

George B. de Huszar
1919-1968

On December 21, George B. de Huszar died, should anyone care. George was teaching political and social what-not, I suppose, at the Chicago City College. He hated to teach, but he had to live and took to it in his last years. And anyone will also know what junior colleges are like these days. However, at the age of 49, he had had enough. He caught the Asian flu, added pneumonia to it and refused hospitalization (his anti-institutionalism developed into claustrophobia). He was forced in, finally, and died in three days.

George might have taught a few brilliant and yearning graduate students at some great university (if this is not a contradiction in terms). At least he should have been able to eke a little more out of the intellectual system for what he put into it. But he was out of phase, a grand intellectual at the wrong time and place, contending with both personal troubles and a peek-a-boo culture.

His father was a homme d'affaires of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its smithereens. Maybe he was Jewish in part; he didn't have to argue the question; no Hungarian does. His version of the common ethnic joke was: "One Hungarian a mathematician, two a chessgame, three Hungarians - but that's impossible, one is a Jew!" And he would giggle, his long gaunt frame shaking madly.

He blessed by his presence the academic community of the University of Chicago in the halcyon days. After registering as a graduate student in international relations, he was well on his way to a Ph.D. when the University gnomes discovered he had no "Bachelor's Degree or Equivalent" and forbade him "to take courses for credit." And anybody knows what that means! He became merely a charming, wonderfully learned and worldly hanger-on. What seminars he would help to conduct at International House eating tables and in the bistros of the area! (The University destroyed these: "a University is a clean set of buildings containing whatever is listed in its Annual Bulletin of Courses and Requirements."

Came the second World War, and George, who must have had six draft-deferable conditions, was left behind, living with his mother across the Midway. He lectured a bit, going so far also as to edit fine sets of papers on NEW PERSPECTIVES ON PEACE and PERSISTENT INTERNATIONAL ISSUES.

He wrote me once, during the French campaign, telling me (he was frightened of children) that my daughter, whom I had never seen, came crawling over to him looking like Mussolini, with her jaw thrust out. I reached into my grimy uniform for her picture - what a lovely baby! "Don't you think she's a pretty baby." "Yes, sir, Captain," they said.

When I returned, George was joyful and told me of his struggle against Robert Maynard Hutchins and the University. His bitterness had proceeded apace: to injury had been added insult. A girl with whom he had been in love had been seduced by a man who was visiting her in her dormitory! Intellectual and moral chaos: that was the University. I argued and coddled him; Chicago was still sacred: its 20-year siege of imbecilities had just set in.

George went to work for the Chicago Tribune, helping Frank Hughes to write a considerable diatribe against the foundations, the liberal establishment, communists, and the University of Chicago. "What are you doing these days, George?" "I am a professional red-baiter!" he would exclaim, laughing and giggling.

He became a leader of right-wing polemics and, directly and indirectly, caused many good people moments of righteous concern for self and nation. "Al," he said, when my lips tightened a bit at the mention of his friend, Joe McCarthy, "you would get along well with Joe. Do you know what Joe told me? A couple of men burst into his office one day and said to his receptionist 'Where is that son-of-a-bitch?' and she replied, 'I'm sorry, but Senator McCarthy is not in at the moment.' And McCarthy laughed to tell it." George laughed to repeat it. So did I to hear it. It was the best piece of news that I had heard about McCarthyism up to that time.

But George couldn't keep this activity up forever. He was always a serious, if quite unrecognized, scholar. He wrote a little book on PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF DEMOCRACY that is a gem of clear exposition of pragmatic and participatory procedures. He prepared a fine anthology on THE INTELLECTUALS. He wrote straight text materials for a living. He decided, after consulting with friends, that he needed a doctorate and was admitted to Northwestern University. But, then, unaccountably, he failed his examinations; despite all the special circumstances of his case and the sympathy of certain members of the department, he must have been put through the usual hoops of "What were the six major differences between the recommendations of the Brownlow and Hoover Commissions?"

I suppose that he died a little then. George started to die young. He was probably the earliest self-aware American existentialist, and insisted, upon my return from the wars, that my wife and I read his thick volumes of Soren Kierkegaard. He was frail and tried pills and liquor, alternately and together, to come to terms with the interminable twenty-four hour cycle. Happily he found a wife, Barbara, serene, beautiful, and blonde, who went along with his habits and

comforted him greatly in his incessant, frenzied unraveling of the human skein. She was a victim of his irritability, finally, after many consoling years together.

Before he began his teaching, and thereafter as much as possible, he would arise in the afternoon, read and work and emerge from his small apartment on the hectic and wicked Near North Side to dine at midnight. Afterwards, he would read, drink four whiskies, take some sleeping pills and, perhaps, sleep.

His interest now was Cervantes. Like the beam from outer space that struck the eyes of the three wise men on Christmas Eve, Don Quixote unerringly found George de Huszar wandering over the vast bureaucratic deserts of the machine age. The book, of course, was not completed. We should be able to derive something of his greatness from it, however, and it will be published.

Alfred de Grazia
January 6, 1969

DEC 22, 1968

10 - Section 2 ★★

G. B. DE HUSZAR, AUTHORITY ON RUSSIA, IS DEAD

Taught in Chicago City College

George B. de Huszar, 49, an authority on Soviet Russia and internationally known author and co-author of more than 50 books on politics, philosophy, and sociology, died yesterday in Wesley Memorial hospital of a pulmonary failure resulting from influenza.

Mr. de Huszar, who lived at 1220 N. State st., was a faculty member of the University of Chicago and a lecturer at Northwestern university during World War II. From 1962 until his death he was an associate professor of social sciences in Chicago City college.

His books were translated into as many as 17 languages.

Editor of Encyclopedia

He was history editor of the American Peoples encyclopedia, and also in charge of development for a new Encyclopaedia Britannica edition in 1946.

Among his best known books are "The Intellectuals: a Controversial Portrait;" "Soviet Power and Policies;" "Persistent International Issues," and "New Perspectives on Peace."

Edits Press Study

Mr. de Huszar also was an authority on freedom of the press, and helped in the editing of "Prejudice and the Press," a definitive study that attacked the conclusions of the Henry Luce-Robert M. Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press.

Mr. de Huszar was born in Berne, Switzerland, March 15, 1919, the son of a prominent intellectual, author, and publisher. He became a United States citizen in 1946. He leaves a brother, William, who lives in Mount Prospect.

Services will be held at 11 a. m. Tuesday in the chapel at 1035 N. Dearborn st.
