

# The Canadian-American

# REVIEW

## of Hungarian Studies

Man's Biological Future in Hungarian  
Utopian Literature

GEORGE BISZTRAY

Praise the Lord! Albert Szenczi Molnár,  
1574-1633

ANDREW HARSANYI

The Lyrical Poetry of Sándor Petőfi

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**Review Articles:**

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(continued on page 68)

## Man's Biological Future in Hungarian Utopian Literature\*

George Biztray

A fairly recent, unofficial report of the National Academy of Sciences concludes the survey of the present state of biology with this judgment:

"When one day man accepts responsibility for his acknowledged power to control his own genetic destiny, the choice between plans must be based on value judgments. When he begins to use the power to control his own evolution, man must clearly understand the values towards whose realization he is to strive."<sup>1</sup>

In other words: For what purpose life, present or future? For what purpose a new breed of man?

Right now, these still are uncomfortable questions. None of the existing social models should dare claim that it could serve as ideal for the future generations. The Nazis tried to shape genetics so that it corresponded to their ideology. Western scientists preferred to stay on grounds which they could long defend as purely speculative and non-political. A certain "scientist" named H.J. Muller, for instance, recommended freezing the sperms of famous males to be used by lucky females in the future.<sup>2</sup> In less future-oriented psycho-medical practice, like the changing of human behavior and world outlook by methods ranging from lobotomy to brain washing, our scientific age has produced more outstanding results than in planning for the future.

Though man's natural existence is inseparable from the social formations and technological conditions in which he lives, his physical constitution seems to have attracted the attention of utopian writers all through the ages. The unchangeability of nature has been a traditional commonplace in Western culture, yet experience, and later Darwinism, pointed out how man-created culture significantly influenced man's very natural essence too.

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\*This paper is developed from a lecture given in July 1974 at the annual conference of the Science Fiction Research Association in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The critical debate on Darwinism, especially, had scores of utopian implications, and the self-assigned prophets like Sumner and Ward, Engels and Thomas Huxley, all had some biological program for the future. Opponents of scientific philosophies also adhered occasionally to utopian ideas, as in the case of Nietzsche. Biological utopias (sometimes also called "anthropological utopias") entered late into Western European literatures, the finest and bitterest being Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and *Ape and Essence*.

It is remarkable how much importance Eastern European writers have assigned to the bio-future of man. Technological utopias of the scope of Jules Verne are scarce, perhaps because of the relatively late industrialization of the East-Central European countries. It was rather the changeability of the organism that most concerned the 19th and 20th century writers from these countries. This interest was primarily not scientific, however: the integrity of the human constitution, the mental freedom of thought and action, were of equal concern for these writers.

In this paper, four fantastic-utopian works, or parts of works, from Hungary will be analyzed as models of East-Central European writers' reactions to the development of biology, and particularly anthropology, neurology, and behavioral science. The works cover the period from 1860 to the eve of World War II.

"Model" is a term well known from general communication theory, still relatively little used in literary scholarship. Yet it seems to serve our purpose effectively. If we investigate the causes and functions underlying the Hungarian utopian imagination, we find more than isolated, individual "examples" in the four books analyzed. Changing as the historical conditions were, the four works nevertheless represent a consistent and continuous preoccupation with man's future in the perspective of his own knowledge and his created "second nature." In the summary, we shall see how the considered Hungarian utopian works correspond to a generalized definition of the model.

—2—

Ten years after Austria and Russia defeated the Hungarian revolution of 1848-49, a patriot and playwright-nobleman, Imre Madách, sat down to summarize a dark decade in an allegorical work. The outcome was *The Tragedy of Man* (*Az ember tragédiája*), an extremely problematic cosmic drama which has since then been frequently and unjustly identified as a paraphrase of Goethe's *Faust*. Though much

less known abroad than is deserved or desirable, Madách's "*Tragedy*" still exists in over half a dozen different English translations.<sup>3</sup>

In the drama, Lucifer guides Adam through different periods of human history up to Madách's age and beyond. There are fifteen scenes in the tragedy, of which the twelfth is a utopian one. The age which the writer imagines will follow the 19th century knows no nations, the world is united under the rule of science and reason. Those species of organic nature which did not serve human needs have been extinguished, the rest tamed and exploited. Society is molded in phalanxes in which, similar to an ant-heap, individuals have no aspirations of their own, only socially assigned roles. Those who, like a new Luther, Plato, or Michelangelo, revolt against their slavery, must suffer humiliating punishment.

