

## **SNAPSHOTS FROM MY MEMOIRES ABOUT THE YEARS IN THE WORLD FEDERATION OF UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATIONS**

*This paper is reflecting my personal views and impressions.  
It may be however interesting for those, who are not familiar  
with the „microhistory”of the World Federation.  
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My 40 years spent in WFUNA has been one of the very interesting and important dimension of my work for the United Nations.

It started in Hungary. In 1969 I joined the work and somewhat later the leadership of a small and at that time hardly visible Hungarian NGO, the United Nations Association of Hungary (UNA-H). UNA-H had a relatively long and rather unique history in Hungary. Together with the Hungarian Red Cross it was one of the two NGOs which survived the different political changes, like the transition from the short democratic years which followed the Second World War to the dictatorial rule, but not without major problems. It has also survived the post Revolution years The return to democracy after 1990 has been an other important milestone of its history.

Even in the darkest years of its existance, UNA-H has remained a member of the the World Federation of the United Nations Associations. In fact, the political and moral assistance from WFUNA has been playing a major role in the stagnation but also in the survival of the Hungarian association. It has exposed UNA-H to untrue charges but also protected the Hungarian Associaton in a few times. It has offered guidance and facilitated the development of bilateral relations. The WFUNA conferences, what the UNA of Hungary hosted increased its visibility and prestige.

My „INVITATION” to UNA-H was related to two factors. One, of them was academic. I had been the first Hungarian who introduced a special course on the UN in Hungary, in the University of Economics in 1953. The second factor was related to my carrier as a UN staff member. I was probably the only Hungarian, who returned to Hungary in the late 1960s, after having spent some years in the UN. The years which I spent in Geneva and in New York in the UN and my participation in different UN committees, particularly in the committee on public admistration and on development planning opened up a new world also for me in many ways. In Geneva, as a fellow in the Economic Commission for Europe, I learned about the internal scharacteristics of an important body, still in its formative years. I got acquainted with many colleagues from the different specialized agencies. It was Geneva, where I met John Ennals and other people from WFUNA. There were still

people in the staff of the UN here, with whom I worked, including my secretary who started their carrier in the League of Nations and told me interesting stories about the organization.

Some years later life in New York I became a member of the staff in an important UN research group: "The Center for Development Planning, Projections and Policies". The work in the Headquarters of the UN was quite different than in Geneva. It was much closer to the real world. My assignment was not only research, but also operative involvement in the field work. My trips and duties in the developing world offered an invaluable experience: to see poverty, deprivation, backwardness and the birth of the Third World countries from inside in Africa, Asia and the Middle East and I had the opportunity to contribute to the formation of some institutions in new states. I had of course my background from the socialist world, where as an academic I had a birds eye perspective and a critical view. Some of my colleagues in the UN looked at the striking contrasts between the rich and poor countries, the miserable condition of the people in the Third World, locked into poverty and deprivation, from a neutral perspective, like an experienced doctor was looking at is sick patients with incurable diseases. Some others, including myself had a different perspective, believing in the necessity and also in the possibility of fast economic and social development as the only source of hope for these people. The Headquarters of the UN in the United States was in a way a window to the richest and technologically most advanced society, a strange mixture of order and libertarian disorder, democracy, humanism, social solidarity and social Darwinism. The work experiences gained in the UN included many things, objective analysis of global economic trends, advise to governments, organization of debates in conferences, lecturing and negotiating in a number of developing countries.

In New York I got acquainted also with the NGO world, including the UN Office of WFUNA. The role of the NGOs in global politics has been growing in the 1960s and 1970s in all the major issues of the global agenda: in the struggle against the nuclear weapons, in the human rights advocacy and also in the development dialogue. The decade of the 1970s, when I became a member of different UN committees, related to global development issues, witnessed the raise and fall of the ideas about a new international economic order, and the global discourse on it brought also the Professional and political elite from the third world countries into the NGO world. I became a member and Vice Chairman of the Executive Board of UNCEF which was quite different from the rest of the UN bodies.

In the early 1970s, at the beginnings of my active participation in WFUNA, the international NGO also reproduced the division of the world. A number of international voluntary organisations were considered as the "communists front organisations" by the opposite camp, others, as the front organisations of the Western countries, or more explicitly, either the "instruments" of the Soviet Union or the United States. The division between them was more often than not extremely wide, political, ideological and it was based also on the sources of membership and financing. I was also aware, that a number of Professional NGO officers, particularly in the East, who were paid for the job, had been often handpicked by the ruling party, and there were many of them, who moved to important government or party positions from the NGOs. The situation was somewhat different in the West, but one could always feel the influence of government agencies on a number of NGOs. The CIA and the KGB were haunting and hunting also in the NGO world. Still, this group of people, whom I defined as the „infantry of global politics”, reflected more the genuine feelings of the citizens of the world, than the UN: their fear from a nuclear holocaust, a desire of peace, the strive for disarmament, development, ethics, cooperation, humanitarian assistance, human rights, democracy, welfare, equity, environment and for many other issues.

After having spent a few years in the UN, I found the NGO world much more complex and controversial. There were (and still are) different views on the role of the NGOs. Some people insisted, that they represented the "real world", the world of global public, the civil society, and they expressed the feelings of the grassroots. They often contrasted themselves to the governments, and intergovernmental organisations, which were, according to them, representing the bureaucratic elites. There was a certain amount of truth in these views. The "non governmental" qualification was however in itself sometimes a simplification. NGOs comprised a large number of different groups: religious, Professional, political, humanitarian, etc. Once I had a very interesting conversation with Andrew Young, at that time, the US Ambassador to the UN on this issue. I visited him in the US mission and wanted to gain his support for one of WFUNA projects. He asked me an interesting question: are the people of the world really so much divided in their approaches, as it is reflected by those groups, which claim, that they represent the people, or is the world of the voluntary organisations a part of the global manipulation? My answer was, that they were indeed divided, but maybe, not in the same ways or not along the same issues, as the governments. We agreed, however; that in the world of the NGOs, both the West and the East had its favourite organisations, which were sponsored by direct or indirect subventions of governments or their different agencies, including intelligence groups but even in those organisations, there were people, who genuinely wanted peace and cooperation.

