

Review published in Hungarian, excerpts
Gyórfy, Dóra, Graduate student, PhD program, Central European University,
Budapest
Külgazdaság (monthly economic journal)
May-June, 2005

János Kornai's recently published autobiography is a captivating reading not only for economists, but also for a wider audience interested in the history of science and society. The book is a testimony for a turbulent age where individual dilemmas may not be interpreted without knowing the limits set by the political environment. The choice of the field of research, the dilemma of staying or emigrating, and the relationship between politics and science accompany the author's entire life and compel him to make serious decisions. His autobiography, by which he primarily attempts to understand his own self, focuses on the analysis of these issues. The tone and the style are familiar; in other words, Kornai explores the motives and the consequences of his decisions in an unbiased and analytical way and based on works of reference; a manner that is characteristic of his scientific publications. He has the emotional power to face the most difficult question with regard to all of his actions, namely whether it would have been possible to act differently.

(...)

Kornai closes his autobiography with the phrase: "Other works are awaiting me." His activity even now, being close to 80, is amazing. Since the publication of his comprehensive work on the socialist system, he has published books on the reform of government finances and on that of the healthcare system. His latest project was the direction of the international research group *Honesty and Trust*. Once the reader completes reading, he/she will have the impression of the author being a person of solid morals; one who has earned world fame in a very difficult age while remaining faithful to his own self and principles. This consistency is accompanied with impressive modesty; features that exclude the possibility for him to consider his choices as the only true responses. Therefore his life might serve as an inspiration for every young researcher. It is impossible not to recommend his biography for reading, because it is a work on a par with his scientific publications both in terms of contents and style, and as such, it is impossible not to read it through.