Madách's dramatic scene is clearly an early protest against the utopian socialist equalitarianism of Charles Fourier. Also, it has been customary to concentrate the attention on Madách's attitude toward the socio-political aspects of utopian or naive socialism. As early as 1862 the author of the "*Tragedy*" had to defend himself against the respected progressive critic János Erdélyi who reproached him for representing the socialist ideals unfairly. Since then, the political aspect of the phalanx-scene has been the focus of interest, and literary historians (including Georg Lukács in his Madách-essay of 1955)<sup>4</sup> speculate endlessly whether Madách was "reactionary" or "progressive" in his view of the future.

We suggest another approach to the utopian scene: an approach based on Madách's apparent view of the advance of biological sciences in the future. This critique of the advance and application of sciences appears mostly in a final and concentrated episode in which we witness the social interference with the spontaneous perpetuation of the human race and with the potential will of the individuals. Eve appears as young mother with her newborn baby. Scientists inspect this baby and another one, and decide that, judging from the shape of their skulls, one shall be raised to become a doctor, the other a shepherd. The babies are instantly separated from their mothers. Eve protests violently: however, she is pronounced ready for a new mate. Adam claims her, but the doctor of the phalanx is against the match: two unstable individuals like Adam and Eve would beget psychotic, hysterical descendants, who could not adjust themselves to a society of reason. When Adam hears that love is no longer a relevant factor, he becomes so outraged that only Lucifer's magic intervention can save him from bedlam.

What concerns us in Madách's utopian vision is not so much his view of socialization and mass-man (in which he shows some similarity to J.S. Mill's ideas), but rather, his critique of scientific marriage planning and professional counseling. He sees the real danger not in romantic love or natural child raising, but in a Lamarckian determinism which decides human fates by using comparative anthropological and genetic charts. Madách believes that man is to have the freedom to live in a certain way he chooses for himself because of, or even in spite of, his innate biological setup. Consequently, he cannot accept science as an antidote for the risks this freedom implies.

—3—

Madách's time was transitory, however, and later decades of the 19th century witnessed a more positive view of science and technology among writers. The Hungarian Mór Jókai was a product of the period after 1864, when the constitutionalist-liberal middle class and nobility made peace with each other and with Austria. It was no longer a post-revolutionary pessimism, but rather a conformistic wish for cooperation with Big Brother Austria, that motivated his writings.

Jókai has always been extremely popular in his country. Also, he has been widely translated, especially in his lifetime and in the earlier decades of our century, even into quite esoteric and improbable languages (such as Armenian, Chinese, Estonian and Ruthenian). The enormous success of this skillful storyteller has made something of an idol of him. Jókai had a vivid imagination which often created fantastic or utopian figures, situations, or whole works. Notable of these is *A Novel About The Next Century* (*A jövő század regénye*, 1872-74). In this work, Jókai described the "Home State" of the future which, possessing the secret of aviation, forces the world into disarmament. When the secret is broken and the arch-enemy (NB: Russia!) also builds airplanes, a challenge of air war shows the absurdity of the armed race, and the "Home State" develops into a "Union of States", based on eternal peace and global cooperation.

*A Novel About The Next Century* is about a political and technical utopia, yet it discusses little of the anthropological aspects of rapid historical changes. Another later novel of Jókai, however, opened future vistas for changing and controlling the individual, using a contemporary motif for the kernel of its plot.

In 1889, Jókai published the notably inferior novel, *The Soul Shaper* (*A lélekidomár*). Though unsuccessful by any aesthetic standard, this work concerns us because of the description of its central



hero, a certain Lándory. This mysterious person was supposedly modelled after one of the police officers who played a key part in rolling up the widespread net or robbers and fences covering the Hungarian Flatlands a hundred years ago.

