

Professor László Ladó, a visionary thought leader*

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While reading the excellent, informative book on *László Ladó* compiled by editors *Gyula Erdősi* and *Katalin Kádár* and being a one-time student of the professor, I was seriously tempted to submerge into my personal memories which relate to what I learnt from László Ladó and to his work as an educator. I was tempted to recall those memories instead of writing about the thought leadership and the professional values of the professor who deceased in 2007, or instead of reviewing the excellent writings of the many authors who contributed to the referenced book. And I would have a good reason for a recollection of that kind. As a young student, struggling with the difficulties of a career start in road construction design with aspirations to become a

specialist engineer, I gained first hand experience about the professor's humane approach and sensibility to the problems of a career starter. Perhaps it is forgivable to recall just one personal implication: My subsequent career change, triggered by my attraction to the harmonies in financial budgeting and controlling, was also a result in part of all the novelties which I could learn from professor Ladó. Then some decades later I had another chance to marvel at his ability of professional renewal, seeing the level of agility which characterised his participation in the work of the Chamber of Hungarian Auditors.

However, I believe it would be inappropriate on my part to use the occasion of a book review to come up with a belated piece of writing that commemorates the professor and thereby follow the authors of the referenced book who produced excellent essays on the topic. Furthermore, it is perhaps more impor-

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tant to touch on the deeper reason which made a systems-thinking approach in profitability calculations, complex business budgeting, cost and profit structure and breakeven calculations attractive to so many young, open-minded engineers decades earlier. I am convinced that it was professor Ladó's sensibility to economic problems, his broad horizon as an educator and the radiation of his will to improve things what made these topics embraceable and learnable to many of us, for these are undoubtedly dry subjects that are easy to look down on as partial matters of organizing and managing businesses.

The book published by Pontus Kft. is aptly subtitled as "Recollections". After an introduction that is as short as it can possibly be, the editors chose to give the floor to professor Ladó's many friends, followers, associates and students – and rightly so. In accordance with the editors' approach, there are no "main" and "side" studies in the book. Each piece of writing is short and properly edited. The reader has the impression that the studies are complementing each other, as if they were to comply with the teachings of László Ladó. What an excellent editorial approach! Still, what makes this well-edited, 150 page, enjoyable book of recollections memorable is not this and not the personal feel that shines through the pages, but the fact that they inevitably provide a great reading not only on László Ladó, a thought leader, excellent person and educator and accomplished scholar, but also render an illustrative description of the era he lived in. This aspect explains why the spiritual heritage of this outstanding personality, who sought and found scholarly partners and was not lonesome at all, is especially valid today.

Just like the scholarly and human heritage of László Ladó, the true topic of the memorial book is staying in the race and preparation that helps adaptation and continued existence. It is about how important (and feasible) it is to find harmonies and optimum solutions, pointing out that there are equilibriums and optimums in every consensus, that there are limits to enforcing one's will and that successful leadership takes more than effective and efficient cooperation and pushing one's interests through. Although it was never mentioned in discussions, this approach quietly became an integral part of our thinking at the lessons of professor Ladó, as he spoke quietly and nearly without accentuation about the actual subject while also regarding us as partners in seeking and supporting change. At his courses, while we studying technical and operational research solutions with varied affinity and diligence, there was one thing we learnt clearly and well: There is always a chance for improvement – as there was even amidst the narrow boundaries, rigid, political and economic structures of the time which we thought were unchangeable. That even under such circumstances, it is worth learning and embracing new methods and techniques and prepare for a future when scientifically established organizational approaches can be adopted beyond factory gates at levels that encompass all layers of society and the economy, both on a small and on a large scale.

Unfortunately, the message of the book is just as valid today as it was decades ago. Yet let us not give up hope that things can change: there is a need for creating lasting values and to build harmony between short-term and long-term considerations.

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