

## ABSTRACTS

**Béni L. Balogh**

■ ***In the Service of the People? Nicolae Ceaușescu, the “Wise Leader”***

Keywords: *Nicolae Ceaușescu, Romania, neo-Stalinist regime*

Nicolae Ceaușescu was Romania's primary leader for almost a quarter century. He established a dictatorial, neo-Stalinist regime, striving for total control over society. He built an excessive cult of personality around himself and aimed to implement a “dynastic” communism akin to that of North Korea. He staunchly rejected all internal reform efforts while pursuing a “separate path” in foreign policy within the Eastern Bloc. During the 1989 anti-communist revolution in Romania, he was stripped of his power and subsequently executed. How did the former shoemaker's apprentice become a communist revolutionary? To what extent was his life path determined by his inherent, childhood, and adolescent personality traits, what was his family background, and how did he undergo the process of socialization? How did he ascend to the pinnacle of power? What do we know about his long reign and subsequent ignominious downfall? In my study, I primarily seek to answer these questions.

**Kata Demeter**

■ ***The Absurd Machinery of History and Power – Shakespeare and Ionesco on a Common Theme***

Keywords: *Macbeth, Macbett, Shakespeare, Ionesco, absurd theatre*

In the play *Macbett*, written in 1972, Ionesco mischievously turns Shakespeare's classic work, the canonised story of Macbeth inside out and creates an absurd parody. According to Shakespeare the mechanisms of history and power are simple and transparent, and even terribly ridiculous if viewed from the right distance. Ionesco achieves this

“right distance” using the instruments of the theatre of the absurd.

The paper aims to analyse the two plays in comparison to determine if the elements of absurdity and comedy already emerge in the original play and seeks answers to the following question: is Ionesco's intention solely to amuse or does he wrap the tragedy of humankind in an absurd appearance to more precisely highlight the story's message? Where did Ionesco get the idea, and which themes and aspects does he emphasize from the Shakespearean play? Furthermore, what additional colours does Ionesco introduce to the same storyline in order to transform the tragedy of human frailty into an absurd comedy?

**Balázs Juhász**

■ ***Benito Mussolini – Old and New Approaches to a Biography***

Keywords: *Benito Mussolini, Italy, fascism, Duce*

During his stay in Switzerland, Benito Mussolini became a staunch supporter of socialist ideas and then an increasingly well-known public figure. His promising political and journalistic career was disrupted by the upheavals of the First World War, leading him to embark on new paths. This gave birth to fascism, which even Mussolini himself could not precisely define at first. The later Duce always reacted and practiced politics pragmatically. It was not a predetermined course but rather adapting to opportunities that helped him rise to power. Mussolini's dual role as both Prime Minister and leader of fascism shaped his politics. His agenda included expanding the boundaries of the monarchical state and restricting the influence of the Catholic Church on society. While addressing the concentration of power, the result was a system that claimed to be totalitarian by the late 1930s. Despite various conflicts, the societal consensus supporting Mus-

solini remained unbroken until the Second World War. However, his downfall eventually came.

**Attila Kolontári**

■ ***Stalin – Enchanted by Power***

Keywords: *Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, Soviet Union, political purges, personality cult*

If the measure of success in politics is the acquisition and retention of power, leaving aside all moral considerations, Stalin undoubtedly was one of the most successful politicians of the last century. Neither his social background, education and intellectual preparation, nor even his early revolutionary activities predestined him to become the creator and leader of a superpower, one of the most ill-famed historical figures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By the end of the 1930s, not holding any official governmental position, Stalin managed to establish strict control over the party apparatus and state security organs and he built up unrestricted dictatorship that allowed him not only to defeat his rivals, but also to make his own allies and creatures obey him unconditionally. Stalin's exercise of power was a unique combination of modern and archaic elements. Among his "teachers" we find, alongside Marx and Lenin, Niccolò Machiavelli, the author of the modern political manual of the exercise of power, and Gustave Le Bon, an expert in the psychology of the masses.

**Gyöngy Kovács Kiss**

■ ***The Historian's Craft***

Keywords: *definitions of history, the practice of the historian's work, theoretical-methodological questions of historiography*

In his posthumously published work, Marc Bloch, one of the founders of the Annales School, extensively discusses questions such as: how does the historian work? What is history, and what is its "purpose"?