The exact identity of Lándory is impossible to verify. It has been customary to find analogies between him and a count Gedeon Ráday, the royal commissioner who led the campaign against the outlaws. Because of Ráday's status and social position, however, it might be suspected that rather one of his officers, for instance an obscure investigator called Laucsik, might have served as a more concrete example for Jókai than did the count.

In Jókai's characterization, this Lándory had an almost supernatural influence on the captured outlaws. Instead of the traditional physical pressure, he used his psychological capacities to make the suspect speak.

Jókai dwells on Lándory's interrogating methods only in one chapter of the book, but with full admiration. His hero plays on the hidden emotions and aspirations of the criminals. In some cases, Lándory succeeds in making the suspect list his crimes in order to prove that he has deserved his dreadful reputation. At other times, he confronts the murderer with his victim in some macabre form, so that the criminal's fear and conscience are awakened. His green eyes put the suspects in a semi-hypnotic state, from which they awake sweating, trembling, and crying. He frequently interrogates at night, and the faces of those arrested for examination are covered with masks, so that they don't recognize each other.

Aside from the obvious influence of the pseudo-psychologism of Victor Hugo and Sue, relevant parts of Jókai's novel are historically true and convincing records of early occurrences of policy techniques which we now call collectively "brainwashing." It is not so much Jókai's dangerously naive approach to such techniques as it is the fact that the writer reflected these phenomena at such an early stage of their development, that makes *The Soul Shaper* important to discuss as a preface to the world of *The Gulag Archipelago* and *A Clockwork Orange*.

—4—

In the decadent-symbolistic atmosphere around the turn of the century, scientific fantasies and utopias were infrequent, both in Eastern and in Western European literatures. After the cataclysm of World War I, however, they re-appeared in ample numbers. Among

the Hungarian writers, it is Frigyes Karinthy's activity that is relevant to our topic.

Karinthy belongs to those not-yet-discovered geniuses of world literature whose fantasy products, unlike those of Verne and Jókai, were often too philosophical to be easily consumed. In two fantastic books, he continued Gulliver's travels in modern setting. In *Voyage to Faremido* (Utazás Faremidóba, 1916), Gulliver gets to the planet of intelligent and perfect self-programmed robots; in *Capillaria* (1921), he sinks to the bottom of the sea to find there a world of amazons who enslave, exploit and, indeed, devour the degenerate, dwarf-size males<sup>5</sup>. This latter novel, particularly, can be regarded as a congenial early literary contribution to Alister Hardy's hypothesis about the aquatic-feminine origin of mankind.<sup>6</sup>

Karinthy wrote a drama, *Tomorrow Morning* (Holnap reggel, 1916), and a documentary novel, *A Journey Around My Skull* (Utazás a koponyám körül, 1937) about the dimensions and perspectives of neurology. His drama is plainly bad by any standard; his novel, however, is a masterpiece, available also in English translation.<sup>7</sup>

The drama, *Tomorrow Morning*, centers around the private conflicts of a dangerous genius, an engineer who invented a winged remote-control rocket which can easily be used for military purposes. In order to prove to his estranged, eccentric, thrill-hunting wife that he has no fear, he must take the challenge of flying the rocket on its test-flight as a kind of kamikaze-pilot. His surviving the test-flight would mean, however, his failure as an engineer. Karinthy's attempt to make this nonsensical paradox believable is pathetically unconvincing. The point is, however, that the hero is afraid. For better or worse, he happens to run into a mysterious Finnish neurologist, a certain Irjö (=Yrjö?) Olson who has found the way to extinguish the fear of death in man through a simple operation. The engineer chooses to undergo this operation, flies the plane the next day only to discover that the explosive mechanism is faulty, and thus surviving the flight, he starts a new life free from his earlier obsessions with his wife and with fame.

Almost twenty years after the play was written, a much less mystical, indeed prosaic, still genuinely skillful Scandinavian medical wizard, Herbert Olivecrona carried out a long and complicated operation on Karinthy himself. He removed an egg-sized tumor from the writer's brain. The circumstances of this operation form the content of *A Journey Around My Skull*.

