

Review of Reviews

(Abstracts)

Jewish Nobles and Geniuses in Modern Hungary. By William O. McCagg, Jr. East European Monographs III. Distributed by Columbia University Press, New York, 1972. 245 pp.

The strange title of this book does not do justice to a most remarkable work. It offers in the first place a case study of the evolution of a financial-industrial and intellectual elite which in the course of little more than two generations achieved spectacular success and yet failed by this very achievement to shed its minority character in Hungarian public life. In demonstrating this process Professor McCagg traces characteristic features of social development in Hungary between 1848 and 1918 which set conditions there aside from those in other Habsburg lands. Yet the author offers even more, namely patterns of social developments of specific groups in transition from a predominantly agrarian to a capitalistic economic structure. The book offers indeed as much to the student in the field of East Central European social history as to the sociologist.

Basically the author perceives three main causes in the evolution of Jewish co-dominance in the capitalistic structure and leadership in intellectual activities of Hungarian society: a social issue embedded in changes in 19th century social structure; a psychological issue reflected in the urge of a minority to become more like the majority and in doing so over-reaching itself; and finally a political one. This last factor means that in the deep constitutional crisis in Hungary from 1903 to 1906 the forces of old with the support of the king-emperor gained the upper hand. The hope for a restructuring of Hungarian society in terms of greater social justice and a fair compromise with the suppressed national groups went by the board. This failure frustrated and disillusioned the particularly gifted young people who were to a substantial part of Jewish extraction. Many of them moved from participation in the narrow ruts of Hungarian social life to a wider one in the fields of internationally recognized natural sciences. The Kármán, Wigner, Teller, Szillard, von Neumann and their like shifted, in part even without specific intention, from the objective of social reform at home to hoped-for contributions to the liberal world of the West. Natural sciences were the main currency in which the fees

for migration were to be paid, and the social sciences and humanities, exemplified by the achievements of men like Jászi, Lukacs, K. Mannheim, often followed the same track

One does not have to agree with all of McCragg's propositions; in particular one might perceive some as stronger than others. The psychological factor, for instance, may be rated somewhat higher and the political one lower than the author sees them

Simply by the wealth of new material presented, by the originality of the topic and the brilliance of the author's accomplishment I would rate this book higher than any other in the field of East Central European history that has come to my attention in several years.

Robert A. Kann (Rutgers University), *Canadian Journal of History*, Vol. IX, No. 2, (August 1974).

Guide to Hungarian Studies. By Elemer Bako. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1973. 2 vols. XV, 1218 pp.

This massive two-volume work is an important contribution to bibliographical research on Hungary. It contains 4,426 entries, some annotated, culled from a wide range of sources

The bibliography is divided into twenty chapters covering such diverse fields as statistical research, geography, demography, history and historiography, constitution and legislation, government and politics, social life and institutions, economics, religion and church affairs, Hungarian language and literature, fine arts, education, scientific research, and press and publishing. The chapter entitled "General Works" includes general bibliographies, catalogues, lists, encyclopedias, reference guides, and dictionaries.

In spite of its seemingly well-organized format, however, this bibliography is an obstacle course for the researcher. One problem is that Mr. Bako distinguishes only four categories within each chapter: "Special Reference Works," "Journals and Monographic Series," "Monographs," and "Articles and Minor Publications." Within these categories the arrangement is strictly alphabetical. As a result, the researcher interested in a specific period or topic must scan every entry in the chapter.

Another problem is that the distinctions supposedly made by the chapter headings are themselves blurred. For example, a bibliography of the 1956 Hungarian revolution by I. Halász de Béky is included in the chapter on history while an article entitled "The Literature of the

Hungarian Revolution: A Bibliographical Survey" written by G. Vissi is listed in the chapter on government and politics.

The confusion created by overlapping categories is further aggravated by the existence of a chapter on Hungarians abroad. Such a category is certainly justified . . . But "Hungarians Abroad" is not what one expects. In an unfortunate move, Mr. Bako decided to list under this heading not only materials related to Hungarian emigres but also all historical works pertaining to those territories which Hungary lost after World War I. For instance, one finds such entries as Transylvania's relations with England from 1526 to 1711; Hungary's intellectual contacts with the Southern Slavs, beginning with the Middle Ages; the history of the stage arts in Arad between 1774 and 1889; and the history of the teachers' lyceum in Kassa, 1747-1904 . . .