Mr Young was asking me about the real place of WFUNA in the divided world? I explained that The World Federation of UN. Associations was a rare exception. We have been „sitting on the fence” in almost all the important areas of the global agenda and agenda setting. The founders probably did not anticipate a divided world. Those distinguished political figures, like Elenore Roosewelt, the widow of the late American president, Jan Masarik, the former minister of foreign affairs of Czechoslovakia, etc had been acting in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations.

In the 1970s when I got acquainted with the work of WFUNA from inside, it was able to go much beyond of the political strait-jacket into which the Cold War locked the World Organization. The struggle for a peaceful world and for human rights occupied central place in the work of the World Federation, but the division, which caractereized the UN was much less the determining factor in WFUNA. It was the first international NGO which initiated the establishment of an all European security system. It served as the only forum in which regular, direct unofficial negotiations have been carried out between the the two adversaries in the Cold War, US and the Soviet Union on a relatively high level. Important unofficial messages have been chanelled through it between the main opponents in the Middle East. As a public forum for the dialogue on the social and economic problems of the world the resolutions of WFUNA have been expressing mutual interests and duties. The UN Associations of the different countries could not leave of course their policies and priorities in the cloakroom, but in many ways, in WFUNA there was more possibility for simultaneous cooperation and confrontation than in the UN.

I was paticipating in Professional voluntary organizations in Hungary before my U. N. carrier, but this was something outside the real game, even though I learned a lot about the nature of the problems, the character of the debates and the type of people, in the field. These experiences were interesting, but very limited, compared to those, for example, which I gained when in 1971 in Calcutta, during the war between India and Pakistan, as the head of an NGO delegation I was assisting the historically unprecedented refugee program and the establishment of the new administration of Bangla Desh, or somewhat later, when I organised a global public opinion poll among decision makers on the government attitudes toward the UN and the New International Economic Order, which was an important global policy initiative of the developing countries in the World Organisation.

## **The path to WFUNA**

There is a Chinese proverb: "even the longest march starts with the first step" My active involvement in the NGO work started in the early part of 1969, after my return from the U. N. in New York by a telephone call. I still remember very well how it happened.

"Have you ever heard about the United Nations Association of Hungary? No, never! Do you know anything about the peoples movements for the UN? Yes, I said, I knew some people in Geneva and I was once invited by the Vermont Chapter of the American United Nations Association, to speak about Hungary and the United Nations.

-You were recommended by one of my friends, the director of the Kossuth Publishing, for whom you are writing a book about the UN. Have you real experiences in UN affairs?

Yes, I answered.

"Could you come and see me in the Hungarian Press Club, it is rather urgent".

This short conversation took place between the Secretary General of the United Nations Association of Hungary, Mrs Irene Komjath and myself in May, 1969. She was a nice old lady, a Hungarian journalist. She was a correspondent in Spain during the civil war and later she was participating in the French resistance movement. Her husband was a well known Hungarian left wing, a leading participant of the French resistance movement and was killed during the war. She survived the war in France, She returned to Hungary, after 1945. I knew her name as the author of interesting articles in newspapers, mainly about France and the liberation war in Africa.

Next day, we met and she explained to me, that the Hungarian Ministry for Foreign Affairs asked her, to reactivate the dormant United Nations Association of Hungary. This was considered as an important gesture by the government, expressing its interest in the United Nations. She told me, that in fact, the UN Association of Hungary was established in 1947 and it was the main window towards the UN before 1955, when Hungary became a member of the World Organization. Since then, there was very little official support for its work. The association existed but was not doing anything between 1949-53. It was reorganised as a part of the changes, after 1953. She was elected as the Secretary General in 1954 and since then, she participated of course in the international meetings of the World Federation of UN Associations

„If you are interested in participating in the work of the Hungarian UNA and I hope, you would” she said, your first task, would be to join me, as the member of the UNA of Hungary delegation in Cyprus, where the Plenary Assembly of the World Federation would be held. I was of course interested. I started already teaching again about the UN in the University and my book about the UN „The View from the 26<sup>th</sup> Floor’ was in the process of being published. “The Head of the Department of International Relations of the Socialist Workers Party will have to approve of course your participation, -she said, -but that will be arranged easily, because you are well known by one of his deputies”. ”In fact-she added- I discussed already with him your participation in UNA-H, he even suggested that you should be responsible for initiating educational work in the UN Association. ”

In August 1969 we flew to Cyprus, to the Plenary Assembly of the World Federation of the U. N. Association. The flight from Budapest at that time was twice a week to Athens, where we had to change for Nicosia. . The plane was supposed to take off around midnight. It was a flight to Beirut and we had to change in Athens. The plane, an IL 18, a Soviet made turbo-prop. was almost empty. Our take-off was delayed by about two hours. The stewardess informed us, that we have to wait for a high level group of Arabs, arriving from Moscow. It was in fact Arafat and about ten young Palestinian Arabs, who joined us on the flight. They were escorted by two Hungarians. One of them, a person from the International relations department of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, knew Mrs. K. the Secretary General of the UNA rather well. During the flight, we were introduced to Arafat.

Mr Arafat apparently misunderstood the purpose of our travel, and thought, that we were connected with the UN peace-keepers in Cyprus. He was asking questions about the experiences in the organisation of the UN peace keeping. Since I was rather well informed about it, we entered into a lengthy conversation on the UN in general. Arafat was particularly interested in the management of the UN peace keeping operations in New York. At that time I did not know much about Arafat, but knew some other leaders of the Palestinian movements from my work in the Middle East, and of course I had personal experiences in the region. Arafat was impressed by my knowledge. A few years later in Egypt, during an international conference I met him again. There, he greeted me as an old friend from the UN and I was the only one whom he kissed, from among the members of a Hungarian delegation, to my great embarrassment and as the consequence of it, I was also kissed by a number of his colleagues.

On the way to Cyprus, we were the only passengers, who disembarked in Athens. It was still dark. Our flight to Cyprus was due in the afternoon. The transit was almost empty. A few Arabs were asleep in one end of it. The hall itself was rather small and dirty. Mrs. K. used this time to give me detailed "instructions" - how to work and behave in the Plenary Assembly. We should not be too active, she said, and never be the first speaker. Let the Soviet comrades speak and set the tone. They are very keen on that. There will be a coordinating meeting for the UNAs of the Socialist countries, and there we shall get all the necessary information about the main issues and tasks. We shall also agree on the officers, assigned to the Socialist UNAs. She said, that she would attend that meeting alone, but would inform me about the outcome. Mrs. K gave to me a copy of her short written statement, which was approved by the International Department of the Party, but, she said, that she would not read it. She will ask me to read it, if it will be necessary. There will be probably three committees of the plenary, one on human rights, in which she intended to participate, the other on peace and disarmament and the third one on socio-economic problems. Then, she told me about the different people, who might be in Cyprus, and warned me, that in the delegations of the Western UNAs, there might be also people of Hungarian origin, particularly in the Israeli and US delegation, and I should avoid them.

