

A Canadian Meets the Magyars

Watson Kirkconnell

My acquaintance with things Hungarian dates from my acceptance in 1922 of a professorial post in Wesley College, Winnipeg. Born of largely Scottish ancestry in Port Hope, Ontario, and educated (Primarily in classics) at Queen's and Oxford, I had had no previous contact with any Magyars. This was not surprising, for by the 1911 census there were fewer than 10,000 Hungarians in the whole of Canada and most of these were pioneer farmers in Saskatchewan. Change soon came, however. The 1921 census figure of 13,181 rose to 40,582 in 1931 and to 54,598 in 1941. Some of the rise may have been due to natural increase, but more of it came from massive immigration brought in by such agencies as the C.P.R. and C.N.R. Colonization Departments and the British Land Settlement Corporation. Many of these migrants had to have passports from the Succession States but gladly affirmed their true national origin for the Canadian census-takers in 1931 and 1941.

In my 18 professional years in Winnipeg (1922-40), my contacts with the Hungarian community were chiefly through the *Kanadai Magyar Újság* [Canadian Hungarian News],* and the Royal Hungarian Consulate, opened in 1928 under Stephen J. Schebeck (Petényi), later followed by Dr. Louis Szelle in 1936.

In 1925-28, the entire margin of my time (beyond professorial duties) was being devoted to verse translation from a wide range of European languages. From this activity there issued my *Outline of European Poetry* (published serially in the *Western Home Monthly*, (June-November 1927), my *European Elegies* (Graphic Press, 1928), and in 1930 *The North American Book of Icelandic Verse* (Carrier & Isles, pp. 228), the first in a projected series of volumes planned for the whole spectrum of Europe's poetic literatures. Over two decades later, this volume was to make me a Knight Commander of the Order of the Icelandic Falcon, but that is another story.

Enter Béla Báchkai Payerle, the 24-year-old editor of the *Kanadai Magyar Újság*, who had encountered my translations from Magyar in *European Elegies* and the *Western Home Monthly* and now sought to encourage me to make *The North American Book of Magyar Verse* the next in my colossal series. He had been born in Újvidék (Neusatz, Novi Sad), and had studied Greek in Budapest under Professor Karl Kerényi (d. 1973) and engineering at the Budapest Polytechnic. Since the half-million Magyars in the southern districts where his father had

*Founded about 1920 in Kipling, Saskatchewan, by Miklós Istvánffy (editor) and Zoltán Istvánffy (printer) and moved to Winnipeg soon thereafter. It was taken over in December 1924 by the Immigrants' Aid Bureau.

been High Commissioner in 1918 were presently handed over to a new "Jugoslavia" in the peace treaties, the Payerle family all migrated to Canada. **

For the project that he urged, I had Arthur Yolland's excellent Hungarian-English dictionary and Kont's *Petite grammaire hongroise*. For originals I had a superb two-volume anthology of Hungarian poets (*Magyar költők*, 1928), edited by Aladár Zlinszky and László Vajthó. For background reading, I had Jenő Pintér's two-volume *History of Hungarian Literature*, also freshly published (in Magyar) in 1928. With Béla to help me in deciphering the fundamental meaning of the Magyar, and with my own flair and passion for recreating the lines in English, the Hungarian anthology in English took shape with exhilarating rapidity.

Actually, the completion of a large book manuscript was the least of our problems. The Great Depression had seen the financial sky fall down in November 1929. My publishers, Carrier & Isles, went bankrupt in the summer of 1930, leaving me to pay the printers and binders of my *Icelandic Verse* out of my own professorial pocket. Two of my other publishers, Graphic Press and Ariston Press, also went to the wall. Further book publication seemed as remote as Australia. As early as October 1929, the eminent Budapest novelist and academician, Ferencz Herczeg, had promised me an Introduction, but this solved no financial problems.

