

Review

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Book Alert/By Force of Thought

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Steve Goddard's History Wire

Where the Past Comes Alive

Book Alert / By Force of Thought

By Force of Thought -- Irregular Memoirs of an Intellectual Journey by Janos Kornai, MIT Press '06, 461 pages, ISBN #0-262-11302-3. Index, references, glossary, chronology, endnotes, grouping of b&w glossy images.

For a Hungarian economist in 1956 to criticize central planning in his communist homeland was a courageous act. But bravery and the will not to be silenced have been hallmarks of the career of Janos Kornai, who first attracted attention of economists in the East and West with his book *Overcentralization*.

More than a half century after his breakthrough book, Kornai turns from ongoing economic studies to pen his memoir of the days he first denigrated Soviet-style economics through his critique of the general equilibrium theory of markets, and his summary of his research career in *The Socialist System* in 1992.

Kornai, who has shuttled between Hungary's Collegium Budapest and Harvard University for many years, sees himself as "an intellectual emissary" between two economic systems. His memoir ranges from his decision to become a communist and writings for a communist newspaper to a phase of "waking up," the beginnings of his research career, his travels to the West, the synthesizing of his economic thinking, and the changes in the economic systems of the East with the fall of communism.

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