

Review of Reviews*

Hungary. By Paul Ignotus. Nations of the Modern World. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972, Pp. 333.

The very first impression is disconcerting. Here is another brief history to be added to the dozen other brief histories headed by C.A. Macartney's *Hungary: A Short History* (Edinburgh University Press, 1962) when what we need is a long history of Hungary in English . . . The first chapter seems to confirm the disillusionment: history until the end of the eighteenth century is dismissed in forty-odd pages not free of clichés and factual mistakes . . . But then, Mr. Ignotus, a well-known and talented writer but not a professional historian, himself protests his bias in the introduction as to what he finds interesting in Hungarian history and what he doesn't. He comes into his own with the description of the first Reform Generation of intellectuals in Hungary, and his writings thereafter becomes breathtakingly interesting. Foreign policy remains neglected to the end, but domestic affairs are treated judiciously and in great detail, and we learn more and more of the role intellectuals, especially writers and poets, played in politics. The approach is urban and liberal, which causes some peasant politicians and populist writers to come out badly: a judgement which I cannot but agree with. There are beautiful passages on Hungarian society, the explosive role of the Jews, the accomplishments of the second Reform Generation of intellectuals in the early twentieth century, the troubles of the interwar period—that Ignotus knows personally—and the triumphs and disasters of the post-1945 era in which the author played a distinguished role, except when he languished in prison as a victim of Mátyás Rákosi. The concluding description of Hungary today is scholarly and fascinating; the style is always elegant and witty, but factual errors continue almost to the end . . . This is a travelogue that takes the reader through history and through the lives of Hungary's political and cultural leaders: the guide

* The inclusion of a book in this section does not preclude a review of it in the Book Review section of a future issue of *CARHS*.

shows only what he wishes to show, but his explanations are almost always excellent. There are good pictures and a fine appendix on Hungarian language and poetry.

Istvan Deak (Columbia University), *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (March 1973).

Stephen Széchenyi and the Awakening of Hungarian Nationalism, 1791-1841. By George Barany. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968. Pp. 487.

Unlike some studies of the past dealing with Hungarian history Professor Barany's work relies on a formidable array of primary material. He also utilizes documents previously unknown to Széchenyi scholars. This ambitious study sets out, according to the title, to deal with the life story of Count Stephen Széchenyi and his impact on the emergence of Hungarian nationalism. Actually, it covers only the first fifty years of his life. Yet the scope is much broader than suggested by the title: it also encompasses numerous related aspects and details of the Hungarian, the Austrian imperial, and European backgrounds . . .

The name of Stephen Széchenyi (1791-1860) pertains to the same historical context as that of Louis Kossuth. While in the 1840's the image of the latter was gradually growing into an epitome of freedom and national reform, it was the former who could not avoid regarding it as his misfortune to have enabled Kossuth to become the spokesman for the nation. It was Széchenyi whose mind proved most susceptible to the new ideas of Europe of the time. Thus he adopted sufficient liberalism to initiate and stand up for social, political, and economic changes on a large scale . . . He became enough of a nationalist to feel emotionally involved in the promotion of what he considered Magyar national interests. But he showed himself circumspect in discerning danger in the introduction of sweeping changes. He was sufficiently cosmopolitan and courageous to insist on the according of fair and just treatment to all the nationalities of Hungary. His attempt, however, to unmask Kossuth as a reckless agitator and a firebrand, only facilitated "the rise of a new star [Kossuth] over the horizon." Széchenyi himself suffered an agonizing blow in both losing popularity with the liberal opposition and failing to gain moral and political support from Metternich . . .

Széchenyi kept diaries regularly—an almost unique occurrence among Hungarian politicians—from the age of twenty-three through

all his adult life. The author interprets them "as analogous to subconscious material elicited by psychiatrists during the process of free association." This assumption enables him to argue on the basis of psychoanalytical considerations that some of the motives for Széchenyi's reforming zeal and many of his public activities derived in a large degree from highly subjective motives . . .

The author does refer to Széchenyi's "system" of thought, but is content at this stage to present the related material grouped as it occurs in Széchenyi's successive writings. However, even such terse references to it as "idealistic," "romantic" and that it is "rested on the immovable values of supreme justice and the rewarding inner calm of one's conscience" tend to stress the true dimensions of the mental conflicts analyzed in the book. Not enough prominence is accorded to the salient role that philosophy, ancient and modern, as well as religion played in the cultural climate of Széchenyi's era. Indeed, he was a true son of his age in this respect and consistently adhered to principles adopted in his youth . . .