In the meantime, a number of my verse translations were published in the *Kanadai Magyar Újság*. Next, about Christmas 1930, I mailed a clutch of nine poems to Sir Bernard Pares, editor of the University of London's *Slavonic and East European Review*. Included were a number in the Greek classical metres that were long popular in Hungary, in this case, Ferenc Kazinczy's "Our Tongue" (epic hexameters), Benedek Virág's "Invocation" (alcaics), Dániel Berzsenyi's "My Lot" (sapphics) and "Invocation" (alcaics) and Károly Kisfaludy's "Mohács" (elegiac couplets). In more modern metres were poems by Endre Ady, Dezső Kosztolányi, "Miklós Bárd" and Géza Gyóni. Sir Bernard's 6-page answer of January 17, 1931, was full of enthusiasm: "Your sapphics are real sapphics, not the kind of jingle which passes for sapphics in England. It is of course, as you have made it, a

**Typical of our contacts with another phase of the Magyar tradition was a dinner-party for six at the home of the Schebeck-Petényis in the early 1930's, when I and my bride (a Canadian cousin of Earl Kitchener) were fellow-guests along with Béla and his bride, Lulu Putnik (a Winnipeg pianist, fresh from study in Paris and a Budapest recital), as well as Lulu's uncle Dezső Mahalek (soon to be 1st cellist in the Vancouver Symphony) and his wife, the golden soprano, "Carrie Henderson." Other Hungarian musicians, who were our house-guests during my presidency at Acadia University in 1948-64 were Joseph Szigeti (violinist), Béla Böszörményi-Nagy (pianist) and Géza de Kresz (founder of the Hart House String Quartet) with his wife, "Norah Drewett" (concert pianist).

five-foot line Also I think your alcaics and hexameters are good." There followed a good deal of prosodic counsel on how to avoid the overloading of unaccented syllables with clotted consonants. Publication followed promptly in March 1931 (Vol. IX, No. 27).

The *Slavonic and East European Review* had a considerable circulation in Hungary, and I presently awoke to find myself famous in academic circles there. A literary academy, the Petőfi Society, elected me to honorary membership on the Ides of March, 1932, along with Fredrik Böök of the Swedish Academy. My *székfoglaló*, or inaugural dissertation, entitled "The Significance of Petőfi from the Point of View of the New World", was duly read in the hall of the Royal Hungarian Academy of Sciences in November 1932.

Meanwhile, publication slowly became a possibility. When Lord Rothermere visited Winnipeg in May 1932, I had lunch with him and secured a promise of \$200 to buy book paper. The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs voted 1,000 pengős (about \$500) to buy 500 copies of my volume for distribution to Hungarian schools. Mr. Schefbeck, the Hungarian consul, made a cash contribution. Béla Báchkai Payerle linotyped and printed the volume gratis with his own hands. Finally, entitled *The Magyar Muse*, the 228-page volume became available to the public in January 1933.

Then came a tidal wave of friendly letters and autographed books from poets and scholars in Hungary. Among names in my files from the first few months were those of Lajos Áprily, Mihály Babits, Eugen Balogh (Secretary of the Hungarian Academy), Aladár Bán, Aladár Bodor, George Buday, Minka Czóbel, Lajos Harsányi, István Havas, Ferencz Herczeg, Bálint Hóman (Minister of Education), Ödön Jakob, Dezső Kosztolányi, Ferenc Kozma, Géza Lampérth, "László Mécs", Gyula Pekár, George de Pilászy, Jenő Pintér, Miklós Radnóti, Sándor Reményik, Gyula Szekfű, Ernő Szép, Kálmán Szily (Secretary of State), István Traub and Gyula Wlassics.

With the *Magyar* volume in my European translation series duly achieved, I turned next to an anthology of my translations from Polish poetry. Here again there was the trial flight of a "Polish Miscellany" in the *Slavonic Review* and, after considerable delay, the publication of a *Golden Treasury of Polish Lyrics* (1936), made possible by heavy purchases of this work by the Polish Government. As a sequel came my decoration as a Knight Officer of the Order of Polonia Restituta and my receipt of the Silver Laurel of the Polish Academy of Literature.

