

# Talking About Economy

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For example when we have saleable products of a good standard, Hungarian products that are cheap for everyone to buy. When we can produce goods of such quality that they can be sold abroad, too. My opinion is that our products aren't competitive, neither in the West nor in the East. We buy them here because they are still the cheapest. As I said, my boss is an entrepreneur. If his burden is lighter, then he can make my life easier too. He could give me a higher salary so that I can afford the things I'd like to. That's how I see economy.



That everybody is happy and has a job, that's basically it.



That which follows the principal of sustainable progress. This is the only criteria that you have to consider. Beyond this, I don't think there's anything. The alpha and the omega is that we be adaptable to social and environmental circumstances. If some progress isn't sustainable then it doesn't matter because economy decreases and in the worst case, it crashes. Of course, the dimensions of society and the economy determine whether we can speak about a sustainable future. Today, I don't think we can. My perspective is that an environmental awareness should be formed in societies which can enhance the economy. But this is like a dream, because actually we are working on other things.



It's a difficult question especially when you have to deal with such small screws in unreachable places. Well, I'm not an economist but if someone wants to know my opinion, I'd say that Hungary should try to sustain itself. It doesn't need any kind of union, any kind of belonging to somewhere else. If we can do that, then humanity will be resistant enough in Hungary...



Man: I don't know what it would be like. Everybody would be able to live from it. Woman: Everybody would have a job so that there wouldn't be so many homeless, unemployed, as they just fire so many people today. Because many people are starving. Children are starving! Today!

M: It was better back in the time of the Kadar regime. Everybody is saying it. Agriculture, industry were rosy - and now? I don't know why.

W: You could live well in those days. I have three children and when they were small, in those days, we could afford to go on holiday together although only my husband was working - he didn't get a great wage but we could still go on holiday. Not today.



Value for money is important, low taxes, and that people are well, then I'm well, too. One should try somehow to get more people into work, then the economy would pick up, too, wouldn't it. I think that's the mechanism, as far as I'm concerned.



In my opinion an economy is good when it is able to provide people with work, when it produces in a sufficient quantity and is consequently saleable, mostly at home. But if it's needed then it's important to be able to import saleable goods that are easier to produce abroad. But they have to take care not to destroy production at home because of them, because that's not good when overpricing means that you can't sell local products anymore. Like now, a lot of Chinese products have come into the country. There are a lot of Chinese markets here in Dunaujváros and local goods are pushed to the margins. In Hungary factories are closing

down, then what can the pure Hungarians do if the foreigners come to trade here, they take away our jobs and then Hungarian products aren't that saleable.

## How would you describe a bad economy?



Bad economies are more varied. I wouldn't be able now to mention any good economies. If we want to avoid clichés, I'd say that an economy is in progress but its progress isn't sustainable, like I think the economy of the USA isn't sustainable, or it isn't progressing like that of the Third World. Furthermore, in some particular cases it decreases, since if we speak in bigger dimensions, then, in respect to a higher scale of progress, the smaller scale of progress counts as a decrease.



We have plenty of unemployed people and few companies. There are more companies closing down than opening and that can't be good. That used to be better, there was more money to be made, in West Berlin, effectively.



Bad economy in Hungary started with the privatisation or re-privatisation. That would have been the last chance to move the country forward, if key factories and companies had remained in Hungarian property or partially in the hands of the State like they do in the west. It might not be nice to say, but it's as if after the regime change a kind of colonisation has started.

Western capital has come in and everything that used to be fundamental to the country is now in their hands. As the army marched out, the money marched in, and re-colonised the country. They come here to buy our companies thus buying their markets because our products weren't that bad, and I don't like this.



When there are a lot of unemployed people, when there's not enough goods or appropriate goods. When you want to buy yourself a pair of shoes, I mean a good pair of shoes that you like, you have to go to many shops and look for it. It wasn't like that in the past. In the past you could find yourself a good pair of shoes sooner. So, good products for a reasonable price, and to earn as much money as is enough for life.

The distribution of money shouldn't be like it is today. If we look back to the old times, there wasn't this big gap between rich and poor. And in a good economy this is not the right precedent. There are the newly rich who've earned very large fortunes very quickly, and, when I remember in my youth, I didn't see that many people going through the bins.



When I was an employee I used to get to the office at half past seven every morning and at four p.m. I put down my pen, went home and what I did outside of work was nobody's business. Now there's this tax, that tax, they get me all the time, insurance, etc. If I didn't pay tax, they would have me up against the wall, but when I have something to claim back from them, I have to beg for months. And I don't like it this way. Employees, employers, entrepreneurs have different needs - so my personal need is that the money I have worked for will stay with me. That's my money. I'd be willing to pay health insurance, if I can have some service back.