The proper evaluation of influences leading to Széchenyi's mental collapse and eventual suicide remains to be presented in the continuation of the present volume, alongside the integration into a final summation of many penetrating, but somewhat isolated observations, often the results of brilliant analysis.

Factual errors apart . . . this is an exhaustively researched book, written in a crisp, very readable style. It will be an indispensable tool for Széchenyi historians and students of the history of nineteenth-century East-Central Europe.

Martin L. Kovacs (University of Regina), *Canadian Journal of History*, Vol. VII, No. 1 (April 1972).

Joseph Eötvös and the Modernization of Hungary, 1840-1870. A Study of Ideas of Individuality and Social Pluralism in Modern Politics. By Paul Bódy. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series, Volume 62, Part 2, Philadelphia, 1972. Pp. 134.

One of the major assumptions of the study posits that it was the ideas and ideals embraced by Joseph Eötvös (1813-1871) in his formative years that were, often against the pressure of public opinion or prevailing political trends, the decisive factor in the formulation of his political recommendations, as writer, creative politician, and Minister of Public Instruction in 1848 and 1867-71, towards the resolution of the long-festered problems of his country.

The early influences most active in the formation of young Eötvös's thought are traced in the study very appropriately through the guidance of his cultured German mother to the classical humanism of Goethe's and Herder's Weimar, and to patriotism and reforming liberalism through the mediation of his private tutor of Jacobin leanings. During his university studies he became more involved in the Hungarian past and its unique and original bearer and custodian, the Magyar peasant. The readings of Victor Hugo, Sismondi, Tocqueville and Guizot tended to sharpen his existing views and to deepen his understanding of the working of society . . . Eötvös, a true son of his intellectual forebears, was also fascinated by the harmonious coherence of things and by their underlying unity and wholeness. But to him, the most important of all unities was *man* who, as a free agent, ought to possess dignity and freedom in its political, social, economic and cultural aspects. Man's separation from his dignity and freedom, his alienation from *wholeness*, from belongingness to human community, owing to such accidents as sociocultural differences, was regarded by Eötvös as the most serious ailment, the root of all other evils. Thus Hungary's manifold problems in his time tended for the statesman to come to a head in three major issues: the abolition of noble privileges or, conversely, the emancipation of the peasants; a clear and acceptable definition of the relationship between Hungary and the empire; and the question of the national minorities. The remedy for such types of alienation Eötvös hoped to find in the judicious extension of political rights, autonomy both at the private and at the institutional-group levels yet within the same *existing* political structure. However, as Eötvös had the occasion to argue against Széchenyi, the necessary condition for the proper exercise of civil rights, which in turn forms the prerequisite of all peaceful reforms, is constituted by education. For it is cultural progress and the resultant deeper insight that enhance respect for the rights of others and human dignity . . .

Dr. Bódy finds that the continuity between Eötvös's youthful thought as expressed most systematically in his novel *The Carthusian* and his greatest political feat, the Elementary Education Act, 1868, is very tangible indeed. This fact and the modernity of the intentions of the Act emerge strikingly from the author's terse summary describing this law as "the attempt to protect the variety and freedom of education in the broadest sense by acknowledging the right of each individual, township, association, nationality and church to sponsor and exercise control over schools."

Evidently, his educational proposals, incorporating recommendations on secondary and higher education as well which, however, never became laws, were meant by Eötvös to complement his Nation-

ality Bill of 1867. This much-debated proposal recommended the use in public official communication by each citizen, township, church and county of his or its native or official language, but with the strict observation of the related rights of the central Hungarian government, and of individuals or groups constituting minorities within minorities. The resultant *Nationality Act, 1868*, was passed only with major amendments . . . The reluctance with which Eötvös's two Acts were passed by the legislature and the lack of appreciation on the part of most minority leaders indicated absence of sufficient public support for the measures. These attitudes and the gradual whittling away by successive Hungarian ministries of some of the guarantees provided in the two Acts do not appear quite unexpected, we may add, in the atmosphere of post-1850 Europe of *Realpolitik*, linguistic nationalism, and social Darwinism . . .