But the Hungarian friends had other plans for me. Dr. Dominic Szent-Iványi, the young scion of an old Transylvanian family and a career diplomat in the U.S.A., helped to found in Cleveland, Ohio, a Benjamin Franklin Bibliographical Society, whose *raison d'être* was

the publication of a series of books by Magyar authors. The proposed first volume was an English verse translation of Hungary's greatest epic, *Buda halála* ("The Death of Buda", 1864), by János Arany (1817-82). I was to do the versifying and the Payerles were to supply me with a literal prose text. There was to be a Foreword by Géza Voinovich, Secretary General of the Hungarian Academy. Dr. Árpád Berczik, of the University of Budapest, would supply copious notes (the first in English). Dr. Joseph Szentkirályi, of the University of Budapest's Department of English, would check my translation with the original Magyar, line by line. I myself was to write an historical and critical introduction for this first translation of the epic into any language other than Czech and German. Complete sets (in Magyar, 16 volumes) of Arany, Vörösmarty and Petőfi now graced my shelves and widened my horizons. The Kirkconnell-Payerle version of *The Death of King Buda* came out on schedule in 1936. A grateful consul assured me that an Order of Merit would have been recommended had not the presence of a Regent (Horthy) instead of the legitimate Habsburg monarch rendered all decorations impossible. The king was the fount of honour and, thanks to the Succession States, who immediately mobilized their armies whenever any restoration of the throne was suggested, Hungary had no king.

The B.F.B.S.'s second volume was to have been an enlarged and revised edition of the *Magyar Muse*. The choice of poems, trebling the size of the volume, was to be made by Dr. Elemér Császár, professor of Hungarian literature in the University of Budapest, and by Dr. László Vajthó, professor of contemporary literature in the University of Debrecen. The Báchkai-Payerles and Joseph Szentkirályi were to play the same roles as for Arany's epic. We all set to work and the entire manuscript had been industriously completed by the summer of 1938.

In the meantime, however, the Cleveland firm had suddenly switched its priorities. Dr. Dominic Kosáry, a young professor of history in the Eötvös Kollegium, Budapest, was writing a *History of Hungary* in Magyar, and an English translation of this prose work (482 pages) was to precede the enlarged *Muse*. Here my own contribution was to be my final vetting of the English text in the summer of 1940. Kósary's volume was published in 1941, just before the firm went out of existence, a casualty of World War II.

But from 1936 on, interim use was found for the rapidly growing mass of *Muse II*. Béla, operating in Winnipeg, founded a literary monthly called *The Young Magyar-American*, with a considerable circulation in both Canada and the U.S.A. With pecuniary interruptions, it ran from March 1936 to May 1939, and every issue carried a newspaper-sized page of our translations. During that period, it published 140 of my English versions (including a whole instalment of

Toldi), 14 historical or critical articles from my pen and instalments of a *Primer of Hungarian* that I had written. Three further generous instalments of "A Magyar Miscellany" also appeared in the *Slavonic Review*

Still another outlet had come with the founding in Budapest of an English-language literary review, *The Hungarian Quarterly* (Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 1936). An opening article by Count Stephen Bethlen tells of its genesis: "Returning, two years ago, from a lecturing tour in England, I brought with me the sorrowful conviction that for all the sympathy and kindness which had met me at every turn, the great problems, past and present, of my own country were a sealed book to the majority of the English people . . . Led by these considerations, a few friends and myself resolved to found a periodical which, written in English throughout, would give British and American readers a faithful picture of Hungarian affairs past and present. With this aim in view a Society was formed which honoured me by offering me its chairmanship and intends a few weeks hence to issue the first issue of a review entitled "The Hungarian Quarterly."