Karinthy as a writer deals with three possible levels of mental existence. One is the so-called "normal" state of the human mind. The

other is the short-circuited mind, implying the wide variety of mental illnesses. In-between the two is the physical deformation: brain tumor. Still comprehensible, visible, and operable, the tumor can nevertheless drive the individual to the verge of insanity. Karinthy does not go so far as to even mention the possibility of a *grand guignol* like a certain Danish playwright does, who describes how a man tortured by brain tumor kills and decapitates his wife.<sup>8</sup> Yet Karinthy too has pathological complaints, such as schizophrenic visual and hallucinative disorders, maddening headaches, giddiness and identity crises.

Both in the drama and in the documentary account, the medical scientist appears as a powerful manipulator of the physical organism of another individual. Doctor Olson compares the human body to a machine without instructions, and the history of medicine to thousands of years spent in trying to figure out how the machine works. In the novel, the author repeatedly looks at Olivecrona as one kind of a Wizard of Oz, in the process of detecting and fixing up a short-circuit in an endless system of wires (that is, neurons). In the dizziness of the operation, there is either an interaction between doctor and patient in the infrasensory sphere, or, alternately, a complete transposition of the consciousness of the writer to the doctor and vice versa. Karinthy has no doubts about Olivecrona; the doctor appears as healer. Yet the ethical responsibility of the manipulator is implicit: opening up the skull, connecting and disconnecting of nerves—for what purpose?

—5—

Three writers from a small East-Central European country have stated their opinion on the possibilities of shaping or influencing man. What is common and what is different in these writers?

At the first sight, dissimilarities seem to dominate. Considering the value judgment our writers pass on the future, we find that Madách is more pessimistic than either Jókai or Karinthy. Also, it is only Madách's single dramatic scene which is undisputably put in the future; the other works take place in the (fantastic) present, but indicate that the unique events they describe will be more universal and accepted in the future. This tendency to tear down the barriers between present and future is itself characteristic of Thomas More's *Utopia*. Naturally, current scientific influences give a distinct feature to each of the works discussed. Madách might have known Malthus' idea of family planning, with its naive genetic implications. Hypnosis always fascinated Jókai, and the 18th century Mesmer was one of his

awful idols. Karinthy lived on the eve of the 20th century revolution in surgery when taboo organs (like the brain or the heart) became operational objects, and when transplanting gradually became a reality.

At least as important as the differences are the similarities among the works, however. All three writers regard the dividing lines between organic non-conscious and organic conscious nature as extremely shaky. They remind us to take good care of man's greatest property: his ethic feeling. The responsibility of professionals is consistently spelled out.

The general understanding of the predominantly biological (or anthropological) character of the Hungarian utopias would be difficult, however, with the application of conventional analytical techniques only. In the introduction it has been suggested that the four works might be used as models in one way or another. Let us take a look at the essential characteristics of any model as we know these from information theory.

Quantitatively on the structural level, the model is a copy of a system in corresponding proportions. Qualitatively (functionally) defined, the model is a constructed system which reacts to certain inputs in the same way as does the original system. Furthermore, the model has an experimental character. It serves one research hypothesis or another. Consequently, there are no unique models; the individual interests and perception of their builders define their character.

Looking at the four Hungarian utopian works as possible models, we find a strongly authoritarian feature of leadership. The biological character of the utopias discussed results in leadership that is not assigned, but acquired, through specialized (as in Madách) or exceptional (as in Jókai or Karinthy) skills or knowledge. It is intellect, and not physical strength, that distinguishes the biological leadership of the future.

The consequence of biological planning and intellectual refinement appears as a new authoritarian trend, however. Knowledge is never represented as socially shared, but as a respected controlling force. Consequently, it becomes the privilege of a new aristocratic cast which is similar to the one we find in Hesse's *Magister Ludi* (Das Glasperlenspiel.) The methods and decisions of the new mandarins are surprisingly undisputed, by the other heroes or the masses (as in Madách), or by the author (as in Jókai). It is only Karinthy who hints significantly in *Tomorrow Morning* that the unstable geniuses of skill can be "used" by a cold-headed political super-elite.