One major strength of Dr. Bódy's study lies in his fine, penetrating and sustained analysis of Eötvös's thought and its interaction with the harsh reality of his contemporaries' political opinions and ambitions. He skillfully portrays Eötvös's growing private frustrations over the failure, with a few exceptions, of politicians both of the governing Magyar nation and of the national minorities to rise above the fragmented state of ethnocentric interests and to create a truly pluralistic multi-national state as earnestly requested by the statesman, and simultaneously suggests the same failure as one of the main reasons for the ultimate collapse of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy. Further, this volume constitutes, in English, the first and only comprehensive treatment of Eötvös as thinker and politician, and is written in a lucid and very readable style . . .

Martin L. Kovacs (University of Regina), *Canadian Journal of History*, Vol. VII, No. 3 (December 1972).

Nationalism in Eastern Europe. By Peter F. Sugar and Ivo J. Lederer, eds. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1969. Pp. 465.

This collective volume, which intends to explore the pattern of Eastern European nationalism from the eighteenth century to the present, is introduced by Professor Sugar's comprehensive and highly perceptive essay "External and Domestic Roots of Eastern European Nationalism." . . .

Historical literature in English is deficient in works on Albanian and Bulgarian history and in particular on nationalism in these countries. Unfortunately, the reader who looks with keen interest to

Mr. Zavalani's essay on Albanian nationalism and to Professor Pundeff's on Bulgarian, will be disappointed. These are nothing but brief political surveys and as such quite useful . . . Professor Zacek's brief contribution in character, yet unlike the previously noted two essays his is concerned with the history of political nationalism and not just with political history. His survey is certainly rich in factual information. Professor Zydis' longer chapter on Greek nationalism is more strongly steeped in intellectual history and offers much valuable information to the Western reader. Professor Fischer-Galati attempts in a brief essay on "Romanian Nationalism" to do equal justice to political, economic, and cultural factors. His task is complicated by the fact that he has to deal with his problem in the frame of different political units. The same is true for Professor Lederer's "Nationalism and the Yugoslavs." . . .

Unquestionably, the four essays by Zacek, Zydis, Fischer-Galati, and Lederer, each in its own way, make a contribution to their subject; but the two best studies are the ones by Professor Barany, "Hungary: from Aristocratic to Proletarian Nationalism" and Peter Brock, "Polish Nationalism." What distinguishes these two essays is that they put chief emphasis where it belongs, namely on the evolution of ideologies in a broad social frame. They do so, each in a different way, in a comparative, critical manner . . .

All things considered, the reader of the eight essays will have great difficulty in finding even a loose common pattern of nationalism in Eastern Europe which Professor Sugar's challenging introduction invites the authors to pursue further. Yet, he will get much information and some stimulating suggestions as well, altogether not a bad bargain.

Robert A. Kann (Rutgers University) *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, Vol. I. No. 1 (Fall 1973).

Ausztria és a Magyarországi Tanácsköztársaság, [Austria and the Hungarian Republic of Councils]. By Sándorné Gábor, [Mrs. Sándor Gábor] Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1969. Pp. 301.

Hungary's 400-year association with Austria provoked continual dissension between the two peoples. At the end of the Great War, when the two countries finally emerged as sovereign powers, the old antagonisms continued unabated. The newly proclaimed Socialist sister republics paid only grudging lip service to Socialist unity and solidarity. Far from supporting one another, the two Social Democra-

tic regimes became immediately embroiled in a bitter struggle for the possession of West Hungary (Burgenland), a predominantly German speaking region belonging to Hungary. The controversy intensified when in March 1919, Hungary's Social Democratic and Communist Parties merged, and thus strengthened Bela Kun's Marxist regime rode to power in Hungary. While professing friendship for Hungary's working classes, Austria's Socialists colluded with the Entente to appropriate West Hungary. Not to be outdone, the Hungarian Marxists retaliated by plotting to overthrow Austrian Social Democracy and impose a Marxist regime on their troublesome neighbour. Gabor's work is devoted to the explication of these complex events . . .

The problems with Gabor's work—and unfortunately several serious flaws do exist—lie elsewhere. The work is thorough and exhaustive to a fault; so much so in fact that the themes frequently disappear in a welter of detail and marginalia . . . The author has also tended to make sweeping generalizations without the benefit of evidence . . .

Gabor's topic is important, her research fairly thorough, her presentation unfortunately chaotic and out of focus. The author ought to approach the text with red pencil and scissors in hand, and attempt to rectify the serious organizational and interpretive flaws of what could otherwise have been a valuable monograph.

Thomas Spira (University of Prince Edward Island), *East European Quarterly*, Vol. VIII, No. 2 (summer 1974).