The same issue carried an article by myself entitled "Hungary's Linguistic Isolation"; and some paragraphs of mine, printed facing some from Count Bethlen's article, were used as a publicity leaflet in launching the periodical. My excerpt began: "With the establishment of *The Hungarian Quarterly*, the English-speaking world is at last given an open window through which to gaze into Hungary's lonely tower of linguistic isolation. It will see there, not an over-delicate Lady of Shalott, weaving a futile web of fictive fantasy, but the vital personality of a gifted people."

The editor, located in Budapest, was to be Joseph Balogh, a scholarly authority of Dante and Erasmus, and there were to be subscription offices in London and New York.

Subsequent contributions of mine, prior to the *Quarterly's* tragic demise in World War II, were "The Poetry of Ady" (Autumn 1937) and "Quintessence of Hungary" (Autumn 1938).

Another literary academy, the Kisfaludy Society, elected me to a corresponding membership in 1936 and the P.E.N. Club of Hungary (whose president was Antal Radó, a classical scholar and a poet) awarded me its "Medal of Honour", a distinction then first inaugurated for eminent work abroad in the field of Hungarian literature. But there was a confidential talk of an impending honorary doctorate at the University of Debrecen, which was to celebrate in 1938 the 400th anniversary of its earliest nucleus, "Debrecen College," founded in 1538 in this Protestant area of Hungary by Magyar graduates of Geneva and Leiden.

The ceremony was scheduled for September 1938, and as a prologue to that event I was invited to give a couple of lectures on

Hungarian literature at the summer sessions (*Nyári Egyetem*) of the University. Transportation was not provided, but the Polish "Gdynia-American Line" supplied free transatlantic tickets for my wife and myself, and I covered the remainder of the trip's expenses by sending back a series of travel articles to the Southam string of Canadian dailies. The Báchkai-Payerles (Béla, Lulu and small son Ferenc) were our fellow-travellers. For our six weeks stay in Hungary, a suite of rooms was placed at the Kirkconnells' disposal in the Eötvös Kollegium, "the Eton of Hungary," in Budapest.

Towards the end of our stay, we were urged to remain for the great Quadricentennial celebrations, but I had to decline, with a regretful "Nem lehet!" Being a full-time professor of Latin, I had classes to meet in Winnipeg in mid-September. As it turned out, in that month of the Munich crisis, the elaborate academic rites were called off. A personal letter from Count Paul Teleki, then Minister of Education, gave me the details (December 10, 1938): "We tried to keep the celebration on programme as long as we could. The great festivities were cancelled only a week before they should have taken place. It was in the first moment of great excitement and of possible war The anniversary was nevertheless celebrated in a simpler form by the University Your honorary doctorship was also announced."

That the promised diploma took twenty months to reach me was due to the pains taken by the University to make it a memorable document. The University Orator was commissioned to prepare an eloquent Latin panegyric on my achievements as an intercultural interpreter. A superb artist, Alexander Kiss, was hired to lavish his chromatic skill on a large parchment, 28 inches by 20. Across the top was the national blazon, along with the elaborate scarlet capitals of an exordium, backed by intricate scroll-work, worthy of the Alhambra. Across the foot of the diploma were the richly-hued emblems of the several faculties—the rooster for divinity, the owl for philosophy, enthroned justice for law and a serpent-cum-chalice for medicine. In between, in arresting, hand-painted black minuscules, with scarlet for all capitals, stood the body of the citation. The capital-S at its beginning (*Si laus eximia . . .*) was expanded, as in a mediaeval manuscript, into a vivid painting, 6 centimetres by 4, of a Hun warrior on horseback, turning back to shoot an arrow in Parthian style. This sketch, largely in scarlet, was a delicate reference to the subject-matter of my translation of *Buda halála*, especially the ancient legend in Canto VI.