We landed in Cyprus late in the afternoon. A nice young lady, introduced herself as the Secretary General of the local UNA was receiving us in the airport. There was one thing, which I did not tell to Mrs. K in advance. In Budapest I knew a number of Greek Cypriots, who studied in my university. I had rather good relations with them, because they learned very fast the language and had been active in the life of the university. One of them became a good friend of mine. He was George Vasiliu, who many years later became the President of Cyprus. He came to Hungary, after the civil war in Greece. His father was an ophthalmologist in Cyprus, a very rich man, and a communist sympathiser. He was asked by the Greek communists, to work in Greece and help them during the civil war. By the time he got there, the communists were defeated, and he, together with a number of other people, was flown directly to the Soviet Union, from where he could not get out. George, his son, and his sister were studying in Switzerland. They got the information from a relative, that his father disappeared and started searching for him. His father also tried to contact the children from the Soviet Union. In a few months, the children were approached by the Hungarian Embassy in Bern, and were told, to come to Hungary, where they will get the information about the parents, who were alive. They came, but in the meantime the parents were sent to Armenia, and there was no possibility for them to get out, or for the children to get there. They stayed and studied in Hungary. In 1957, he left Hungary, because there was a serious accusation against him. He smuggled out the manuscript of a Hungarian

intellectual, about the real story of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956. The article was published in LeMonde. The Hungarian author was arrested, and questioned about the way, the article was sent abroad. My Greek Cypriot friend was charged "officially" but he managed to escape to London. I learned, from some people later, that he returned to Cyprus, after the independence of the Island was declared.

In the airport, the Secretary General of the UNA of Cyprus introduced herself as Andrulla Vasiliou. There may be many Vasilous in Cyprus I told her, but do you know by any chance a certain Mr. Vasiliou, who returned to Cyprus some years ago, who was an economist and studied in Hungary?", Yes, she answered. Could I see him?, Yes, she said. "There will be a reception for the delegates in the evening, and he is also invited". In the evening, they came together. May I introduce my husband, she said. To my greatest surprise, it was my friend, George Vasiliou. At the time of my visit, the president of the island republic was Archbishop Makarios, who offered the reception. George introduced me to the president, as his old friend and former Professor. President Makarios first sentence was a sarcastic remark: "You people, in a Socialist country taught this gentleman rather well to capitalism."

The Plenary Assembly was a very important event in the Island. I was a newcomer in the World Federation. At the reception, many delegates saw me talking with the President of Cyprus in a friendly way, which raised some interest and I was approached by a few of the delegates. The head of the Hungarian UNA delegation, Mrs K. introduced me also to the delegates from the Socialist countries, and she was particularly keen, that I should meet with the head and the members of the Soviet delegation.

The head of the Soviet delegation was a well known person, the infamous "in-house philosopher" of Stalin, Prof. Konstantinov. . He wrote a textbook on "Historical Materialism" in the late Forties, which was translated also to Hungarian and it was a mandatory reading in the university when I was a student. Mrs K. knew Konstantinov well. On the basis of that textbook, I expected a rigid, dogmatic Marxist "preacher". I was wrong. He was a jovial and always smiling person. He had one important constraint, the language: he knew only Russian. There was an interpreter with the Soviet delegation, whose only task was to help him. Both Mrs K. and myself were fluent in Russian, and the communication with Konstantinov was easy. He was particularly pleased, that I was familiar with his famous book, which, according to him, was published in more languages than any of the works of the well known Hungarian philosopher, George Lukacs. I immediately realised, that he was "allergic" to

Lukacs, who was not only an active supporter of Imre Nagy in 1956, but his books, particularly on aesthetics were world famous. Lukacs could never become a real Marxist, Konstatntinov told me. He remained an eclectic bourgeois philosopher. We had some argument about this, but he did not consider my disagreement, as a hostile, anti-Marxist view and said "You are also Hungarian, and it is quite all right to protect your countryman" The other members of the Soviet UNA delegation were seemingly not too close to Konstantinov. He was walking around the large reception hall, with his interpreter, and greeted mainly the heads of the other delegations. During the following days we did not see him too often. He was probably more interested in tourism, than in the work of the Plenary Assembly. A story was told to me about him, later, by an officer of the American UNA, about one of his his touristic adventures. A couple of years earlier, the American UNA invited a delegation from its Russian counterpart. They visited a number of cities in the U. S. The head of the delegation was of course Konstantinov. The first visit, after New York was in San Francisco. They went to the Fairmont hotel, early in the afternoon and everybody was free until the dinner program. In the evening, the members of the delegation were looking for Konstantinov, but he was nowhere. Everybody was of course rather upset. Some of the Russians even said, that he might have been kidnapped by the CIA. The search went on until about 11 PM, when the information came from the local office of the FBI, that he was found in one of the prentices in the outskirts of the city.

The adventures of Mr. Konstantinov in San Francisco started as a little walk. It was a nice sunny afternoon, and Mr. Konstantinov decided to go around the block He didn't know the name of the hotel, and of course did not know the language. His passport was left in the Hotel, and he had not one penny in his pocket. He liked the city, and went further and further away from the hotel. He lost his way and went to the wrong direction in the large city. After wandering a few hours, he started asking people in Russian, about "hotel" the name of which he did not even know. Nobody understood him of course. At one point, a bystander, who realised, that he spoke Russian thought that may be a senior Russian was looking for political asylum. He called the police, who drove Mr. Konstatninov to a prentice, where they were looking for somebody, who could talk to him in Russian. In the meantime, the members of the Soviet delegation were alerted about the disappearance of their boss. The the interpreter, who was afraid, because of her responsibility, called the embassy in Washington and informed them about the mysterious disappearance of Academician Konstantinov. The search started also from Washington. I was told, that due to the importance of the person, even the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Moscow was informed, and immediately sent a cable to the Embassy in Washington, to protest in the State Department.

