sociology.

My integrated impression of Bartók? Were we in need of a model to convince us that goodness and force are far from incompatible traits in a single person, we could find no model better than Bartók. His face and eyes reflected infinite goodness and infinite force, and simultaneously the child-like wonder that instinctively pierces to the heart of things, perhaps deeper than any knowledge. I mostly encountered him on the many occasions when his wife, Ditta, and I played together. By contrast with his imperturbable calm when he himself was playing — naturally his calm served only to cloak the lava of inner emotion — he was always excited when his wife played. This couldn't have been simply attentiveness and politeness. Within the



bounds of his own reserve and devotion to his calling, he perhaps didn't fully realize what his wife meant to him — at such times this welled up from within.

I find it extremely characteristic that when fire broke out in the 57<sup>th</sup> Street apartment house where he lived — I happened to be with them at the time — with his usual, absolutely calm and unhurried movements (with the composure of a child who doesn't know what's happening) he climbed down the fire escape. Incidentally, I felt that weariness may also have been part of that calm — obviously as a concomitant of illness — but his eyes and his facial expression showed that this weariness would never be allowed to reach the kernel of his being so long as he had a single spark of consciousness left.

Here in New York too, everyone who associated him was enthusiastic. World-famous musicians regarded themselves as his pupils when they were with him. When one was in the same room with him, one felt as if in the presence of a colossus — much as in the ancient Celtic tales, space appeared to expand, and through the windows streamed the light of infinity.

You ask about his attitude towards bolshevism? Naturally it was inescapable that we should speak of that. With his own cool logical objectivity he regarded it as an experiment. What revolted him, however, apart from all logical analysis, was the fact of dictatorship, tyranny. Here Bartók knew no compromise.

I believe there have been very few composers whose personality and work have so fused into one. In this regard I could only compare Bartók with Beethoven. Bartók, the person, too, was an amazing harmonization of the constructive and the spontaneous, of love of freedom and insistence upon form. This characterized his music no less than it did Beethoven's. His music is emotional to the nth degree, yet logical in every detail. The simile occurring to me is that this music is not fire, but dynamite.

His art conveyed entirely new significance to folk music. Though folk music as he transformed it was completely Bartók, yet in a certain sense it acquired an even clearer folk character, as if created by the people itself. What was once said of Copland is still more universally valid for Bartók's music: he had an even greater influence on folk music than it had on him. By this I mean that folk music since Bartók has a quite different significance from what it had before Bartók.

You probably could learn more from others than from me regarding Bartók's financial circumstances and mode of life during his American years. What I perhaps could say something new about the appreciation of Bartók in America. Did you know that already in 1908, when only a very limited circle knew him in Hungary, Rudolph Ganz introduced his piano works in the United States with great success? Music lovers here always followed his career with deep interest.

Olin Downes, the influential music critic of "The New York Times", wrote with the greatest appreciation of his compositions in the years before he settled in America. Copland, in his book "Our New Music" (1941), which so strongly influenced views on modern music here, speaks briefly but very positively of Bartók. More than once in the course of the last decade and one half, American musical groups have taken Bartók works on tour and introduced them to European audiences. Thus the New York City Ballet toured Europe with "The Miraculous Mandarin". Menuhin, Szigeti, György Sándor, and many other American musicians have played his violin and piano compositions throughout Europe and the world. In 1951 the Julliard String quartet was the first in America to play all of Bartók's string quartets, and in 1952 had to repeat the cycle to capacity houses.

He himself valued his American successes as if he had a special ambition to achieve them. He who, on stage, never gave an outward sign of his feelings was in tears when Menuhin played his "Violin Sonata" in Carnegie Hall with such triumphant success. Long before Bartók's arrival in America, his "Divertimento for Strings" had achieved great success under the direction of Ormándy in New York and Philadelphia. Under Golshman the St. Louis Symphony played it in several large American cities. In 1948, the "Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta" was played by two orchestras in a number of American cities. Robert Shaw, the outstanding conductor of choral groups, presented "Cantata Profana" in several cities. Perhaps Bartók has been played most by pianists — especially "Out of Doors", the "improvisations" and (naturally) "Evening at the Szeklers", the "Bear Dance" and the "Allegro Barbaro", but many have played the piano concertos too — the second and especially the third have been favorites with Edith Farnadi, Andor Földes, and György Sándor. (In Europe Bartók's great pianist interpreter is Géza Anda.) Among works for violin the two violin sonatas appear frequently on the program of outstanding artists. The Léner, Végh and Hungarian quartets have played his string quartets in America and throughout the world. The Léners also played the six small pieces in the "Mikrokosmos", transcribed for chamber orchestra. It is worth noting that two evenings when the Julliard quartet interpreted his string quartets, Shostakovich, then on an American visit, was in the audience. (It was Shostakovich's sovietized music Bartók so acidly ridiculed.) In recent years all three of Bartók's stage works have been presented in New York with great success. Nor is it mere coincidence that the thus far most authoritative and complete Bartók monograph is by an American — Halsey Stevens. I dare say Bartók, along with Stravinsky, is today the most popular modern composer in the United States. He is

ranked higher than Hindemith, Schoenberg and a number of "big names". His unequaled rhythmic power fascinates American audiences. In my opinion, the Bartók cult has reached its peak in the United States — though in this respect two small European countries, Switzerland and Holland, will not be outdone. He appears to be meeting with a certain jealousy in Britain and Germany — though that quite possibly may be just a personal impression.