As a major document in these annals, the text of the diploma is given hereunder in English translation:

WE, the Rector and the gracious and most famous Royal Stephen Tisza University of Debrecen, greet those who will read

this document! If exceptional praise is deservedly due to those who are devoted to the welfare of their own fatherland and people, then assuredly those men are worthy of the highest admiration and respect who, studying deeply the literatures of foreign nations, set as their goal the establishment and promotion of friendship and brotherhood between different peoples. In the noble circle of these men, by far the most eminent place is held by the most learned and famous gentleman, WATSON KIRKCONNELL, professor in Wesley College, Winnipeg, and a most illustrious member of many societies of letters among foreign peoples. For more than a decade now he has devoted himself to a study of the literature of our Hungarian nation and has published for his own nation an endless series of his translations and versions from the works of Hungarian poets and writers. His Hungarian anthology, rendered into English, and likewise his translation of "The Death of Buda," are monuments that will demonstrate to all ages, more enduringly than bronze, the genius and poetic ability of this Man, not only among us Hungarians but also truly in his own fatherland. Finally, who could help telling how much this Man, a true and sincere Friend of the Hungarian people, had made known in annals and periodicals the culture and learning, the character and virtues of our nation, and how much he has toiled on behalf of our just rights! We therefore, out of respect for his eminent deserts, and in accordance with a decree of the most eminent Regent of the kingdom of Hungary, dated December 20, 1939, and as a sign of our respect, of our own free will and accord, have created, pronounced and declared the said most illustrious, most distinguished and most erudite gentleman, Watson Kirkconnell, Doctor of Philosophy, *Honoris Causa*, conferring on him all the privileges and rights which Doctors of Philosophy *honoris causa* enjoy by right and custom. In proof of which, we have bestowed on him this Diploma, ratified by the great seal of our University and confirmed by the customary signatures. Issued in the free and royal city of Debrecen, May 3, 1940.

THEODORUS F. LINC
Doctor of Medicine,
Professor of Surgery,
Rector Magnificus.

STEPHANUS KISS DE RUGONFALVA
Doctor of Philosophy,
Professor of Hungarian History,
Dean.

In less than a year from the time that I received this document, an endless procession of German troops and planes was streaming through Budapest on its way to the Rumanian Banat, and Count Paul Teleki (premier since 1939) had put a bullet in his brain (April 3, 1941), leaving a note for the Regent that stated: "Perhaps by my voluntary death I may render a service to my nation." In the national descent to Avernus that finally hit hell-bottom in the German occupation of 1944, German S.S. brigades, aided by a few Right-Wing Hungarians, rounded up half a million Hungarian Jews and then deported them to Auschwitz for extermination. Antal Radó, who had called on me with the P.E.N. Club Medal of Honour, Miklós Radnóti, who had presented me with inscribed copies of two volumes of his

poetry, Joseph Balogh, in whose book-lined apartment my wife and I had dined—all these gracious and cultured friends were slaughtered, as Jews, by the Nazis. Stephen Bethlen, with whom I had helped to launch the *Hungarian Quarterly*, went underground when the Nazi police occupied Budapest in 1944, but was caught by the Russians in 1945 and seems to have died two years later in an NKVD dungeon in Moscow. In 1943-44, Béla Báchkai Payerle was involved in a crash program at the University of Indiana, training American officers in history and geography in preparation for occupation duty in Hungary; but Roosevelt suddenly sold Hungary out to Stalin, the Indiana program was cancelled, and Horthy was informed that he could place no hope in a separate deal with the Americans and the British, but must make his peace with the Soviets. In October 1944, Dominic Szent-Iványi was Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in an unavailing delegation of three sent by Budapest to Moscow. Later, he was “framed” in a political trial by the Rákosi regime and endured several agonizing years in Communist prisons in Hungary.