In Cyprus of course there were no such dangers. Konstatninov was escorted and well protected also by the members of the Soviet Embassy. The other, for me, more interesting person in the Soviet delegation was Prof. V. Truchanovski, a historian, a former diplomat and a former personal assistant of Molotov. He was very friendly and always full of anecdotes. His English was rather good, and he preferred speaking English with foreigners, even with those, like myself who knew Russian. Truchanovski explained to me, that he was specialised to the modern history of the United Kingdom, and was working on a book about Churchill. He had an interesting carrier. During the war he served in Iran, as the Soviet Consul General. He was present in San Francisco at the signature of the UN Charter, in 1945. I asked him about the reasons, why he left diplomacy. The answer was: "for family reasons- I married a "wrong person", a women of Jewish nationality, with relatives abroad" We became good friends. Truchanovski was elected as the Soviet member and vice-chairman of the Executive Commitee of the World Federation in Cyprus. An other interesting member of the Soviet delegation was Grigorij Morozov, a former son-in-law of Stalin, and the father of the grandchildren of Stalin. At that time I was not aware of his past, but I found him an interesting, person, very well informed about international politics, particularly about the United Nations.

There were of course in many interesting personalities in the different UNA delegations. Some of the were familiar to all those, who knew the League of Nations. The presence of people like Lord Noel Baker, Kapelle di Kapello, a distinguished personality of the World Federalist movement, Shean Mac Bride, the former minister of foreign affairs of Ireland whose mother was one of the most famous Irish revolutionaries made the event even more interesting for me. They were not too active in talking to people, but in the political debates they have been excelent. They the behaved like the old war horses, when hearing the trumpets calling for the charge.

The main concern of the Plenary Assembly in Nicosia was the future of Cyprus. It was expected, that the meeting will give an excellent opportunity for bringing the leaders of the Greek and Turkish community of the island together, as the beginnings of the process of reunification. A ' historical' public meeting between Archbishop Makarios and Dr. Kucuk, the Turkish leader was arranged, and their handshaking was indeed a major event. This was probably all, what we could achieve at that time.

To the great surprise of Mrs. K. and also of myself, I was elected as a member of the Executive Committee of the World Federation. The story of my election was rather interesting. I was actively participating in the discussions during the Assembly in that committee of the Plenary, which was

dealing with international economic and development issues. Two delegates, one was Morozov, from the Soviet and the other, John Ennals from the United Kingdom approached me, and expressed interest to support, and second my candidacy. The members of the executive Committee were elected in personal capacity, but there was an informal agreement about "regional balancing" The seat of Eastern Europe was vacant, due to the absence of the Czechoslovak UNA delegate, whose term expired anyway, but he could have been reelected. Due to the political events in that country however there was no delegation present from Prague.

According to the Constitution of the World Federation: regularly the national UN Association had to nominate the person, and other associations had to second the candidacy. Mrs. K. was against my candidacy. She said, that there was no authorisation from Hungary, and that it was too early for me to become a member of the Executive Committee. I think, that the views of the Soviet delegation were more important to convince Mrs. K. than the advise of the UK. delegation. In the report, what she wrote to the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, the explanation of her accord was based on the proposition, that the post in the Exco would have been lost and therefore she supported my candidacy, without the authorisation of the International Relations Department of the Party, on the insistence of the Soviet delegation. .

In the 1970s when I got acquainted with some of the old records and reports of the UNA of Hungary. I had to realise from a note, dated in 1949 in the archives, and written by a former secretary general of the Association, Mr. Paloczi Horvath, (who was arrested and jailed in the same year) that in 1947 an „Englishman”, whose name was not even mentioned, came to Hungary, visited all the political parties and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and convinced them to establish a national association for the UN, which will help the UN membership of Hungary. I found out much later, from one of the retired diplomats of Hungary, who served in the Ministry in those years, that Paloczy Horvath was a victim of the „show trials”. The term **show trial** is a pejorative description of a type of political trials. The authorities have already determined the guilt of the defendant and that the actual trial has as its only goal to present the accusation and the verdict to the public as an impressive example and as a warning. Defendants had little or no real opportunity to justify themselves: they have often signed statements under torture prior to appearing in the court-room. After his arrest, Paloczy-Horvath was forced to confess that the World Federation of United Nations Organisations was in fact an imperialist and spy organisation. According to the story written by the “scriptwriters” of the trial, the UNA of Hungary had conspired to overthrow the People’s Democracy. John F. Ennals, secretary-general of the WFUNA, had been Pálóczi-Horváth’s spy-master to whom he had handed intelligence reports in Budapest daily from 1947 until his arrest. The case of Paloczi

Horvath was of one of the last sideshows of those political trials, which took place under the instructions of Stalin.

After all these events, Between 1949- 1957 the United Nations Association of Hungary existed mainly on paper. Formally, there was a statute, a presidium and a president, who was the Editor-in-Chief of an important daily paper. On behalf of UNA-H the Ministry paid the dues to WFUNA regularly. The leading bodies however never met, and the president was not even interested to know anything about the work. After 1953, the Association had a small office in the building of the Hungarian Parliament, which was closed for the public. It had no windows, and there was only a small desk and a chair in it. I had to ask not only for special permission for example in each of the two cases, when I wanted to enter the Parliament and go to that office. I was escorted by a guard also when I was leaning the office. The small financial support, which was given by the Parliament to the Association, came from the budget of the Hungarian Group for the Interparliamentary Union. It was enough for paying the membership fees for the World Federation, and for the travel of a small delegation to the annual meetings abroad.

My first recommendation was to move the Association out from the building of the Parliament, and to transform it into a real autonomous civic movement. I also suggested, that we should have a new statute, a new presidium, a budget of our own. NGOs in Hungary, in those days were subsidised by the government. There were of course important political conditions for getting the subsidies:the political acceptance by the regime, and an appropriate supervisory body in the existing political hierarchy. Hungary became a member of the UN in 1955. I thought, that an autonomous Hungarian peoples movement for the UN is a legitim and acceptable justification. My written arguments were not completely rejected, but the International Relations Department of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, on which the final decision depended, added some modifications:the U. N. Association should be revitalized under the political umbrella of the Patriotic Peoples Front, (a national political structure uniting different people and organisations) its small subsidies should be a separate chapter of the budget of the Peoples Front. A new statute should emphasize that the activities of UNA-H should be confined to the international role of the UN. We got a small office, and sufficient funds for a . Professional secretary. I initiated the reorganization of the leading body of the Association, which was necessary, not only from legal point of view, but because about half of its listed members were already resting in the cemetery. A small presidium was elected. In 1972 I was elected to the position of the Secretary General, and my predecessor became the President of the UNA of Hungary.

