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First of all I would like to thank the speakers, Imre Kondor, György Surányi and Gábor Klaniczay for commenting on my book.

Now it is my turn to say a few words.

It is quite a long book – several hundred pages - so it is impossible to summarize all of it. Therefore, I'd rather concentrate on the explanation of one single page that is the cover page. I am sorry to say so, but I bet some people will not get further than looking at the cover page. At least I can as well offer a little help for them with the right interpretation.

Let us start with the main title:

## **BY FORCE OF THOUGHT**

The title has a double meaning. On the first hand it refers to my own career, i.e. what I have achieved – not through a powerful political position, not with the aid of money, not because I tried to flatter influential people, but with the help of thoughts, by writing books and papers, presenting lectures.

My thoughts even served as a shield against becoming part of the dirty business of the Kádár regime. While working on my memoirs I came across interesting documents in the archives of the secret police. Somebody proposed to recruit me in the early 60s to become an informer or a spy. In the book you can see the facsimile of a police document: the decision of a high-level officer to abandon this plan, because Kornai is disloyal to the regime. That was an Orwellian concept - the police had been checking my thoughts and did not like them at all.

As for the second meaning of “By Force of Thought”, it represents the belief that thoughts may have an influence on the course of history. In the book I offer a frank discussion of my own influence. I try to evaluate cases when my thoughts had powerful impact, and also cases, when they evaporated in thin air without any influence. My book is an account not only of the “volume”, or strength of the impact. What is more important here is the direction of the influence.

Good thoughts have a beneficial influence, bad thoughts have a harmful effect. In the early 50s I worked as a journalist, and I served a wrong cause. I do not want to hide this part of my life. On the contrary, I face it: I try to understand the motivations, and give not only an analytical, but also an ethical evaluation.

Let us move on to the subtitle:

## **IRREGULAR MEMOIRS...**

Regular memoirs are a subjective account of the story of a life, including private life. I am rather shy in this respect. You will find relatively little about my private life – perhaps one exception, my upbringing in the parental family. You can get more insights in the private aspects of my life by looking at the photos, showing me in the company of my wife, children, grandchildren and friends.

It is irregular, because I am combining two genres: memoirs and a series of „mini essays” in which I raise several topics: problems of economics, my understanding of notions like planning, socialism, command economy, reform, market socialism, Marxism, mainstream neo-classical economics, economic policy, post-socialist transition and so on.

As for the rest of the subtitle:

## **INTELLECTUAL JOURNEY**

I have not been following a regular route. I did not even study as an undergraduate, but I got deeply involved in the radical youth movement, and in politics – instead of visiting university lectures.

I directly jumped into the graduate study phase and earned my candidate degree (equivalent of a Ph.D.) under rather unusual circumstances. Its public defense took place a few days before the 1956 Revolution. Quite unusually, several hundred people were present. It was entitled ‘Overcentralization’, and it happened to be the first critical book on the communist system, written from the inside.

My Ph.D. thesis was not followed by an academic appointment as it would have happened in the normal course of events. On the contrary, I got fired from my job. So I did not move higher step-by-step on the academic ladder, starting with being assistant professor, then associate, and finally full professor. I was given my first permanent university appointment two decades later – immediately in the rank of a full professor at Harvard University.

Also, my life was much more like a journey intellectually, an “odyssey” – rather than a straight line. Let me give some examples. At a young age I was deeply attached to Marxism, and then sharp disappointment followed. First I was attracted to neo-classical economics, but later I became rather critical. I like to characterize myself as having one foot in the mainstream and the other foot out of it.

And finally, I would like to speak about the:

## **PICTURE**

That is the photo of two tiny sculptures made in pre-Columbian times, about 3500 years ago and found in Mexico. I suggested, even insisted on having this picture first on the jacket of the Hungarian edition, then on the Japanese edition, and now on the American edition as well.

The picture is called ‘**THE SHAMAN AND THE YOUTH**’.

In my interpretation it represents the linkage between the teacher and the student, the master and the disciple, the older and the younger man. For a while I was on the right side, and now, for many years I have been on the left side. It is remarkable that the younger one is explaining something with a vehement gesture. The older one is only listening, perhaps encouraging the youth.

It is a bitter feeling that for many decades I had not been appointed to the University of Economics here in Budapest. I had many graduate students earning their degree under my supervision – not Hungarians, but Americans, British, Chinese, Irish. That is not an adequate compensation for what I had to miss here in my home country. So the dream, the ambition – expressed in this Pre-Columbian image -- had not become completely true.

I stop here. Let me hope that you will take the next step, leave the title page, turn over to the text and start to read my book.