Meanwhile, back in Canada, my academic employment had shifted from a professorship in Latin (Winnipeg, 1933-40) to a professorship in English (McMaster, Hamilton, 1940-48) and to the presidency of Acadia University (1948-64). I had also abandoned verse translation for active prose publication in support of the unity of wartime of Canadians of all origins. Books of mine with that purpose were *Canada, Europe and Hitler* (1939), *Canadians All* (1941), *Our Communists and the New Canadians* (1943), *Our Ukranian Loyalists* (1943), *Seven Pillars of Freedom* (1944), *The Quebec Tradition* (1946) and *Stalin's Red Empire* (1951). In December 1940, I was one of five founders of what is now the Citizenship Branch in the Secretary of State's Department, but declined the honour of becoming its first director, since, as a civil servant, I could then no longer speak out on public issues. One of my combative interchanges was in disposing of a claim, in *Saturday Night* (Jan. 9, 1943) by Steve Szőke, editor of the *Magyar Munkás*, Toronto, that his paper, founded by the Communists in 1925, had nothing to do with the Communist Party. Unfortunately for him, I had on file an official publication, *Resolutions of the Enlarged Plenum of the Communist Party of Canada* (1931), which specifically claimed (page 11) to have founded the *Munkás* as a revolutionary paper.

The stifled Budapest uprising in 1956 against the Communist dictatorship brought nearly 40,000 refugees to Canada and made our public at least briefly aware of the facts of life in Eastern Europe. A few fugitive remnants of the AVO, dislodged on October 23, 1956, may have arrived in Toronto one jump ahead of the real refugees, but the great bulk of the new influx consisted of long-suffering citizens who were neither Communist nor Fascist. Many were college

students, who made a vigorous contribution to life on our university campuses, as at Acadia, where Margaret von Fricke won straight A's in all her courses and Leslie Török ("Black Belt") began a judo club.

I found the newcomers very friendly. A Hungarian Literary Society in Winnipeg made me an honorary member and Sándor Domokos, its president, created for me a bronze wall-plaque relief portrait of myself, "from a son of a small nation to a great son of a great nation." The Helicon Society of Toronto presented me with a large bronze medal, "In gratitude to Canada for the welcome accorded to the exiles of the Hungarian revolution, 1956-61." Meanwhile the Hungarian Freedom Fighters' organization in New York conferred on me its Gold Medal of Freedom, in company with some eight other "international champions of human liberty"—Charles de Gaulle of France, Premier Segni of Italy, Defence Minister Strauss of West Germany, Chancellor Julius Raab of Austria, Cardinal Cushing of Boston, Mrs. Bang Jensen of Denmark, Richard M. Nixon and Senator Thomas J. Dodd. The medal had been designed by the Hungarian sculptor, Mihály de Kátay. The large parchment scroll (in Latin) accompanying the medal, had been deliberately burned around the edges so as to symbolize the martyrdom through which the Hungarian people had passed. Still another Magyar award was the George Washington medallion of the American Hungarian Studies Foundation, conferred on me, along with Hans Selye and Marcel Breuer, at a 1967 banquet at the Plaza Hotel, New York.

From 1938 to 1968, my work in translating Hungarian poetry had been left on the back burner. There had indeed been my *Little Treasury of Hungarian Verse* (1945), published in Washington by the American Hungarian Federation, from fragments of *Muse II*. For the Premonstratensian Fathers, of Saint Norbert Abbey, I prepared a volume of translations from László Mécs, a canon regular of their Order, and saw them published in 1964 and 1968. In 1957, I translated spontaneously a poem by "Tibor Tollas," had the man himself as my house-guest in Wolfville, and Englished most of the famous freedom-fighter anthology, *Füveskert*. But most of my literary energies had been poured into a massive trilogy of Milton studies, begun in 1933 and published as *The Celestial Cycle* (1952, pp. 728), *That Invincible Samson* (1964, pp. 229) and *Awake the Courteous Echo* (1973, pp. 360); into a verse translation of Adam Mickiewicz's Polish epic, *Pan Tadeusz* (1962, pp. 407); into two volumes of verse translation from Ukrainian, made in collaboration with Dr. C.H. Andrusyshen, namely, *The Ukrainian Poets, 1189-1962* (1963, pp. 530); and *The Poetical Works of Taras Shevchenko* (1964, pp. 614), into a volume of my own verse, *Centennial Tales and Other Selected Poems* (1965, pp. 550); and into a volume of my memoirs, *A Slice of Canada* (1967, pp.