This bibliography is selective. Mr. Bako's aim was to be representative rather than exhaustive . . . Moreover, it includes only those studies which appeared before 1965. Hence this volume provides merely an introduction to the vast material on Hungary and does not replace other bibliographies in the field.

Despite its flaws, Mr. Bako's *Guide to Hungarian Studies* is a much-needed reference work. It is an important publication which every library should have.

Eva S. Balogh (Yale University), *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, Vol. XVII, No. 1, (Spring 1975).

Parteien und Reichstagswahlen in Ungarn 1848-1892. By Adalbert Toth. Munchen: R. Oldenburg Verlag, 1973.

In Hungary, centuries-long domination by Austria precluded a meaningful participation in national and international affairs. Yet this dependence co-existed with a stubborn perseverance of provincial autonomy in which legalistic hairsplitting and highly personalized and passionate politicking made up for the lack of decision-making opportunities on the national and foreign policy levels. The 1867 Compromise—equal partnership with Austria—did not radically alter that mentality; on the contrary, the constitutional issue of whether to tighten or loosen ties with Austria perpetuated and deepened the national proclivity for endless legalistic arguments and further inflamed political passions, which were still highly personal and frequently parochial. The well-known saying that "politics is the art of the possible" reflects the kind of down-to-earth and pragmatic approach to politics, characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon world. Politics in post-1848 Hungary, on the other hand, had retained much of the

emotional content of past history, continuing to be the art of the desirable rather than the art of the possible.

Such a framework does not easily lend itself to a systematic and rigorous classification. The merit of Dr. Adalbert Toth's work lies precisely in the author's successful attempt to apply such a treatment to the fluid and often confusing picture of Hungarian party politics and elections from 1848 to 1892

All in all, his book is a product of remarkable scholarship, a pioneering study which will undoubtedly become an indispensable reference work for anyone interested in that period of Hungarian history. Appropriately, this review should be concluded with the wish that Dr. Toth will continue his research and writing in this field and carry the story of Hungarian political parties and elections beyond 1892.

Gabor Vermes (Rutgers University, Newark), *East European Quarterly*, Vol. IX, No. 2 (Summer 1975).

Hungary: A Century of Economic Development. By I.T. Berend and G. Ranki. David and Charles, Ltd., Great Britain, 1974. Pp. 263.

The process of Hungarian economic development as Professors Berend and Ranki relate has been the slow metamorphosis of the country from a predominantly agricultural society to one in which industry has the foremost position. The authors conclude the industrialization of the country has been the logical outcome of an inevitable process, periodically marked by state intervention which culminated in the socialist transformation of Hungary. However, more realistically the economic development that did occur in Hungary should be viewed as the role to which the economy was assigned as the country aligned with different major powers. First as part of the Hapsburg Empire, then its gradual absorption into the German sphere of influence and finally its position in the Soviet dominated CMEA

The foundations for the industrialization of the country centers around the years of the *Ausgleich*. At this time foreign banks and financial groups invested heavily in Hungary providing the necessary capital accumulation for an economic "take-off". At the same time the state supported industrialization through the state owned railroads and related heavy industry

The dominant feature of the Hungarian economy has been its seriously one-sided character. Initially it was an agricultural society and when industrialization began, the emphasis was on heavy

industry rather than light industry. This imbalance was reflected in the fact that Hungary exported raw agricultural products and imported finished goods for internal consumption. By the end of the Hapsburg period the Hungarian economy had undergone substantial changes, but was not basically transformed, as many static relationships continued to persist. There remained the inherent weakness of the economy and its dependency on exporting agricultural goods. This was further aggravated at the end of World War I when Hungary, as a result of the territorial losses separated her industries from their sources of raw materials.