In spite of all our efforts, the UN Association of Hungary could not expand its membership and become a larger NGO in a socialist country in those years. The official authorities gave preference to NGOs, which were considered as full supporters of the domestic and foreign policies of the regimes. My association was dealing with the support of a global organisation, the United Nations. I realised however that while the scope of activities permitted to us was rather limited, confined to certain functions, through such events as the UN Day or meetings on disarmament and decolonization can involve rather large number of people and here and there even can get some publicity. We can also use our membership in WFUNA for the establishment of bilateral relations with different Western UNAs, , organize small seminars and exchange delegations.

My participation in the leadership of the World Federation was rather formal at the beginning. I did not know much about its past. I was not familiar with its global structure, I understood however rather well the background and the actual realities related to the main issues on its agenda: global development problems, peace and disarmament, East-West relations, the special problems of European Security. I was also familiar with the controversies related to human rights in the context of global politics. The World Federation was one of the most important and active NGOs in this field, but in a rather balanced way. There was for example an anti-Franco Spanish UN Association among the members of WFUNA the leaders of which were persecuted at home and they have been very active in human rights issues. The issue of political prisoners and human right abuses in the Soviet Union have been also raised by some Western UNAs, but there was no detailed discussion on them. WFUNA meetings had of course important debates on Human Right issues in general terms, followed by strong resolutions, but in concrete terms it was the struggle against the apartheid regime in South Africa which were both raised and discussed. The struggle against the dangers of the nuclear world war, the support for the national liberation movements and the development process occupied a central place in WFUNA meetings.

### **Brezhnev, the Israeli Professor and the KGB officer**

International programs in WFUNA included a number of things, get together for the regular internal work of the organisation, like the meetings of the Executive Committee, small topical meetings of experts, seminars, special training courses for grassroot workers, consultations with UN officials and also major global conferences, congresses. Cooperation with UNESCO, the UN Development agencies, facilitated the involvement of many young people from different regions. Some of the

UNAs were also able to sponsor regional activities. The most important meetings have been connected with WFUNA programs. The representatives of WFUNA have been invited also by different NGOs. One of such event has been a major gloal get-together in Moscow, in 1973.

After the famous Nixon-Brezhnev meeting in 1972, and the declaration on detente, the Soviet political leaders wanted a new opening toward the NGO world in the West, much beyond the left wing groups, like the World Peace Council. They wanted to Profit from the general mood of the Western public, which turned against the war in Vietnam. For this purpose in the autumn of 1973, a major global congress of "peace loving forces" was planned in Moscow. Formally it was sponsored by a large international committee of different NGOs and important individuals. The World Peace Council was supposed to be only one of the convening NGOs. Everybody was of course aware, that the Soviet government was the main force behind it. The World Federation of UN Association was considered in the East, as a Western organisation, since the majority of its members were associations, from the Western world and from the developing countries, and it was also close to the UN. We were needed in the Congress mostly as a proof of the well balanced nature of it. WFUNA was even asked to be a co- sponsor and for delivering one of the keynote addresses. In the debate about the participation and about our role, there was a major disagreement among the members of the Executive Committe of the World Federation. The members from the Socialist countries, India and other developing countries supported the idea of our precence and active role, the UNAs of the NATO countries were strongly against it, and insisted, that if any, only a small observer delegation should be sent to Moscow. Prof. Trouchanovski, the Soviet member of the EXCO told me, that he will have troubles at home, if the World Federation will not send a regular delegation as a full participant of the congress. I suggested to him that he should speak individually with all the members and tell his problem frankly also to the American member of the EXCO, with whom I also spoke before. Finally, it has been agreed, that a WFUNA delegation will take part in the event, but under certain conditions. The conditions were rather strict. It was decided, that we must have constant consultations within the delegation, and should not express views on the given issues other, than the official resolutions of WFUNA assemblies, that the delegation should be representative, that no final document would be adopted without the consent of the WFUNA delegation, and that the speaker on behalf of WFUNA, the Secretary General should advocate only the policies of the World Federation. There was an other condition set by our EXCO at a very last moment. It was requested, that there should also be a delegate from Israel. The organisers agreed with all our conditions, except the participation of the delegate from Israel. Finally however they gave in just two days before the opening. As it is well known, relations between Israel and the Soviet Union were extremely bad in

those years, there were no diplomatic relations, and there was a very strong anti-Israeli propaganda in the Soviet Union. The situation was complicated further by the outbreak of the war between Egypt and Israel, just a few days before the opening of the congress. A world famous lawyer Prof. Aksin was the Israeli member of the WFUNA delegation. who was of Russian origin and he belonged the ultra-conservative pro-Western circles of Israeli politics. .

The World Congress of Peace Loving Forces was a major event. About 3000 delegates came, from all over the world, including political leaders from the developing countries, many left wing, non communist personalities from the West, religious leaders, NGO representatives. One day before the opening, it became evident, that the forces of Egypt and Syria not only collapsed, but it was imminent, that the Israeli Army will push further to Cairo. There was a rumour about the intervention of the Soviet Army for the Arabs, and of the alert of the American forces. The opening speech of Brezhnev was delayed. We were sitting and waiting for the news from the Middle East. All the members of our delegation, were convinced, that we were on the threshold of a major global conflict. The only person, who was quietly reading a Russian newspaper was Prof. Aksin. He was sure, that there would be no Soviet or American intervention, there would not be any nuclear weapons used. Than Brezhnev came to the podium, with the members of the presidium of the congress, which included the Secretary General of WFUNA. At that time, Brezhnev was still firm, he looked rather energetic and serious. We all stood up, and set down in the atmosphere of tense expectations. He began his long speech with the announcement about an agreement which was reached a couple of hours ago about the cease-fire and the involvement of the UN. He advocated detente policies and used the Middle East crisis as an example and a proof of the commitment of the Soviet Union for the detente. The usual debates which followed were rather boring. The declaration was too general and biased against the US. Our delegation could not agree with the text. The organisers did not mind all these disagreements. The method of acclamation was suggested for the acceptance of the declaration, instead of a voting. The protest of the WFUNA delegation was not even heard, because our delegate was not given the floor. Nobody noticed, when most of our delegation left the congress hall, as a protest move.