Revolution in Perspective Essays on the Hungarian Soviet Republic. Edited by Andrew C. Janos and William B. Slottman. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California, 1971. Pp. 181.

Revolution in Perspective is the edited work that grew out of a conference held in March, 1969 at the University of California at Berkeley commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. Its editors are both professors at Berkeley and the slick publication of the University of California press provides an excellent little volume for readers interested in the Hungarian communist movement in particular and in Hungarian history in general.

The content of the volume is highly uneven and deals with issues which are extremely varied. By far the best two essays are written by Professor Janos, the first dealing with the decline of oligarchy from the Compromise of 1867 to the end of World War 1, and the second dealing with the agrarian opposition present at the National Congress

of Soviets during the 133 day existence of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. The first article deserves special mention . . . Professor Janos' analysis of the change that takes place in the pattern of the ruling classes is perhaps the best documented study of the social change in Hungary during the fifty years of the Dual Monarchy. His conclusion, that it was the "breakdown of communication that allowed the ascendance of new elites who were neither more humane, nor more democratic than the gentry, but were more skillful in manipulating the symbols of modern politics," (p. 60) sums up the essay as the best single study of those fifty years.

Peter Kenez's article on "Coalition Politics in the Hungarian Soviet Republic" challenges the notion that the Hungarian Soviet Republic was solely a Communist organized and led affair. He also takes issue with the view that Communists bear the whole responsibility for the failures of that era. Although this contention is debated by many historians, it seems to this reviewer that Kenez's viewpoint is the only interpretation uncolored by historical bias. In March, 1919 the ideological distinctions between Hungarian Communists and Socialists were less exaggerated than they are today . . .

Keith Hitchens' article on the Rumanian Socialists and their contact with the Hungarian Soviet Republic as well as the influence of the Kun regime on Rumanian socialism also as a solid piece of historical research. His article points out the split in the Rumanian socialist movement, torn between their nationalistic attachment to Rumania and their Communist attachment to Moscow. Given the historical circumstances and the "strong national feeling and belief that socialism could develop most effectively within the framework of the national state," (p. 144) there was really nothing that the Hungarian Communists could do to create closer contact with Rumanians in general and Rumanian Communists in particular . . .

Professor Slottman's article dealing with the attitude of some Viennese intellectuals (the *Geistesaristokraten*) toward Hungary and—peripherally—toward the Hungarian Soviet Republic is an entertaining essay . . .

The final brief statement by Richard Lowenthal on the Hungarian Soviet Republic and international communism is a melange of personal analysis interspersed with ideas already exploited elsewhere . . .

Ivan Volgyes (University of Nebraska), *East European Quarterly*, Vol. VII, No. 3 (Fall 1973).

Hungary in Revolution, 1918-19; nine essays. Edited by Ivan Volgyes. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971. Pp. X, 219.

Perhaps because of the delays our university presses are subject to, *Hungary in Revolution* missed out on the fiftieth anniversary of the "Kun regime" by about two years. No matter, for . . . the volume remains a distinguished scholarly contribution, whether timely or not. The nine authors who have contributed an essay each to the work are already known in the field of recent Hungarian or recent Central European history, and this volume can only enhance their reputation.

Most of the essays are based on documents and many provide an unusual, if not altogether unique, interpretation of these. We learn from the essay by Eva Balogh that the Hungarian leaders were not eager to help establish an independent Slovak Soviet Republic, and that there was confusion in Slovakia as well as in Hungary regarding the nature of the relationship between those two "Soviet" regimes. Balogh's assertion finds indirect confirmation in Rudolph Tokes' brief biography of Bela Kun (the last essay) in which he notes that, in his youth at least, the Transylvanian Kun was something of a Hungarian cultural chauvinist. According to Alfred D. Low, the Great Powers, although more than a bit shaken by the events in Hungary, demonstrated a great deal of weakness (France included), if not outright moderation, in handling the Hungarian situation—a point of view not generally shared by either Hungarian nationalist or Hungarian Marxist historians . . .

What remains unexplained is why the work has taken the form of a cooperative venture, especially since the essays amount to a more or less complete and chronologically ordered account of the "Kun regime" and the Karolyi regime preceding it. Without meaning to deprecate some original and distinguished contributions, I am convinced that Ivan Volgyes . . . could have written the work by himself; in fact, he probably should have, if only to avoid repetitions and provide a more continuous narrative.