To measure the force of the American Bartók cult it does not suffice to study the concert programs. Young people, including laymen are especially enthusiastic. Two New York institutions of higher learning, the New School and City College, have practically every semester scheduled courses on the appreciation of Bartók's works. His popularity grows year by year. "Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta" has been ranked by several eminent musicologists and critics as the greatest creation of modern music.

Yet you wonder that in this immense country appreciation for Bartók should be restricted to a small circle? The question is whether a pioneer genius in composition can achieve more than the recognition and enthusiasm of a relatively small circle. Naturally it is true here, as well as in Europe, including Hungary, that — as Antal Doráti has said — it is not the people, the broad strata of music lovers that fear his music, but those of high estate in the musical world. But this was exactly what happened in the case of Bach and Beethoven, Wagner and Liszt.

It stands to reason that half-educated American snobs respond just as coldly to his music as do their European counterparts. I am always amused when I recall a letter of his from Amsterdam, written in 1938: "To begin with, they invited me to supper en famille. The host asked me, among other things, whether I could play the piano. When this was clarified, he asked whether I could play the violin. The conversation continued in this style." Why should we expect more of a half-cultivated American than of a half-cultivated European? Half-cultivated people in the Soviet bloc, indoctrinated by the Communists, know only that he was an outstanding peace fighter, an ardent friend of bolshevism, and America's sworn enemy. Has this brought them any nearer to Bartók's music and personality?

## 7.

G., our next interviewee, is an American concert pianist and teacher; her husband is a doctor. She has a daughter, Ditta, named after Bartók's wife. She is a typical American intellectual, modest and extremely reserved in her judgments and pronouncements. She strives to avoid more or less personal themes that cannot be quite objectively handled. Despite this, her voice is veiled and her eyes moist when she speaks of Bartók. "For years I haven't spoken at length with anyone who knew him," said she. In Budapest she was Bartók's pupil, having, in 1937, come as a young girl to the Hungarian capital on an American fellowship in order to study piano with Bartók.

Her affection toward Bartók is perhaps deeper than that of the other interviewees, it is certainly more instinctive, feminine. She too has a quarrel with him. As if she would ask, "Why did it happen, as it did?" As if she would make Bartók responsible of many unsolved personal problems.

At first our relationship was rather formal. Bartók was loved and revered by his students, for whom he was a heroic figure not quite of this earth. And Bartók himself always kept a certain distance between himself and his students. When he came to America this relationship changed a great degree. The distance between Bartók and his young students dissolved, he was very human and approachable as far as I was concerned. His brilliant personality far surpassed the average, not only in music, but in general knowledge. I can only say he was a phenomenon with whom I can't even begin to compare anyone else. The privilege of knowing one such man is, I believe, a miraculous gift of providence.

His own musical life absorbed him so, that when he worked he was quite oblivious to what happened around him: he wouldn't care whether he hurt any feelings or not.

I arrived in Hungary on a fellowship, as an exchange student sent by the Institute of International Education. I had already heard much of Bartók, and my sole desire was to study with him. When I got to Budapest a bitter disappointment awaited me: Bartók had just been granted a leave of absence from the Academy of Music in order to work on his folk music collections at the Academy of Sciences. I met him on a number of occasions and found him very unsympathetic without the least consideration for others and with a manner distinctly provoking. But my colleagues said he was a marvelous teacher. I was so discouraged that I wanted to go right home, but my friends persuaded me to stay, and so I began my studies with another piano

teacher, at the same time taking composition with Kodály. Shortly afterwards I heard that an American boy named Storm was also studying in Budapest, and that he was taught by Bartók privately. Mr. Storm told me that Bartók had inquired about me several times — which greatly surprised me after the curt reception I had received. He had asked about the little American girl and how she was getting along with her studies; was she satisfied? I promptly decided to go to the Ministry of Education to get permission to take private lessons with Bartók. After all, that was my purpose in coming from America. The Ministry agreed. This step of mine won the admiration of all my friends and Bartók's respect too. He apparently sensed what it meant to me to be his pupil.