There were rather interesting side-events during the days we spent in Moscow. We were staying in Hotel Russia, which was a large chaotic place. The Western delegates called it as the Hilton Serai. The representative of the American UN Association, in our delegation, S. Wilner, the Vice President of Hilton International agreed with the sarai character of the hotel, but dislikied the use of the Hilton nickname.

Vodka was cheap and plenty. During the nights, many drunken delegates mainly from the developing world who lost their way in the building and spent the night in armchairs, snoring loudly. I was surprised that the famous *dezurnaia* te ladies on duty in each floors of the hotel let them do it. They were probably instructed not to disturb the delegates.

Once, on the way to my room I saw a completely naked beautiful African girl running out from a room. She was chased by a fat black delegate, who apparently lost his balance and fell off. At this moment a Hungarian journalist opened the door of his room from inside and the girl run into his room and closed the door from inside. His pursuer did not see where did she disappear, so he started knocking on different doors, including on mine, where I wanted to return. I told him, that my room was empty, since I did not open it yet. The only person who opened the door for him was a high level clergyman from Hungary, one of the bishops of the Greek-Catholic Church. The African delegate forced himself in and demanded the girl. The bishop who told me the story later, was at first surprised. He did not know about anything, particularly about the girl, but offered him a drink instead, which he accepted and calmed down. They emptied together a bottle of Hungarian apricot brandy and became good friends. The other part of the story was told by the Hungarian journalist who became naturally quite upset. He spoke only Russian, and the only thing, what he understood, was, that the French speaking the nude girl wanted to stay in his hotel room. The journalist thought, that the whole thing was a provocation of the imperialists or of the KGB against him. The nude girl immediately went to his bed, and covered herself. The journalist, phoned to the head of the Hungarian delegation, who came with two Soviet security officers. They took one of the shirts of the Hungarian journalist, put on the girl and escorted her to the office of the hotel security, where she spent the night. She did not want to return to her room. . We found out later, that the man was a minister from Mali, the girl was his secretary and mistress, whom he found in the room of one of his countrymen, a fellow delegate from Mali, in a situation which could not be misunderstood, and they did not lock the room.

The WFUNA delegates were not exposed to such exciting events. With the exception of the two Eastern European members, the others were staying in the Western wing of the hotel, where the Western delegates were placed. This part was well guarded. Our delegation had however an other problem. The Soviet hosts offered different programs for the participants of the congress, after its conclusion, which included visits in different major cities in the country. Prof Aksin the Israeli member of our delegation, and a person of Russian origin, still fluent in Russian, asked the Soviet

hosts, to allow him a visit in his birthplace, in a town called Pinsk. That place in the West of the Soviet Union was of course not included in the program, and Aksin was not one of those anyway, whom they considered as a friendly delegate. To the request of the secretary General of WFUNA, who was also received by Brezhnev, they gave in, but, Aksin had to pay not only for his own train ticket and hotel, but also for an interpreter and for an additional person, who was supposed to protect his security. In fact, he was a KGB officer. Prof Aksin, who had a good sense of humor, told me later, that he was so rich that he could even sponsor the KGB escort, and thus, he contributed to the welfare of the KGB. The officer, Aksin told me, was extremely friendly and to his greatest surprise "enforced" his entry to the house where he was born. The tenants did not want to allow him to enter the building.

### **Mr. (Acting) President**

I was elected for the president of WFUNA in an unexpected way. In the history of the World Federation the presidents were important political figures, former ministers, heads of international intergovernmental organizations. Most of these people could not and did not participate in the regular work. Some of them were figureheads, some others who took the presidency seriously, could devote only very limited time for their WFUNA office. I became the first president of the World Federation, who came from the rank-and-file of WFUNA. When my term was over as an EXCO member, I was elected as one of the Vice-Presidents. By that time I was rather well known by the leadership of the different member associations. An unexpected and rather sad event resulted in a vacancy in WFUNA presidency. The French Rene Maheu, the former Director General of UNESCO was elected by the Plenary Assembly of WFUNA as the president. Maheu was an excellent person, a typical example for a good, intelligent, efficient, competent and devoted international civil servant. He retired in 1974, and we were all happy, that he was interested in the Presidency of WFUNA. Unfortunately he could not take the post. His sudden death in 1975 put the World Federation into a difficult position. We could not convene a new Plenary Assembly. The Executive Committee decided, that one of the Vice Presidents of the World Federation should serve as Acting President until the next plenary. I was the only Vice President, who was acceptable by all the three "groups", the North, the South and the East as an „acting president". The role and activities of the president in WFUNA depended very much on the individual, who has been elected to this office, usually by acclamation. It was the Indian member of the Executive Committee who suggested me, as one of the "gurus" of the NGO world. He told me, you are wise and balanced person, who knows the world and also WFUNA. Two other important persons, Horace Perera, and John Ennals not only supported my candidacy, but gave me

important advise. Ennals told me, that „acting or not”the president is the face of WFUNA in the world, and not only in the NGO world but also in the UN and in the UNAs. If he is not active, WFUNA is faceless. ”You may be acting, so you should act actively”. Perera suggested that in WFUNA in organizational matters, it is the Chairman of the Executive Committee and the Secretary General who carry the burden of the daily work. The president should help them. A president must have not only knowledge, wisdom but also tolerance and understanding. Understanding is particularly important in the developing countries, where UNAs are weak, confined to a few active people. I was serving for almost six years as the president of WFUNA for about 18 months as Acting President and after these period, I was elected by the Plenary for two 2 years terms for the post of presidency.

The World Federation was not a small and peripheral NGO in those years. Most of the member associations had a special relation with their governments. For some of the governments it served as the testing ground for raising certain issues, for others it was an important source of contacts and informal negotiations. I mentioned already that WFUNA served as a framework for important political and rather high level negotiations between the USA and the Soviet Union. These negotiations have not been open to the members of WFUNA. They were considered as the bilateral business of the two UNAs. Still they were very important source of financial and political support for WFUNA. People in the UN and in the NGO world could see, that the two superpowers needed and supported WFUNA. The resolutions, which have been adopted by WFUNA were seriously considered by the UN and in the NGO world, because it was understood, that they carry at least the consent of both the US andthe Soviet Union.

