

Blogpost

Kornai's norms

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A few things that have recently happened around me made me realize how difficult it was to preserve one's autonomy.

Suddenly I remembered Kornai's principles, which can perhaps help inspire those thoughts who wish to remain sober and strong individuals in a world of chaos and temptation. In an environment where people lose themselves easily.

1. *I would break with the Communist Party.*
2. *I would not emigrate.*
3. *My vocation would be research, not politics. I would not indulge in heroic, illegal forms of struggle against the Communist system. I wanted to contribute to renewal through my scholarly activity.*
4. *I would break with Marxism.*
5. *I would learn the basics of modern economics. I wanted my studies and researches to be part of the Western profession of economics.*

Later Hungarian reformers offered him the olive branch and the possibility to transform into a Party advisor and „the nation's expert” – a most enviable position to be held. However, Kornai argued the following way:

*“I was appalled at the thought of having to listen to the latest whispers so that I might discover whether Comrade X, that week's party boss in charge of the economy, could be won over to the idea of exchange rates based on the marginal-cost criterion or was a firm adherent of the average-cost criterion. I wanted no part in cobbling together a compromise committee recommendation that would eventually be discussed and at best endorsed in a party forum.”*

*Translated by Rita Fancsovit*