The role and responsibility of the utopian scientist in the interpretation of the three Hungarian writers is, understandably, analogous with the historical conditions, too. The authoritarian, oppressive character of a functionalized, materialistic social structure is spelled out most prominently by Madách, who was writing in an age of absolutism. In Jókai, only criminals (who “deserve it”) are forced to undergo a socially beneficial brainwashing process. Finally, in Karinthy, the paranoid genius accepts a similarly “corrective” and socially desirable process by free choice, yielding to the humane and logical arguments of Doctor Olson. (Also, Karinthy himself “chose” the risky operation by his own free will—though his freedom was considerably limited by the fact that his only alternative was a slow, painful death.) At any rate, the comparison of the three individual “models” shows a development from conditions in which individual freedom and responsibility appeared as hopelessly lost, to circumstances in which these became realistic to consider.

The “experiments” the three Hungarian writers were involved in depend precisely on these changes in the social structure. Madách seems to probe especially into science and its relevance for Hungary. The general relationship of this country to Austria was analogous with a well-known colonial pattern insofar as a larger nation, claiming a higher civilization, imposed its standards on a smaller one. Experience shows that the result of such relationship is often a nationalistic rejection of whatever progressive feature the colonizing nation may have. (This aspect of the utopian tradition, its connection with nationalism, has been regrettably neglected by researchers. Gandhi’s plans for a future India, Swift’s veiled reference to the Anglo-Irish relationship and Ibsen’s parody, “Gynthiana,” are just a few of the writings relevant to mention here.)

Madách focuses on science as a possible foundation for a better age, and condemns it. In order to understand his attitude, we must keep in mind that by condemning a Western ideal of some scientific-equalitarian “paradise,” he also passes judgment on Austria and thereby performs a patriotic action.

Thirty years later, Jókai is no longer bothered by Austrification. Instead, he speculates on an ambitious cosmopolitan level. Hungary had been a downtrodden, semi-colonized country for centuries. Could she regain her ancient, respected status in Europe by coping with her own internal problems (*The Soul Shaper*)? If so, this country might fulfill a glorious world mission in the more distant future (*A Novel About The Next Century*). This truly ambitious speculation carries

Jókai to extremes, yet his utopian novels show a clearly sequential pattern in their hypotheses of Hungary's present and future. How a sudden awakening to a nation's potentials produces a missionary zeal which is reflected in utopian literature is a phenomenon clearly recognizable in the wave of American and Soviet Russian science fiction utopias of our century.

Again, 30-50 years pass, and Karinthy witnesses the emergence of international belligerence. Technology is slipping out of the control of unstable geniuses, and becomes a threat in the hands of power-hungry politicians. But science can help mankind, states Karinthy. Lobotomy can save man from his self-destructive frustration (*Tomorrow Morning*.) The same human knowledge which produces the means of universal destruction is capable of producing the remedy at the same time. Karinthy's *A Journey Around My Skull* is actually a corroboration of this thesis in the form of a personal documentation, seemingly without any utopian reference. As in Jókai, we find a consistent development pattern in Karinthy's utopian works. It is beyond our aspiration, however, to make Karinthy's numerous other utopias (about Faremido, Capillaria, etc.) correspond to this pattern. As in Jókai, in Karinthy too the contribution of small nations to the technological-scientific scene is spelled out—the engineering genius is Hungarian, his healer a Finn, Olivecrona a Swede.

The involvement of the discussion of concrete historical and geographical determinants in the observation of particular utopian works does not exclude the possibility of looking at these works as being universally interesting and relevant. Nor does such method dim the main preoccupation, the biological perspective. Rather, the building of models should further explain on a genetic level both the changing value of science in a set of literary works and the potential supra-national appeal of these works.

The history of its utopian literature is an unwritten chapter of the culture of Hungary. (Nor have the utopian traditions of other East-Central European countries been ever studied—certainly not comparatively.) Consequently, the fairly well established classifications and terms generally used by Western critics of utopian literature are also missing in Hungary. To some, it might even seem ludicrous to think of this small, technologically long underdeveloped country in terms of the utopian tradition of world literature.