WFUNA had also a special relation with the UN system, beyond the fact that the only NGO which was supported by a special resolution of the General Assembly of the UN. It was the only NGO which was allowed to use the logo of the UN, its offices were in UN premises, and there was also a special informal relation with the Secretary Generals of the UN. WFUNA also occupied an important place in the NGO world.

The “power” of the President in the Federation was of course limited, but its tasks were quite diverse and complex in representing the World Federation in different conferences and countries. One could initiate also agenda items, recommend WFUNA policies, and in the so called behind the scenes negotiations can offer mainly mediation between the different members, and in thus in a number of cases to hold together the Federation.

I was in a particularly difficult and delicate position. These years were conflict ridden which intensified the Cold War, due to the Soviet intervention in Afganistan, the policies of the Regan administration, the delicate and difficult problems of Soviet-Chinese relations and the global socio-economic troubles. The Third World countries were disappointed, because of the failure of the New International Economic Order. In Eastern Europe, there was a growing political opposition and the events, the introduction of a military rule in Poland influenced adversely the global political atmosphere. I was carefully watched by all the three main groups in the Federation. The representatives of a few important Western UNAs in private talks expressed their hope, that I would not become the instrument of Soviet policies. At the same time, some of the top figures in the Soviet UNA told me rather openly and in a direct way, that they expected me as a citizen from a Socialist country, to support their political initiatives. I could not promise this and I explained to the Soviet representative, that such an attitude would be also against their interest. We strongly disagreed, and when I rejected their proposals concerning a policy statement on the condemnation of the Regan Administration. The Soviet UNA. sent a letter, through the central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, to the Hungarian Workers Party leadership, that I did not support Soviet initiatives in condemning the US policies, and they requested, that the Hungarian party should take the necessary measures. The deputy head of the International Relations in the Hungarian party, who became about 15 years later, in a new democratic regime, the Prime Minister of Hungary, presented this letter to the head of the party, Janos Kadar with a comment, that this was an other example of Soviet arrogance. Their response was to the Soviets, that the Hungarian Party is not interested in influencing in any way the citizens of the country, working as elected officers in international organizations. Hungary, in the early 1980s tried not to follow any more the cycles of Soviet Cold War politics.

In the capacity of the President of WFUNA I had to visit more than 50 member states, in all parts of the world. I knew of course that the members of WFUNA represent a diverse global network. It was however quite different to see this in their respective countries. There were „ghost UNAs” existing on paper. In a few cases, when my UN duties took me to certain countries and I wanted to find the local UNA there was nobody on the address which was given to WFUNA. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs official informed me in some cases, that there was in fact a national UNA but the person who founded it was not alive any more or left the country. Still the Ministry was paying the membership dues. There were other cases, when I found small marginalized groups. In a number of cases however the local UNA was a distinguished and influential national NGO, with important people, mainly Professionals, journalists, political figures and businessmen. Former ministers, ambassadors, key

political figures chaired the association. The forms of the visits resembled to each other. In the larger UNAs, which invited me to „official” visits, I met the leading personalities of the national Association. Occasionally I was received by the President, the Prime minister or the minister for foreign affairs. In the US and in England, I visited mostly the grassroots and met the local activists. In India, in many different states, the local UNA branch often included wealthy businessmen, who organized fabulous parties on the occasion of my visit. In Germany the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Bundestag offered a dinner on the occasion of my visit. In the Sudan I was received by Mr. Nimeri and also by the religious leaders of the country, including the Mahdi, who was later assassinated during an uprising. The Mahdi invited me to a long breakfast, which lasted from 9 AM till 1 PM. There were a number of his assistants present, including poets, who praised him during the breakfast a couple of times, in Arabic. My escort, one of the fundamentalist political leaders of the country served as a translator.

I had to meet also some strange political groups, which wanted to get the support of WFUNA. A number of different movements considered WFUNA as the ante-room of the UN. One of such a group was the Puerto Rican Liberation movement in the US, which wanted to gain the support of WFUNA for the cause of their independence. Three people came to my hotel in New York, late in the evening and asked me on behalf of the American U. N. Association to come down to the lobby. They introduced themselves as the members of the Puerto Rican Chapter of the American U. N. Association and informed me, that this membership was only a cover. They did not want to tell me, how did they find out about my staying there. I refused to talk to them and next day, informed the American UNA, which was quite surprised to hear the story.

I had greater and longer problems with another group, the National Liberation Movement of South Molucca. The representatives of this movement came to Geneva, during one of our Plenary Assembly. They got somehow into the assembly hall, and wanted to speak about the alleged atrocities of the Indonesian government. This was not possible. They had no status in WFUNA either as members or as invited guests and had no rights to speak in the Plenary. I had to talk however with the Moluccan delegation. They were staying in one of the most expensive hotels of Geneva. There were five persons: three Moluccan gentleman, one young lady and one Dutch priest from Luxembourg. They told me about the fact, that as a Christian ethnic minority, they were persecuted by the Moslim majority and had to flee from the Moluccas when Indonesia took over the islands. Many Moluccans lived in the Netherlands and some in the US. Recently a national liberation movement was formed in the Moluccas, and a revolutionary government in exile was established.

The lady in the group was a member of this government and the priest, in fact a former missionary was one of their foreign policy advisers. They were supported both financially and also politically by some organizations from their former Metropolitan country, and one or two of our member associations was also sympathizing with their goals. I had to do some research about these people and in order to avoid any scandal, I had to talk with the representatives of the Indonesian United Nations Association. They of course disagreed even with the idea that I should talk with the Moluccans. Still I had three or four “personal” meetings with them, only to listen their side of the story. WFUNA of course could not do anything.