What is "historical reality"? Where does history fit among the social sciences? The issues he raised, however, are not new; they have long occupied and continue to engage historians. Throughout history, countless individuals, belonging to various civilizations, regions, and intellectual frameworks, have formulated the definition of history from ancient times to the present day. This essay presents a selection of the above-mentioned questions, definitions, and discussions that have been raised and explored over centuries.

**Ignác Romsics**

■ ***Franco and His Regime***

Keywords: *Francisco Franco, Spain, general and leader of the Nationalist forces, civil war*

Francisco Franco (1892-1975) was general and leader of the Nationalist forces that overthrew the Spanish democratic republic in a bloody civil war (1936-39); thereafter until his death he was the head of government of Spain. He ruled his country as dictator – called El Caudillo (the Leader) – for 36 years. In his essay, Ignác Romsics deals with the military career of the would-be dictator, the Civil War as an arena of social change where different political ideas and programs were forged, and finally the main characteristics and functioning of the Francoist authoritarian regime. The most difficult period of Franco's regime began in the aftermath of World War II, when his government was ostracized by the newly formed United Nations. This period of ostracism came to an end with the worsening of relations between the Soviet world and the West at the height of the Cold War. His international rehabilitation was advanced further in 1953, when Spain signed a military pact with the United States. Later his domestic policies became somewhat more liberal, as well. Due to all these and

the economic development during the 1960s, Franco's image gradually changed from that of the rigorous generalissimo to a more benign civilian elder statesman. In spite of that, his legacy deeply divides the Spanish society even today. The essay is based on the available literature written in English, French and Hungarian.

**Péter Vámos**

■ ***Mao Zedong, a Politician of the Revolution***

Keywords: *Mao Zedong, China, politician of the revolution*

In 1949, Mao Zedong was celebrated by hundreds of millions as a liberator, a victor over the corrupt Guomindang regime. Within a few years, however, it became evident that he was even more ruthless than many of his imperial and republican predecessors. He laid the foundations of modern China, but due to his wrong decisions tens of millions of Chinese people starved to death. In the last decade of his life, he led his country to international recognition, but the society was on the brink of total chaos. So who was Mao Zedong? Was he a brilliant politician driven by sincere enthusiasm, or a calculating technician of power politics who was ready to destroy Chinese cultural heritage and to unscrupulously attack his fellow leaders who threatened his position? This study cannot provide definitive

answers to these questions. Here we can only attempt to present some elements of Mao's relationship to power and the leadership methods of the politician who had perhaps the most significant impact on China's 20<sup>th</sup>-century history.

**Zsolt Vitári**

■ ***Hitler and Power***

Keywords: *Adolf Hitler, Germany, Nazism, World War II*

Adolf Hitler's rule between 1933 and 1945 is still seen by many as the embodiment of total, all-encompassing, unrestrained, yet madly pursued power. This paper examines the factors that underpinned Hitler's power. Among them, his own abilities, his will to power, his rhetorical talents, his program-making habits, his organizational skills, his ability to restrain his subordinates and his cult. It becomes evident how the Nazi party efficiently structured itself into one of the most organized and distinguishable political entities in Germany, offering a credible alternative in a time of economic crisis, and, amid the intrigues of the Weimar elite, finally seizing power in 1933, consolidating and securing it through well thought-out measures implemented in stages. Hitler's power thus became unchallengeable and rested on a foundation so solid that, though eroded, it remained firm to the end.

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Kovács Kiss Gyöngy

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## TÁMOGATÓK



„Adolf Hitler 1933 és 1945 közötti hatalomgyakorlását máig sokan a totális, mindenre kiterjedő, korlátlan, ugyanakkor az örültség hajhászott uralom megtestesítésének tekintik, s – több más társával egyetemben – a történeti emlékezet is így őrizte meg az alakját. Ha ez így volt, joggal merül fel a kérdés, hogy mi volt az, ami Hitlert erre a szörrepre predesztinálta, milyen tulajdonságokkal és képességgel bírt, amelyek ehhez a korlátlan hatalomhoz hozzásegítették, mennyire járt el tudatosan, tervezetten hatalma megeremésítésében. Min alapult egyáltalán hatalma, melynek egy szinte teljes nép behódolt, s még a pusztulásba is hajlandó volt őt követni? Kérdések sora, melyekre a történettudomány az utóbbi évtizedekben kimerítő válaszokat adott.”

(Vitári Zsolt)

ISSN 1222 8338



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