But a really intimate relationship between him and us, his students, actually couldn't develop later either. I had an American friend, Wilhelmina Creel, who also came to Budapest on a fellowship to study with Bartók — and we once had him as our guest. (You doubtless know her name from the correspondence between her and Bartók, who until his death kept in touch with her despite the immense distance — Wilhelmina lived in Seattle and for a time in Japan.) He was most charming and genial on that occasion, but there was still a certain aura of unapproachability about him.

I met him from time to time in America during the last years of his life, and on two occasions when there was talk of the Communists and communism, his sharp reaction left no doubt that he considered them no better than the Nazis.

When the Second World War ended and the Russians took over Bartók's homeland in place of the Germans, he said: "Scarcely is one bad situation over, but we are in another." He was very depressed, literally miserable because of this, but thought it would be quite hopeless, under the circumstances, to initiate anything to the end that the United States intervene to free his homeland from the latest oppression. He was broken up by the fact that there seemed to be no way out either for him or for his nation.

Small things often annoyed and hurt him a great deal; still, he must have had an unusually strong nervous system to be able to retain his balance despite so many upheavals and the attendant suffering.

After Bartók came to the United States I continued my studies with him, though sometimes there were long intervals between lessons. I should mention one such occasion. Bartók then lived at the Hotel Woodrow. When I arrived, Ditta was there too. I told them I was expecting a child. They were very happy; and Bartók showed great interest. Ditta remarked that she would be glad to be in the same situation. After my little girl was born, I paid them a visit with the baby. I was surprised to see Bartók play with her so long and with such absorption: till then I could never have imagined that he'd know what to do with an infant. We named her Ditta, after Mrs. Bartók.

After the Coolidge Festival, Bartók went to little Juanita College in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, where I taught and where he gave a concert. From there he had to go to Pittsburgh to play under Fritz Reiner. On that occasion we spent a happy time together. Bartók felt no need of practicing and said he'd prefer to talk, which was most unusual for him. He wanted me to accompany him to Pittsburgh, and later I deeply regretted not having done so; but I felt that my obligations at home were more important. After the Pittsburgh concert someone showed me a photo in a Pittsburgh paper which in some fashion related Bartók's and Ditta's names to Communism. Later I asked Bartók about this and he replied that the only possible reason for relating him or her to Communism might be that, after the first world war, the short-lived Communist regime in Hungary had appointed him and several young artists, among them Kodály and Dohnányi, to relatively high, though completely non-political, posts. He had not held the post long. Bartók emphasized that it was the only association he ever had with the Communists. He went into this in great detail and explained his hostility to Communism. He condemned the Communists' use of terror, their indifference to human values, their ruthlessness.

His American compositions, I feel, showed a sort of equilibrium after his revolutionary career. In these latter works he attains heights beyond mere originality and independence, heights which in my opinion he achieved only in certain portions of his earlier works.

Her discourse does not thus far bear out our contention that Mrs. G., despite all her love and enthusiasm for Bartók, has a quarrel with him that seems, as it were, imbedded in her very love and enthusiasm. She is the only one whose comments we do not reproduce in full, but she herself observes that everything she has said other than what we have reported is so personally colored, so much reflection of her subjective attitudes and feelings that it is less a revelation of Bartók than a revelation of herself.

## 8.

The next "interviewee," who responds without being questioned, need not be indicated by an initial — though as it happens, the initial would have coincided with his name — because he has already written down his impressions of Bartók. He is H. W. Heinsheimer, who at present heads a large music publishing firm. During Bartók's American years he was an employee of Bartók's concert management. His personal impressions, possessing the spontaneity of conversation, appeared under the title "Béla Bartók. A Personal Memoir" in the now non-existent magazine "Tomorrow", the October 1949 issue. We deem the reproduction of certain passages from this rare article to be of interest not just because of their quite personal coloring, but also because the writer had a business relationship with Bartók, and would thus no doubt be expected to view his "client" with the eye of a businessman.

I knew Béla Bartók well. I worked for him in a double capacity. Our little concert bureau tried to help him and his wife, the pianist Ditta Pásztory, in their attempts to fit themselves into the complicated machine of American concert business. And during the same period the house I was connected with published his music. No association in my life has been more inspiring; none, if I pause to look, more densely filled with an almost mystic atmosphere: the aura of a truly great man.

It's a dangerous word to use: a great man, and life has taught me to use it sparingly. But I know it's the right word when I think of Béla Bartók. I am not talking about his music; history only, much later, will be its final judge. His greatness is more than his music. Bartók, if he never had written a note worthy of being preserved, would still have been a great man.

I see that I called him, just a little time ago, "the great Hungarian composer." Yes, of course, he was Hungarian — he loved his country; his music had its roots deep in its native soil. Before he died he was visibly moved by his nomination to the new Parliament in Hungary, shortly after his country had been liberated from German occupation. Yet, one could never think of him as a Hungarian. He never seemed to belong to any nation, or group, or race. Unlike any other man I knew, he was a human being of an almost abstract, sidereal quality, sternly governed by the most rigorous application of the universal laws of decency, integrity, faith. He lived by them unrelentingly, as an artist and as a man. He knew no others. He was Hungarian not more than St. Francis was Italian. The laws that governed his life were as eternal as the laws that move the stars.