403). All of these last eight volumes, totalling over 3,800 pages, were published by the University of Toronto Press.

From the same Press, through its *University of Toronto Quarterly*, there had been published for thirty-one years my annual survey of all books published in Canada in languages other than English and French, totalling perhaps 2,000 volumes in all. While the great majority of these were in Ukrainian, Icelandic and German, the Magyar record was not entirely blank. Before this, I had already become acquainted with the poetry of Gyula Izsák, Sarolta Petényi and Rózsa Páll Kovács. The 1930's also brought biographical narratives from Rev. Monsignor Pál Sántha and a short *History of Canada* by Gustáv Nemes. But an up-to-date literary community really materialized after the great migration of 1956, and the founding of *Kanadai Magyarság* and *Magyar Élet* in Toronto as vehicles for the outpourings of that community, presently gathered up in book form. Preeminent in this new wave in Toronto were Ferenc Fáy, with several volumes of distinguished verse; András Tamás, whose *Öröm a házat* [I guard the house], (1961), is masterly and mature, and Márton Kerecsendi Kiss, whose *Hetedhétország: Mesejáték* (1962) is alight with imagination. Contemporary with these began the political commentary of András Tamás, *Délkeleteuropa a diplomáciai törekvések sodrában 1939-44 között* [Southeast Europe in the Current of Diplomatic Endeavours, 1939-44] (Montreal 1961), which reminded me of *Diplomacy in a Whirlpool* (Notre Dame University, 1953), by Stephen Kertész, whom I had met in Budapest in August 1938. The laudable growth of a whole circle of Magyar poets came with the founding of a Canadian Hungarian Author's Association (*Kanadai Magyar Írók Köre*, 1969), with a striking series of annual volumes of original prose and verse, entitled *Antologia*, edited by János Miska, of Ottawa and Lethbridge, and presently printed with the financial help of the Szechenyi Society. All contributors deserve to be cited, but under pressure of space I shall mention only Ernő Németh, Sándor Domokos, Ferenc Fáy and György Vitéz. A celebrity in prose and verse who stayed briefly in Toronto before passing on was György Faludy.

I retired from Acadia University's presidency in 1964, following a bad coronary, and even from a subsequent professorship in 1968, following two cataract operations. As shades of the undertaker began to dog my septuagenarian steps, I turned back to a resumption of my old Hungarian studies. For this, the circumstances had changed since 1938. My shelves were now crammed with scores of new volumes of Magyar verse, and especially the 3-volume *Hét évszázad magyar versei* (Budapest 1966, pp. 1131, 931 and 1136). Pinter's *Irodalom-története* was now supplemented by the monumental 3-volume *Magyar irodalmi lexikon* (Akadémiai kiadó, Budapest, 1963), under

the general editorship of Marcell Benedek. I also purchased a complete microfilm of the Latin works of Janus Pannonius from the British Museum Library. But the first undertaking was my completion of Arany's *Toldi*, begun in 1936 in partnership with Tivadar Edl of the Hungarian Foreign Office. Next I added excerpts from a dozen other epics by Janus Pannonius, Zrínyi, Gyöngyösi, Csokonai, Vörösmarty, Arany and Petőfi. When I sent a copy of my projected table of contents to a score of knowledgeable Hungarians, many valuable suggestions flowed in. Dr. Asztrik Gábel, director of the Mediaeval Institute at Notre Dame University, proposed a much fuller representation of poetry from before A.D. 1800. Dr. Dominic Szent-Ivánvi, of Budapest, recommended a much more adequate array of poems from the Great Triad: Vörösmarty, Petőfi and Arany. Almost all advisers urged a fuller roster of the poets who had risen to prominence in the forty years since I had published my *Magyar Muse*, especially such men as Dezső Kosztolányi, Lajos Kassák, Milán Füst, József Erdélyi, Lőrinc Szabó, Gyula Illyés, Sándor Weores, Attila József, Zoltán Zelk, Miklós Radnóti, István Vas and Ferenc Juhász. My chief mentors for this recent period were three émigré scholars: Dr. George Gömöri, of Darwin College, Cambridge; Dr. Ádám Makkai, of the University of Illinois; and Dr. George Buday, of Coulsdon, Surrey.