During the post-war decade state intervention created the potential for a broadening of the domestic market and general economic expansion. Simultaneously, the commitment of the western countries to further prevent the penetration of socialism into Eastern Europe led them to extend financial credits to Hungary. This assistance, accepted at high rates of interest and poorly used, created the necessity of drafting additional loans resulting once more in the dependency of the country on foreign credits and powerless in terms of western economic penetration. The depression and collapse of the creditor nations brought about the economic alignment of Hungary and Germany

In the inter-war period there remained no solution to the major social issue, that of land reform. Some modernization of agriculture had taken place but this was primarily on the large estates and never reached the small peasant holding which still remained a dominant force in agriculture

The emergence of a war economy in the later part of the thirties greatly improved the economic situation of the country but in actual fact, this was unrealistic for such a falsely inflated economic structure could not continue indefinitely. Due to Germany's mounting indebtedness economic conditions worsened and the final months of the war were disastrous. The authors estimate that forty percent of the nation's wealth was lost directly from the transporting of industrial and agricultural goods to Germany and damage from the war. Professors Berend and Ranki argue that the losses to Germany and severe war damage resulted in an economic collapse of the country but neglect to mention the tremendous war preparations that were exacted by the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and other countries.

As a result of the successful socialist revolution, the Hungarian economy became modeled on that of the Soviet Union. The introduction of planned measures resulted not in the spectacular economic growth that was envisioned but did bring about a general improvement in the overall economic situation. Utilizing antiquated methods, and greatly expanded labor force caused by the mechanization of agri-

culture, high industrial output was achieved. Quality was inferior and the goods were not competitive with those produced in the West or the more industrially advanced socialist countries. By the 1960's Hungarian exports had changed from agricultural to finished industrial goods and trade was carried on primarily with other socialist countries according to planned measures. Exports to the West consisted of agricultural products for the most part.

The authors disregard the relationship of the Soviet Union in the Hungarian economy and CMEA which dominates the inter-socialist export trade. They offer no justifications for the changes in agricultural policies since World War II and the fact that the producers' co-operatives have been the least successful aspect of the Hungarian economy. Hungary, once the breadbasket for empires, is now in the position of having to import agricultural goods

James V. Fitzgerald, Jr. (University of Colorado), *East European Quarterly*, Vol. IX, No. 2 (Summer 1975).

The Pattern of Reform in Hungary: A Political, Economic and Cultural Analysis. By William F. Robinson. New York, Washington and London: Praeger Publishers, 1973. Pp. 468.

As its title implies, Robinson's work is not history in the ordinary sense but an examination of Hungary's fluctuating trends of economic, political, social, and cultural reform during the past two decades. The author, a political scientist and a senior analyst for Radio Free Europe, has attempted to trace the antecedents of reform, depict its character, and assess its ramifications within the framework of Marxist authoritarianism and the West's technological revolution. The interplay between the two hostile systems constitutes the leitmotif for Robinson's investigation.

The book deals with a great variety of crucial issues arising from Hungary's quest for a *détante* both with domestic and foreign detractors. Among other things, Hungary's Communist regime had to reconcile Marxist dogma with the realities of life in the West which, contrary to somber predictions had grown extremely productive and prosperous. Until recently, the Marxist had dismissed the computerized technological revolution—the source of all this affluence—as a decadent bourgeois phenomenon. More recently, however as Robinson recounts, spectacular advancements in all walks of life in the capitalist countries had greatly impressed the Hungarians. They suddenly became enthusiastic champions of the scientific revolution they had formerly despised

Despite certain shortcomings Robinson's book is a welcome addition to the current literary harvest on East European Marxist problems. Unfortunately, the author is not always objective. At times he criticizes Party policies on the basis of personal bias, at other times—and this is when he is at his best—Robinson is a dispassionate observer. For references the author has regrettably chosen predominantly non-scholarly Hungarian sources and Radio Free Europe staff reports. Robinson would have been well advised to consult other sources as well, as to commit his final draft to scholarly scrutiny. Still, the author's style is excellent, his organization lucid, his prose interesting and concise . . .

Thomas Spira (University of Prince Edward Island), *East European Quarterly*, Vol. VIII, No. 1 (March 1974).