You had only to look at him to understand the determination of a man who would never fit into a world where everything had become a give and take, where every hand washed every other hand, and where there was an angle to everything. Bartók never knew of, never recognized angles. In his music as well as in his life the very thought that he should accommodate himself to demands of the day, to any detour that might ease the way to success or money, was unthinkable.

He was small and terribly frail. His very beautiful, very wise face was calm, stern, seldom ruffled by laughter. He was shy, very quiet spoken, constantly alert, very suspicious. Fragile in body and soul, he was hurt easily by the slightest deviation from what he believed to be right and true. His thin body, the penetrating, clear, serious eyes, the fine, sharply pointed nose, the noble forehead, the transparent, childlike hands — his was the appearance of an ascetic thinker, relentlessly driven by an inner flame, by a fire that eventually consumed him.

I had known him for many years in Europe, before the war, and when I saw him again here in America, I was amazed to see how little he had changed. He always seemed quite ageless. His hair had become white — but his face, his skin, his eyes, his body seemed the same after all the years. Even through the years of his consuming sickness he changed little, outwardly.

He had come to this country as a refugee. Here, again, in a fate he seemed to share with thousands, he appeared to be in a class by himself. If ever anyone chose freedom for no other reason than because he refused to compromise, it was Béla Bartók.

Neither he nor his wife was Jewish — there was not the slightest racial uneasiness that could have prompted him to choose emigration as a convenient way to safety. Neither did he have any outspoken political association that would have endangered his life or his livelihood. He had a comfortable income as a professor at the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest. He had a house, a pension for his latter days, his books, his garden, his vast collections of folk music from many countries which he had noted down and recorded in decades of scientific work. He had his native language, his friends, the beloved surroundings of home. Nothing compelled him to leave it all and to seek the precarious shelter of a foreign shore: nothing but

his unbending heart, his complete and absolute inability to compromise, to make peace with the forces of evil. Compromise was unthinkable: it would have destroyed him forever.

In leaving, he risked much more than many of the famous men who stayed on would ever have risked, men who tell us today that they just couldn't help themselves. His was not a glamorous name, sure to be accepted by the western world, certain to be installed in a new existence of honor and wealth. When he set out with his wife and his son on the perilous journey — weeks of traveling through Europe, their baggage lost somewhere in Spain, barely reaching Lisbon for the frigate that brought them across — he faced an uncertain future: poverty, a violent climate, disruption of his scientific work, a city whose noises and nervous vibrations pounded day and night at his emaciated body and super-sensitive mind. He also was to face an artistic hierarchy, too busy with the advancement of their own glory to pay much attention to the quiet, small man who could be hurt with one unguarded word and repudiated forever with the shrug of a shoulder.

But there was never, in the years of his exile, either doubt or regret. His determination, as always, was absolute. After he had put the ocean between himself and the enemies of everything he had been living for, he even refused to speak or write German. He spoke, instead, a very selected, highly cultivated English, slightly stilted, choosing his words slowly, striving perceptibly always to find the right expression. His speech retained a quite undefinable foreign flavor. It was highly civilized, rich and often amazing in its variety of vocabulary and the elegance of its grammar. Even when we were alone and when the conversation might have been easier and much less of a strain on both of us if conducted in German, he would never use the language of the enemy.

His letters, too, ever since he had come to America, were always written in English, composed by the hand of a master and just as dense in their texture as they had been in the old days. Only once in a while, he would question with a (?) his own proper use of a word or phrase, sensing infallibly the slightest error or foreignism in a language he had spoken only for a short time.

Bartók's letters were always written by hand, in a small, clear script that looked as if every letter had been put down slowly and deliberately. Every thought, it seemed, had been completed in his mind before it was put on paper, just as if the words were musical notes, the result of an intense process of formulation. There were no unnecessary phrases in these letters, and, wherever possible, he used penny postcards, filling them to the edge. Neither time nor space was ever wasted on courtesies, on how-do-you-dos, on anything personal that had no connection with the subject of his message. When, after his death, we went through his letters to help provide "human interest" material for a man who wanted to write Bartók's biography, we found almost nothing that would shed light on his character or life.

His letters covered the paper from top to bottom. Even the margin was usually used for a postscript or two. If the letter did not fill the page he would tear off what wasn't used, mailing only a closely covered scrap of paper. His room was always overflowing with little paper strips and torn off pieces of printed matter, every one of them covered with notes, figures, symbols and a special musical shorthand understandable only to him. All these notes, clippings, letters, books, manuscript paper, music, were scattered throughout the room, overflowing from the piano to the floor, covering chairs and tables — an appalling accumulation. Seemingly aimlessly scattered throughout the room, they were in reality exciting witness to a mind that never rested and was occupied, simultaneously, with many problems and ideas. Every one of them was always present and ready to be consulted whenever he would have need of them.