But the overall note of my evaluation is that the work is a worthwhile contribution . . .

Mario Fenyo (Universidad Catolica de Puerto Rico), *East European Quarterly*, Vol. VII, No. 1 (Spring 1973).

Magyarország külpolitikája 1919-1945 [Hungary's Foreign Policy, 1919-1945]. By Gyula Juhász. Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiado, 1969, Pp. 374.

One of the main tasks Hungarian Marxist historians have set for themselves has been a thorough investigation of Hungarian foreign relations during the interwar period. Though an initial motivation may have been the desire to discredit the "Horthy regime," the result has been the appearance since the early 1960's of a noteworthy series of scholarly monographs covering many important topics from the peace settlement to the German occupation . . . This preliminary work has been done, the opportunity was present for the writing of a scholarly survey of Hungarian diplomacy in this period. Gyula Juhász has undertaken this assignment, and this resulting volume, the only one of its kind in any language, is a admirable and valuable contribution to the study of recent Hungarian history.

Juhász, the author of a previous study dealing with Hungarian foreign policy under Pál Teleki, has blended secondary and archival material to present a skillfully balanced account of the intricacies of Hungary's interwar diplomatic history. His thesis is that Hungary was thrust into the ultimately disastrous cooperation with Hitler's Germany by two factors: the unceasing quest for integral revision of the Treaty of Trianon and the need for the counterrevolutionary government to seek ideologically compatible allies. The only diplomatic constellation which would serve these purposes, as Hungarian leaders from Bethlen to Teleki came to discover, was one in which Hungary maintained firm ties with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. These latter two states, like Hungary, were intent on disrupting the peace settlement, and were far more likely than the Western Powers to sanction territorial revision for Hungary . . .

Juhász is at his best in describing the tangled negotiations for a separate peace in 1943 and 1944, the frustrations of the Teleki period, and the attitude of the Great Powers during the peace settlement after World War 1 . . . Somewhat weaker is the author's treatment of the crisis years of the 1930s. The subtle and complex policy of Kálmán Kánya, Foreign Minister from 1933 to 1938, is not properly examined, and the critical role of the Hungarian military in the formulation of foreign policy is not mentioned . . .

These minor criticisms notwithstanding, Professor Juhász is to be congratulated for his mastering of the relevant primary and secondary materials in at least five languages and his skillful weaving of this material into a balanced and readable narrative. The work is an important contribution to modern East European history and deserves to rank high on the list of books awaiting translation into a Western language.

Thomas L. Sakmyster (University of Cincinnati), *East European Quarterly*, Vol. VI, No. 3 (September 1972).

Hitler, Horthy, and Hungary: German-Hungarian Relations, 1941-44. By Mario D. Fenyo. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1972. Pp. xii + 279.

Felicitous language, clarity of style, and lucid logic make this a delight to read. The author has amassed and digested into a well-organized study all the available material. With admirable thoroughness he has checked and rechecked his data in all that has recently been published and in the archives of Hungary and abroad, and he has worked them into a fluent and coherent entity.

His extensive dependence on secondary sources currently in print in Hungary, however, poses a serious and important question. How far should such an approach be taken? It must be acknowledged that historical works produced in Hungary are generally scholarly, rich in variety, and remarkably objective. The more distant the subject is in time, the more evident these qualities are, but the Marxist-Leninist line makes it inevitable that these characteristics become weaker the nearer the subject is to the present time. Treating the Horthy regime academically is simply not tolerated; it has to be viewed mostly from an ideological standpoint. Hungarian works on it have to be used with great caution. Yet Fenyo writes that according to a "Hungarian legal publication," the Hungarian state was "monarchical and Fascist" (p. 9). On this and other occasions the author fails to alert the reader to the partisan nature of such value judgments. He himself terms the Horthy regime "semi-feudal" or "outright feudal" (p. 113). But such a statement surely fails as academic synthesis . . .

Bela K. Kiraly (Brooklyn College and Columbia University), *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (December 1973).

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- Agnes Huszar Vardy. *A Study in Austrian Romanticism: Hungarian Influences in Lenau's Poetry*. Buffalo, New York: Hungarian Cultural Foundation, 1974.
- Steven Bela Vardy. *Hungarian Historiography and the Geistesgeschichte School*. Cleveland, Ohio, Arpad Academy, 1974.
- For a list of further books, mainly verse, prose and fiction, please contact the editor.