What we are heading for now: lots of people without work, companies are not making any profits, that can start spiralling downwards. Eventually, when the social benefits

have been cut enough, people will ultimately take to the streets, when they have had enough. If it really happens again like back then, when was that, at the end of the 1920's, it's possible that it might with time, not immediately, it will also go downhill politically. It's definitely got harder. When I hear those proposals, how they are going to cut the unemployment benefits to the level of income support, which in itself is quite a good proposal, but then again, I imagine that I'm going to lose another 30 % of my customers because they live on unemployment benefits...



It's simple; up until 1992, beyond maintaining the family, I could afford to have a car. Since then the situation started to get worse, I started to lose opportunities. Today, as well as the two children, I can't afford a car, not even a twenty year old one. And I don't see their future, if they'll ever have a flat, because I could always have social housing, so didn't need to pay an enormous amount just to have a place to stay in. It's not like that anymore. Today bank loans that don't have any state guarantee, you can be thrown on the street any day if you can't pay the mortgage, so it's very dangerous.



Why is it that we can put enormous energies into cheating the State, cheating each other, we are even aggressive towards each other, there's zero tolerance in everyday life, although maybe we could do our things in a more honest way. For example, in Hungary, anyone who doesn't cheat the tax system is considered an idiot. The citizen who declares 60.000 forints per month, goes to complain that he can't park his ten million forints car because the snow isn't cleaned from the streets! I don't think Europe needs this Hungary. A Hungarian who's the last to enter a revolving door, is the first to exit on the other side.



The economy's not right, people are unemployed, so the whole of society is in a state of agitation, purchasing power is lacking, society is not happy and that is some sort of a vicious circle, if society is not right, then the economy can't be right either. If you don't have money, you're not going to spend it and that makes the economy weak. So really the whole world is in an economic crisis, if you look at the stock exchange. Everything is pretty much in decline at the moment. I would say, in my whole life, I've never heard of so many people, also friends and relatives, so many people to be unemployed as there are at the moment. It's all you hear everywhere, redundancies here, redundancies there.



In ten to fifteen years you can't tune up a country to the level of - not even America, but let's say, of Germany. It can't go very quickly. It's as if you put a car in the first gear then just push the accelerator. I don't say that the country can't develop - it can, mostly if we consider that we had been "oppressed" for forty years, putting it in quotation marks, because oppression is such a broad concept, there are different oppressions. In an economic sense, for example, oppression was useful because the Hungarian economy could sell a lot of goods to the members of the socialist block that wouldn't have been sold in other places. Personally, I didn't have any problem with the Soviets.



M: The one we have now. Hell knows. Economy must depend on what the administration does. W: I'm not an expert, but it seems that back in time a lot of goods were bought abroad and now we don't export that much.

M: Yeah, the exportation. The problem must be somewhere up there. W: They must have thrown the goods back.



A bad economy, in reverse logic, then consists of too little work, or rather pointless work that is being done.



Before the wall came down I never had any difficulties finding work, there was always enough work, I could change jobs as often as I liked and didn't have any difficulties finding a different company. But today you'd think twice about handing in your notice. See I've been working in the building sector for 27 years and I've worked for 27 companies. That was never a problem. That's just not possible anymore. Just think back to 1924, the 20's, that was a disaster, as well. Or just before Adolf, Adolf also provided work for people, that it had to end in war is a different story, but if they go on like this, that's how it's going to end again.



We can see it, we can see that it doesn't work. Just take the example of the unemployed. The people that work have to bear the whole burden. They have to pay all those social contributions. So today, who would even employ anyone full time? That's where the problems start. Like I said I haven't gone into it to such an extent to really comment on this.



I can tell you in one word what I think of as a bad economy: the one we've had for years now. Globalisation, the capitalist globalisation, to be clear, that's the root of everything. Now they are searching for new land, virgin lands so they're coming to Hungary, to eastern-Europe, they'll fill us up with all things multinational, they are searching for cheap labor, 'you just work, poor people so that you can be richer' - but at the end of the day it's the capitalists who will earn fortunes and not the poor people. So, that is it about economy.



I'm a trained chef, but I worked for ten years in the paper factory - that was good, but that was during the old regime. I didn't have any trouble. I could have a flat in six months, have money for everything, I could go out for dinner, to the theatre, cinema - I could afford it all. Now I can't. So, everything has gone wrong for me. I don't think it was me who changed.



A bad economy is one that allows a few lobbyist groups to pursue their group interests, that's a bad economy.



We have a bad economy. Where the individual doesn't count. You are supposed to know everything, to be good at sports, to be slim, to be fantastic, to be a good mum, and you are supposed to do all that in one day, and at work you are supposed to do a fantastic job, and to know all films and to have read all good books and somehow the expectations are very high and it's not possible to do all that in the time you have. Those that have work, have to work harder and harder, the rest are sick because they don't have work and others are working themselves to death and so it's not so severely distributed. The ever-increasing intensification of work, that's the only thing that this system wants, but they are cutting off their own supply that way.