New York was the powerful, unconquerable enemy. Traffic frightened him deeply. He would never walk against a light, and even when he crossed with a green light he was tense and disturbed, hurrying across the street in short hasty steps, like an animal that has left his protecting woods, and faces, wide-eyed, the roaring uncertainties of the metropolis. The climate, New York heat and New York cold alike, was a constant source of preoccupation. Noise, and particularly any emanation of music penetrating his privacy, caused him physical suffering. The vicinity of a radio meant painful disruption of his creative work.

Sometimes he seemed to delight, in a strange and almost self-destructive way, in the difficulties and setbacks he experienced; he used to relate them in great detail, an ironical "I told you so" in his voice. At the same time, he would discard any good news we had for him with a deep-rooted disbelief that his fortunes would ever take a decisive and permanent turn for the better. The difficulties of finding an apartment where he and his wife would be allowed to practice were at first insurmountable. When, finally, friends located a place in Forest Hills where practicing pianists were not regarded as breachers of the peace, he only shrugged his shoulders — there would be other difficulties, he asserted. And he was right. After the Bartóks had moved in and the two pianos had been delivered by an obliging manufacturer, it was discovered that they could not be placed in one room. Triumphantly Bartók reported that they had to practice in two different rooms, separated by a corridor, unable to see each other, with coordination established only by ear!

Béla Bartók's bows were certainly a concert manager's nightmare: stern, professorial, unsmiling to the extent of chilliness — of a great, very moving dignity but bare of everything the American public had been

trained to expect from a performer. Nothing, of course, that anyone would ever dare to suggest to him would change his attitude toward his program and their presentation, and his hopes to earn a livelihood on the concert stage were sadly disappointed. Later, as his illness progressed, even the few concert appearances and lecture recitals we had been able to book for him had to be canceled.

Life was grim. Offers to accept a position as a teacher of composition — they had come from several educational institutions — he turned down unwaveringly. He was willing to teach piano, but only a few private pupils studied with him for short periods.

He accepted a few scientific assignments. One of them, offered by Columbia University, kept him busy for two years and provided him with a slim, academic salary. He had, during that time, a little studio in one of the brownstone houses owned by the University, on 117<sup>th</sup> Street. Here he spent several hours each day, transcribing on paper a great number of recordings which had been made in various European countries: folk songs, dances and melodies, played and sung by the shepherds and peasants of eastern and southeastern Europe, all very difficult in rhythm and intonation, decipherable only by a highly trained and incredibly patient mind and a sensitive ear. These notations, a unique mixture of scholarly exactness and creative genius, were just as close to his heart as his own music. With infinite, tireless care he listened to thousands of recordings, wrote down the tunes in all their inflections and variations, using his own method of musical notation to put them faithfully on paper. Detailed footnotes and carefully worded explanations, minute in every detail, would go with most of them.

And this was the same spirit that dreamed up the powerful pages of his own music, freely soaring through fantastic space, trying the impossible, speaking with Prometheus' fiery tongues — only to return again to the painstakingly accurate realm of science.

The Columbia assignment, limited as it was in scope, had been a great help. It had provided the composer with a minimum of security; and regularity of income was, to Bartók's methodical mind, the only possible way to make livelihood. Many of the composers it has been my good fortune to be associated with conducted their lives under the assumption that everybody-publishers, agents, opera directors, symphony orchestras, juke boxes and heirs — would make mountains of money from their works as soon as they died. They decided — not, it appears, without some justification — that they might as well cash in on all this while they themselves were still around. They saw no reason to balance their books. They felt fully justified in borrowing on posthumous glory.

To Bartók such imaginary bookkeeping was unthinkable. When we had, at last, persuaded him to accept an advance on his royalties, he insisted that the full amount be deducted at the end of the year. His young son had joined the American navy soon after the family's arrival in this country. He was glad to know that his pay was regularly sent to the father; the boy didn't need it and was happy to help. But when he came home the father handed him a bank book. There he found every penny he had been paid throughout the war years, "it wasn't mine" the father told him. "It's yours." Béla Bartók's views about money were never those of an artist. They were those of a puritan, and they were sometimes quite exasperating.

During a previous visit to the United States he had made a few recordings of his piano works for one of the smaller companies in New York. The owner of the business, an American of Hungarian descent, was a great admirer of Bartók. He called me one day; he wanted to come up and see me. It was rather important, he said.

What he proposed was startling. He knew that it was quite impossible to offer Bartók any money he didn't think he had earned. So he had advised a scheme whereby he would forge the royalty statements he was about to send to the composer. Instead of accounting for the few hundred records he had actually sold, he would show a sale of 10,897. Royalties would be paid for that amount. The statement, as was usual, was to be sent to the composer through us, his publishers; even the slightest deviation would have aroused Bartók's suspicion. Our bookkeeper became part of the plot, entries were made to substantiate the crime, and statement and check went out to the composer.