The responsibility for the English versions was always my own throughout. Under the combined pressure of old age (pushing 78), coronary lesions and a work-desk suddenly swamped with several hundred pages of extra originals, I was deeply indebted in 1971-72 to the help on basic line-by-line meanings given me by my old friends, Lulu and Béla Báchkai Payerle, and by a new friend of the 1956 Emigration, Maxim Táborny, of Kinston, N.C. But for better or worse, the *summa manus* on the prosody was always my own. My aim in translation has been to pursue two conflicting ideals: (a) to come as close as possible to the meaning and metre of the original, and (b) to produce English verse that is acceptable as English in prosody and idiom. It is the tension between these ideals that creates whatever merit (or demerit) my translations may have.

In the spring of 1973, I sent a completed typescript of my *Hungarian Helicon* to the modern languages editor of the University of Toronto Press. His production staff reported that my 1180 typed pages would print as 848 large pages, at a cost of around \$28,000. The Helicon Society of Toronto, the Széchenyi Society of Calgary and the Hungarian Literary Society of Winnipeg have all recommended it to the Secretary of State, Ottawa, for a multicultural grant in aid of publication. The manuscript is still on the knees of the gods.

Franco-Rumanian Intervention in Russia and the *Vix Ultimatum*: Background to Hungary's Loss of Transylvania.

Peter Pastor

On March 21, 1919, the democratic Hungarian government of Mihály Károlyi collapsed and gave way to the Hungarian Soviet Republic. In that year of the "Red Scare" the rise of the Béla Kun regime strengthened the spectre of world revolution.

With the fall of the Károlyi regime, Hungary's first democratic experience met an untimely death. The direct cause of the government's collapse was the renowned *Vix Ultimatum*, a French-inspired memorandum from the Paris Peace Conference. The note, delivered to the Hungarians on March 20, 1919, by the head of the French Military Mission in Hungary, Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Ferdinand Vix, seemed to legitimize Rumanian occupation of Transylvania. The crisis this development provoked in Hungary made some contemporary observers, among them the American General Tasker H. Bliss and the South African General Jan Smuts, believe that Rumanian occupation of Transylvania was a scheme of the Allied Supreme Commander, Marshal Ferdinand Foch, whose plan for an Allied attack on Russia required the placation of Rumania.¹ Historians of this period came to accept this view.²

Since the *Vix Ultimatum* was delivered almost one month after its issuance in Paris, the selection of the date of its presentation has remained a mystery.³ Recent publications have offered various explanations why the French chose March 20 as the date to hand over the fateful document. In Hungary, Professor Sándor Vadász has suggested that Colonel Vix was ordered by his superiors to transmit the memorandum on that date because French military preparations to enforce it had by then been completed.⁴ Tibor Hajdu, the best known authority on the Hungarian revolutions of 1918-1919, believes that the date was chosen because the Paris Peace Conference was ready then to reopen the discussion of the invasion of Russia. According to this thesis, the French military leaders were preparing the ground for such an invasion by handing the ultimatum to the Hungarians.⁵ In the United States, the present author has concluded that the date of transmission was an arbitrary decision of Colonel Vix to reinforce his waning authority over the Hungarians.⁶

The opening of the archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs for 1918 to 1929 in the summer of 1972 shed new and startling light on the affair. It is now evident that the Allied forces in eastern Europe under the command of General Louis Franchet d'Esperey were not ready to transmit the memorandum to the Hungarians in the