

SZIGETHY RUDOLF

Retrospection

Szigethy Rudolf had worked for 39 years in the Central University Library, Cluj, until his retirement a few months ago. This was more than a mere job for him; it had signified an existence between the companionship of books and culture set in the labyrinth of historical fate. Therefore I think it is only fair to commemorate almost four decades spent by him in this library. I asked him to write a few lines about the main events and achievements of his life. However, I became rather perplexed reading these lines... Although I do understand the principle moments of this winding path of life I am not sure at all that it can be understood by a foreign reader.

Before he came to the library in 1958, Szigethy Rudolf worked as a medical distributor, bricklayer, mine geologist, housing inspector and stockkeeper. We often read about the 'self-made man', millionaires and filmstars who started their career as nightwatchmen, hotel porters or dish-washers in restaurants. This is why a foreign reader can hardly understand the course of the life of a man living in this part of the world, especially the last 50-55 years of it. In spite of apparent similarities there is an essential difference between these two instances. The majority of citizens of former socialist countries do not live according to the possibilities created by them, not even theoretically, but they live according to opportunities offered or, better said, left by political and economic circumstances. They can only choose between permitted possibilities of life; this is the scope for most lives and careers.

Szigethy Rudolf was born in Cluj, on 25 May 1934. He spent his schoolyears in Braşov and Cluj. He studied Geography and Geology at the "Babeş-Bolyai" University, Cluj and graduated in 1957. After changing his workplace three times within a year he was appointed to the Central University Library in August 1958. First he was at the Public Relations Service, then he worked at the International Exchange Department from 1961 to 1969. The Department underwent

multiple changes in this period. However, there were no shifts of perspective in its activity. The activity of the Department had been under constant party-policy control, therefore changes were determined by the (sometimes substantial) shifts of focus in this policy.

Szigethy Rudolf worked at the Collection Development Department until his retirement. First he was in charge of the provision and professional guidance of student hostel libraries. These libraries had almost nothing in common with the college library system in other parts of the world. They did not aim at improving the process of education or leisure activities; instead they promoted a rather abstract, ideologically determined ideal of education. Moreover, they were managed by students who were chosen for this purpose and received a scholarship for their activity; therefore these "stores" did not fulfil the aim of the University Library, they meant only loss of copies. It is no wonder therefore that Szigethy Rudolf readily changed his field of activity: he started to organise and improve the system of library records. I was always amazed by the synoptic chart at his desk: he could inform you at any moment regarding the present state of collection development. It was because of his thoroughness that the Director of the Librarianship Department of the Ministry of Education invited him to take part in the training of librarians working in other towns, mainly in the 1973-1979 period.

However, Szigethy Rudolf was not satisfied by his mostly administrative-recording activity. Commencing with 1986 he compiled yearly the *Bibliography of Hungarian Book Publishing in Romania*. This was published in the *Könyvesház* librarianship supplement of the Hungarian periodical *Művelődés*. In 1995 he edited the work entitled *Hungarian Book Publishing in Romania. 1950-1953* with his colleague Újvári Mária, who had also recently retired. It was published by the Transylvanian Museum Society which is the academic-level organisation of the Hungarian spirituality in Romania. At present he is also working for the publications management supplement of the *Új Könyvtár* periodical published in Budapest. He also works as consultant editor: he read the manuscript of the bilingual (Hungarian and Romanian) edition of the selected poems of

Dsida Jenő, one of the most sensitive Hungarian poets in Romania translated by Petre Şaitiş. This volume was published by the *Tinivár Publishing House*.

Szigethy Rudolf has resigned himself to the idea of his retirement. Although he would still be able and perhaps willing to work, he cannot get rid of a certain bitterness. When I asked him about the turning points in his career and the life of the institution during those 39 years he spent there, he answered that there were no turning points until 1989, and the direction of the change after 1989 has been rather confused. While the constant party-policy direction was built on the support of mediocrity, this confused period after 1989 is dominated by the hustle and bustle of fussy people.

Perhaps it would be useful for the library to keep in touch with people like Szigethy Rudolf.

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