When I saw Bartók a few days later, he asked me at once whether I had seen the statement. He was very pleased, happily excited. I felt miserable. Even if this was a conspiracy I could always be proud of, such a deceit seemed almost criminal in his presence.

But the story didn't end there. A few days later he called me on the phone. "I want to take steps against Columbia Records," he said. In a sudden foreboding of what had happened I felt my swivel chair turn into molasses.

He explained that he had just received another statement for gramophone records sold, this one from Columbia. They accounted for 349 copies.

"It's quite impossible," Bartók said, quietly but in stern determination. "Here is a little company selling 10,897 records, and at the same time a big outfit like Columbia sells a few hundred. I want you to investigate."

Somehow, with the help of the man who had pushed me into this web of benevolent deceit, I got out of it; but it took a lot of very nervous explaining, and once in a while I was sure that Bartók suspected me to be in conspiracy not with the real culprit but with the innocent accounting department of Columbia. At last the incident was pushed aside — I wouldn't say forgotten, since Bartók never forgot anything — as a more important event took the stage: the strange circumstances surrounding the creation of Bartók's last big work, the "Concerto for Orchestra!"

In the spring of 1943, the sickness that had gripped Bartók for some time seemed noticeably worse. He was running temperature. He became weaker, more irritable, even more difficult to approach. He had to cancel lectures and instructed us not to book him for any recitals any more; he was sure he would be unable to appear in public again. He turned down a scientific assignment in spite of the fact that the university that made the offer explained that he was welcome to the honorarium and could begin work at any time, no matter how indefinite, in the future. But so deeply was he filled with his sense of responsibility that he was unwilling to accept as long as he was not absolutely sure that he would be able to deliver his part of the bargain. Sometimes, it was very difficult to have to deal with such a stubborn display of principles, which to him were inviolable.

Serious as his physical condition already was, it seemed to be aggravated by the growing feeling of solitude and bitterness that had taken hold of him. He saw himself as a neglected stranger, away from the main flow of musical activity in America. Once in a while he remembered with bitter nostalgia the days of his European past. The artists and conductors who played his music in America were, to a large extent, old acquaintances, many of them former Hungarians. Only a few of the great stars showed interest in his music, and when Yehudi Menuhin played his "Violin Concerto" Bartók was so deeply moved by the unexpected attention of a great artist that he wrote a new sonata for Menuhin.

But now all this was forgotten as the composer was brooding, sick, poor, in the enforced inactivity of a hospital room. We had little to cheer him up. Small things didn't matter. There were no big ones to report.

It was then, in the summer of 1943, that something happened in the room of Doctors Hospital in New York that strangely and mysteriously resembles an event in another sick room, 152 years earlier: the sudden appearance of the "mysterious stranger", who had come to commission the dying Mozart to write the "Requiem". This time, in streamlined New York, the messenger was no mystery man. He was a well-clad, elegant gentleman of very aristocratic bearing. His name was Serge Koussevitzky.

The visit came as an unexpected surprise to the sick man. Koussevitzky was one of the conductors who had never played any of Bartók's important scores. I don't think that the two men had ever met before. The conductor was alone. He took a chair, and began to explain his mission. He had come to offer Béla Bartók a commission from the Koussevitzky Foundation — a commission carrying 1,000 dollars and the assurance of a first performance by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The composer was free to choose any form of music he cared to write. There was just one condition: the score was to be dedicated to the memory of Mrs. Natalie Koussevitzky, the conductor's wife who had died a few years earlier and in whose memory the foundation had been established. It was to be a requiem after all.

Koussevitzky himself later told me of the details of the conversation and as he recalled it he seemed genuinely moved. Bartók, touched without doubt by the personal appearance of the conductor who could have sent a letter or have had the message delivered by one of his countless disciples, declined. He was much too sick. He could not commit himself. He could not accept money for a work he might never be able to write.

The conductor had been prepared for just this situation. Before the foundation had decided to give the commission to Bartók, friends of the composer (Fritz Reiner and Joseph Szigeti among others) had approached Koussevitzky and the members of his board of trustees, urging that Bartók be chosen. They had explained his precarious circumstances and the difficulty of helping the proud man with anything he might consider as charity. It had to be a real commission, even if, due to Bartók's delicate health, nothing whatever came of it.

Koussevitzky explained that he was bound by the trustees' decision. A commission, once decided upon, could not be taken back. The money was given to the composer, no matter whether he was willing or able to deliver the piece. These were the terms of the covenant. He had, in fact, under the rules of the foundation, already brought with him a check for 500 dollars which he was obliged to leave with Bartók, together with an official letter stating the terms of the commission.