### **Waldheim and the WFUNA, New York, Washington DC**

I had to be in New York quite often. On one of these occasions the purpose of the visit was to discuss relations between WFUNA and the UN. Mrs Annabelle Wiener, the head of our New York office arranged the meeting with Mr. Waldheim, the Secretary General of the UN. Annabelle Wiener was a very active colourful personality. She knew practically all the top officials, ambassadors and NGO representatives in New York. She was an excellent organizer and manager. She was responsible for the philatelic program of WFUNA, which brought visibility, money and publicity for the World Federation. Special first day covers for the UN stamps were designed by important artists from all over the world. They included Picasso, Chagall and Hunderwasser, Miro. In fact she arranged my meeting with Mr. Waldheim, who in spite of his busy schedule was ready to see us in short notice. The meeting with the Secretary General was very friendly. He informed us about the main issues in the UN and put special emphasis on the needs for strengthening public support for the World Organization, particularly in the areas of disarmament and development. He was complaining that neither the US nor the Soviet Union were interested to increase the role of the UN and the new American administration offered even less support to the global development efforts than its predecessors. His aid took note about our special requests concerning the greater support for WFUNA, including free accomodation and access to infrastructure and and better access to information on UN affairs. He fulfilled the promises. According to my notes, next day I took the Amtrack train to Washington for a short visit there. Among other duties, I met the people from the UNAUSA chapter in DC. They were friendly but knew very little about WFUNA.

According to my diary, on June 5 in the afternoon, I got an urgent message from the Hungarian Embassy to see the Ambassador immediately. The Embassy was located in Shoemaker Street. A “confidential” telegram was waiting for me, that I have to go to Geneva, to an extraordinary NGO

meeting on disarmament issues and on behalf of WFUNA I will have to open the conference. This was a compromise between the Western and Eastern NGOs and the holding of the conference depended on our readiness to accept this role. WFUNA Headquarters from Geneva sent this message to Budapest, and through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs it reached me in Washington. In fact, I had other commitments in Budapest related to my Professional work. The Hungarian Ambassador added however, that the NGO conference was considered as an important event also by the Hungarian government and of its allies. My ticket was already in New York at the Swissair office anyway.

I flew to Geneva and opened a meeting of NGO disarmament experts. The main points of my statement were mainly based on my discussions in Washington. According to my notes, I started my introductory statement by saying “ for somebody who is familiar with the history of the Palais des Nations it is not easy to speak about disarmament here. This building is haunted by missed opportunities. It is full of the ghosts of those politicians, who were responsible for the Second World War but spoke about disarmament. We should not follow a similar path. The urgency of our meeting is not dictated by the upcoming special session of the UN General Assembly, but by the events”. I underlined that the Regan administration is moving toward a new era of confrontation with the Soviet Union. Its global ideological, political and economic offensive is combined with a new arms race. The new wave of arms race has two important goals: to prove the credibility of the US efforts and to increase the economic problems of the Soviet Union. I expressed my doubts about the intention of any major power to start a new world war, but stressed that the new arms race was a dangerous path, because it increased the dangers of a global nuclear confrontation and it is diverting important resources from development to destruction at the time, when the world is facing growing poverty, indebtedness and instability. I was speaking also about the problems of my country in this context.

There were two main lines in the debate which followed the keynote address by a Swedish politician. One was dealing with the policies of the US and the needs of NGO cooperation for greater efforts in blocking the arms race the other was more interested in a discussion on Afghanistan, the situation in Poland and the dangers of a Soviet intervention there. I had to leave the conference next day and returned to Hungary to pick up my daily routine work.

### **Moscow, August 5 1981: who should be the next president?.**

The outgoing president had a very important responsibility: to help WFUNA in the search of the successor. I was asked by the Soviet UNA to go to for “consultations”. I arrived around noon to a

very warm Moscow. There was no air conditioning in the car nor in my hotel, where I was given a luxury room. The refreshments were luke- warm. I had a late lunch with the leaders of the Soviet UN Association who wanted to discuss with me not only their problems with the elections, but also political issues, related to the upcoming Plenary Assembly of the World Federation and the general situation in WFUNA. I asked them about the problems related to some expected world events, particularly about the probability of a Soviet intervention in Poland. The President of the assured me, that there would be no Soviet intervention in Poland. The Soviet Union was well aware of its potential international and national consequences. Around the end of the lunch they raised the issue of the upcoming elections. I was told, that they would prefer to elect an Indian president, the chairman of the Indian UN Association who was a minister of textile industry in the central government. This was a rather a surprise for me. A couple of month before my visit in Moscow, we had a meeting in Geneva, during the NGO disarmament conference in the Geneva Hilton, to discuss the presidency. There were three of us: the American WFUNA representative, Mr. S. W. who was the chairman of the Executive Committee of the Federation, the Soviet representative in the EXCO, Prof. Trouchanovski, the vice chairman of EXCO and myself. Mr. Trouchanovski suggested, that S. Willner should be recommended to the member associations for the next presidency of WFUNA. This would correspond to the “troika principle” according to which, the leadership will be from East, West and South. Since the Secretary General would be from Poland, the president might be American and the Chairman of the Executive Committee an Indian person. I was convinced that this was a move on behalf of the Soviet UNA in order to get the Polish SG candidate acceptance by the US. On this basis I also supported the idea, even though there was a gentleman agreement in the World Federation that the UNAs of neither superpower will present candidates for the post of President and Secretary General. I explained the fact, that since we agreed in Geneva about the “troika principle” the suggestions are circulating already in WFUNA and it has been more or less generally supported by the UNAs. The President and the Secretary General of the Soviet UNA at least pretended to be surprised. I was told, that nobody authorized Prof Trouchanovski to suggest an American and that I was also wrong to agree in the given setup. According to them, I made a major political mistake, against the interests of the “socialist community” and I have to correct it by writing letters to all the UNAs and supporting the candidacy of the Indian minister. I refused to do it and suggested, that if they want to, they should write letters, because the idea came from their representative. My guess was, that they changed their mind and they wanted to blame Prof. Trouchanovski and me for the proposal. I wanted to see Prof. Trouchanovski, but I was told, that he was in the Soviet Far East on summer vacation, which was of course not true. Finally, they had to agree that Mr. Willner should be the president. In my farwell remarks at the Plenary I warned the

participants, that the destiny of WFUNA is tied to the destiny and future of the UN. We have been facing a world in which the World Organization might be increasingly marginalized and with it the future of WFUNA might be also endangered. All the UNAs should increase their efforts to protect the UN and make also our Federation more relevant in the evolving new stage in the Cold War.

When my extended term had been over, I was elected for honorary president of WFUNA, and continued my participation in its work in an increasingly complex era, shaped by major, unexpected changes. I returned to the UN again, in a new capacity, as a member and then the President of the Council of United Nations University. I have been also reelected for the presidency of the UNA of Hungary, which after many years of marginalized existence has become one of the most important and active NGOs in the country after the 1990s.