Bartók made no reply. He suddenly began talking of other matters. He asked the conductor, almost urgently, to stay on. The two men had a long talk. Bartók did most of the talking, unburdening his troubled mind. He covered many subjects and became flushed with a new and very touching confidence in life. It was almost an hour later that the nurse came in and the conductor took his leave.

Undoubtedly the learned specialists, who attended Béla Bartók in his sickness that two years later consumed what was left of him, will have more logical explanations for the incredible recovery that set in almost immediately after Koussevitzky's visit. All we know is that soon they found him to be so much better that they released him from the hospital. He left New York for Asheville, North Carolina. He found a quiet room in the outskirts where neither traffic lights nor radios interfered with the absolute concentration that he craved. The Hearst Building, the Fisk Building, the entrance of the Independent Subway station, the newsstand, the assortment of sweat and dirt he had viewed from his window on 57<sup>th</sup> Street were replaced by flowers and trees. And the constantly tormenting screams of auto horns and police sirens were drowned in memory by the concert of birds. Their cries and calls can be heard in the second movement of Bartók's "Third Piano Concerto" which he sketched in Asheville and completed, with the exception of seven bars, in a grim race with death in the summer of 1945. Here he had returned to the sources of nature. In the last pages he ever wrote, the Hungarian, the European, the great citizen of the world set a small lovely monument to the birds of North Carolina.

He was happy again. "Don't send me special delivery letters or telegrams," he wrote us, a few days after he had arrived in Asheville. "I get all my mail at the same time — mail, papers, special deliveries, wires. Here, time makes no difference." He had no piano. Once in a while his room was very cold. He went for walks, always alone. There was nobody to talk to, only one family where he occasionally took a meal and where he would practice the piano from time to time. He asked us to send them a selection of his music as a token of his gratitude.

His letters, deviating strangely from the austerity we had come to expect, sounded almost elated. He included short health bulletins, giving us a graph of his morning and night temperatures with slightly ironic but not at all pessimistic comments. Most important of all, he asked for music paper — lots of it. Then, suddenly, he wrote that he had completed a major part of a new work he was writing for Serge Koussevitzky. He was sending us the score to be copied. Soon a second and a final third batch arrived. It was the "Concerto for Orchestra".

He did not return from Asheville in time to be present at its tumultuous premiere in Boston in December, 1944. But he observed its immediate success, its acceptance as one of the great masterpieces of our generation. He knew that this time he had touched the hearts of his audiences, and he was present to hear it and take many of his gentle, very touching, terribly serious bows when the work was played in New York. A few months later he was dead.

When I saw him for the last time he rested, at last. The little funeral parlor on Lexington Avenue in Manhattan was filled with a hushed, deeply stirred crowd. There were no representatives of organizations, no honorary pall bearers, nobody who had come because he wanted to be sure his name would be in the register. I don't believe there was a register. No reporters were there, no pictures were taken as the mourners, stunned, filed out.

But there were many people who had known him and who suddenly felt that they must come to pay their respects. Suddenly, this very day, he had become great. As I took the last look before they closed the coffin I felt again, stronger than ever before, that this tiny face, so beautiful, so great in the peace of death, drawn even now by suffering and still reflecting an unending struggle, was not only the unforgettable face of a great musician. It was the shining example of bravery, faith, and an indomitable spirit that will live on, long after the frame that carried them has been taken back, forever, by the dust.

## 9.

As an appendage to these detailed reports we reproduce the recollections of one who met Bartók only twice — at the home of Mr. and Mrs. A. Mr. I. is a very well-known personality of exceptional cultural attainment. But he has an almost pathological aversion to individual literary expression; hence almost all his works have appeared under pseudonyms.



What perhaps struck me the most in Bartók's appearance was the childlike and at the same time prophetic wonder in his eyes. There was something priest-like in his appearance — as if some high ranking, scholarly prelate had dressed in mufti. His manner also expressed this "priest-like" quality. I believe it derived from the fact that his every word and gesture was utterly unequivocal and kept to the very essence. In society we all more or less lose our individual identity. This didn't hold for Bartók in the least. He was the same in society as when alone. I think this air of apartness from society, this strict consistency and loyalty to self is permitted only to a very great man — had Bartók not been Bartók, he would have been found intolerable in society.

On one occasion, in connection with a serialized novel about Imre Bogár, the famed brigand, there was talk of the ballad in which the hero's fate is recounted. I mentioned that in my opinion the rhythm of the song is identical to the rhythm of "Klára Zách", a ballad by our great 19<sup>th</sup> century poet János Arany. Bartók reflected, then still turned away from the piano, using his left hand, he played the different variants of the melody. This series of tunes, together with his brief, incredibly precise elucidation was a veritable little masterpiece of musicology. I was amazed at his perfect grasp of prosody.

But to come back to his appearance — I see him before me more clearly than anyone whom I haven't seen for a long time. What I called "priest-like" has to do with a certain solemn quality coming from within, never put on.

We did not speak of bolshevism. But this man's being was the negation of every facet of violence. Any attempt to expropriate him for the benefit of any sort of tyranny cannot but be malign in intent.

## 10.

We feel that these testimonies truly evoke Bartók's life in America. We aimed at utter exactness; we have done no retouching. It is our feeling that, despite the variety of our sources, our picture is unified. The recollection of eyewitnesses put us in a position to evaluate the Communist version: Bartók, wandering deserted and sick, shivering in New York's bleak September weather — incidentally September is the loveliest month in New York — his absolute abandonment, the utter indifference of society, its callous spurning of his work, the unmarked grave, and his unquenchable yearning for the paradise back home, along all the other party-line trappings of the Communist-sponsored Monument-to-Bartók erected in the Soviet World.

The doctrinaire nature of this Bartók Monument in itself assures us of its falsity. A party-line genius is a contradiction in terms. But merely to point this out is not enough. In Bartók's case it has been essential to reveal the true picture of a critical period in the life of a maligned genius, lest his adulterated memory be dispensed like slow poison not only in the bolshevized world, but also among the more easily misled intellectuals of the free world. Consequently we attach importance to an objective appraisal of Bartók's American years, not solely because in our era his personality and work continue, even after his death, to exert a decisive and universal influence, but also because his strong social consciousness, his understanding of people and his identification with the cause of the helpless and oppressed offer a temptation to Communist surgeons, who stand ready to carry out a by now routine operation on his memory, turning him into a "people's democrat".

The question, however, is deeper — and here we can only hint at its broader implications. The genius, who, forging beyond his own era, blazes a trail in the arts and in the humanities for generations yet to come, can never feel at home in the world. Ever a pilgrim from afar, his whole being is centered on the ideal world he bears within him.... Bartók could not feel at home in New York, the alien metropolis whither he had to emigrate, old and ill, leaving behind the fruits of a lifetime. Bartók's New York homelessness is no more than the eternal homelessness of creative spirits, intensified by the tensions of the age, by the appearance of demonic forces which humanists believed to be over and done with long, by the emergence of a new period of trembling and fear. The Communist transposition is as follows: Bartók was a great humanist, a great artist, the pioneer of a new humanity, homeless in the world around him, as are all great men in advance of their time. So much is a fact; but in the Communist interpretation, this fact means that Bartók hated the world around him and that the world hated him. In the Communist parable the two warring sides are Bartók and Wall Street, the latter symbolizing America, the hostile world bent on his destruction. Bartók's American years allegedly document the battle of the genius with the capitalist world, a battle in which he is doomed to perish miserably.

Another point of departure: the genius bears within him the new world of his dreams — a world truer than outer reality. This, too, is a fact. But in the Communist transposition this new world in Bartók's soul and art is none other than the bolshevist order sponsored by the ever-glorious Soviet Union, where his boldest prophecies have been realized. Thus, scene I of the people's-democratic tableau shows America fighting Bartók and Bartók fighting America—the portrayal of his exile in the United States. Scene II: Bartók championing bolshevism and bolshevism championing Bartók — the ascension of genius into the Communist heaven.

There would be no point in our, as it were, resurrecting Bartók so as to show what might have befallen him had he gone home and died behind the physical and spiritual barricades of the Iron Curtain — much as Dostoyevsky in "The Brothers Karamazov" brings Christ, at his second coming, to the Spain of the Inquisition era. This might have made sense a decade ago or perhaps even five years ago when the free world still was but scantily informed about bolshevized life.

Today it is pointless, because this barred world's every secret is known. In our days, it would indeed be laughable to consider whether the world of terror and lies, as Bartók called it, could be the new world Bartók dreamt of and expressed in his music. There can be no doubt that a Bartók, incapable of compromise, would have withered away utterly in that world. There have been great talents — mostly epitomizing their age, rather than geniuses building a new world — able outwardly to adjust to a world totally regimented in spirit. But Bartók can by no means be classed among them. Opposition to such a world belonged to the essence of his art and being. "The Tragedy of Man", a dramatic poem by the great Hungarian poet Imre Madách, shows, in a scene portraying the phalanster society of the future, how those incapable of adjusting themselves to strict mechanical work — Plato, Michelangelo, and Luther — are punished by being made to kneel on peas, whereupon the tortured Plato cries: "Even kneeling on peas I shall dream of beauty!" But modern totalitarianism robs its slaves even of their dreams. The artist's dream is creation. And this dream world can exist only to the extent that the artist can express it. If deprived of the possibility of expression, if his cry is unheard, he no longer possesses his dreams. These stolen obliterated dreams rise to accuse totalitarian regimes.

Far be it from us to attempt to lay claim to Bartók on behalf of America or of any sort of political or economical system. We have sought merely to preserve his world from expropriation.