Yet, Hungarian literary history does not lack significant achievements in the utopias. György Bessenyei's satirical political utopia, *Tarimenes' Travel* (*Tarimenes utazása*, 1804) is an introduction to the

later 19th century production of Madách and Jókai. As for Karinthy, he was not alone in the 20th century with his utopian inclinations. Mihály Babits, one of the greatest modern Hungarian writers, himself wrote a utopian novel, *Pilot Elza, or The Perfect Society* (Elza pilóta vagy a tökéletes társadalom, 1933). The first volume of Sándor Szathmári's "Kazohiniatrilogy" came out in 1941, the last one in 1957. In the sixties, Tibor Déry's *Mr. G.A. in X.* (G.A. úr X-ben, 1964) raised eyebrows with its "controversial" contribution to the utopian tradition. (Incidentally, the astonishment at Déry's Kafkaesque-fantastic vision was understandable: Déry wrote the novel while serving a prison term for his activity in favor of the Nagy government during and after 1956.) Last but not least, the find of the seventies is the young Peter Lengyel whose novel *Ogg's Second Planet* (Ogg második bolygója, 1969) has become an international success.

Directing the attention of literary scholarship to yet undiscovered aspects of Hungarian literature seems to be a long needed effort. The Hungarian utopian tradition is just one of the hidden treasures in world literature. Besides establishing analogies between Western European and Hungarian literature, however, the specific situation of this latter, embedded in the motley East-Central European cultural context, should not be forgotten.

#### NOTES

1. *Biology and the Future of Man*, ed. Ph. Handler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 928.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 926.
3. The translations are by W.N. Loew (New York: Arcadia Press, 1908); Ch. H. Meltzer and P. Vajda (Budapest: Vajna and Co., 1933; New York: Macmillan, 1935); C.P. Sanger (London: Woolf, 1933; Sidney: Pannonia, 1953); J.C.W. Horne (Budapest: Corvina, 1963); J. Grosz (Portland, Ore., 1966); [adapted by] L.E. Roberts (n.p., n.d.).
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## **Praise the Lord!** **Albert Szenczi Molnár, 1574-1633**

Andrew Harsanyi

Molnár means miller in English and, in fact, Albert Szenczi Molnár's father was a well-to-do miller in the market town of Szenc (Szencz according to contemporary spelling) in north-western Hungary; hence his full Hungarian name: Szenczi Molnár Albert. He was born in Szenc in 1574 and died in 1633 in Kolozsvár, Transylvania; his gravestone still stands in the cemetery of Házsongárd.

Molnár spent more than 30 of his 59 years abroad as student, writer and scholar, beloved and respected; yet, after his return to his homeland in 1625, he was ignored and died forsaken in poverty. Still, no one in the history of the Reformed Church of Hungary had such a lasting impact upon its theology, piety and congregational life as Albert Molnár. Moreover, Albert Molnár had a decisive influence upon the development of Hungarian poetical forms and the Hungarian language in general.

Molnár lived in the period of Hungarian history when the country was divided among three powers. Its middle part was occupied by the Turkish empire, the East and Southeast, Transylvania, was an independent principality, while the northern and western sector was under the rule of the Habsburg king. In his youth, Albert Molnár witnessed first the consolidation of the Reformation, then the rising Counter-Reformation and the struggle for religious freedom championed by the princes of Transylvania: Stephen Bocskay and Gabriel Bethlen; in his later years the Thirty Years War raged all over Europe.

Albert Molnár began his studies at the age of 10. We know the story of his life quite accurately, for he kept a diary together with a kind of scrap-book with greetings of teachers and friends—among them such personalities as Theodore Beza (Calvin's successor in Geneva), the astronomer Johannes Kepler and Prince Gabriel Bethlen. These, together with hundreds of his letters, have been preserved and published. Other valuable biographical data can be distilled from the

dedicatory prefaces to his printed books. These are written mostly in Latin. Latin was the international language of scientists, scholars and diplomats, even of merchants who engaged in international trade. The ten-year-old child had to learn to read, write and speak Latin at the same time he began to learn his Hungarian alphabet.

Incredible as it sounds, at the age of 12, Albert Molnár, together with some other youngsters and an adventurous tutor, wandered across the country in search for a new place to study. He landed at a place called Gönc. The fame of this place comes from its Reformed pastor, Gáspár Károlyi, the first translator of the full Bible into Hungarian (1590). At the time Molnár was in Gönc the work of translation, carried out by Károlyi and several co-workers, was in full swing. At a most sensitive age, Molnár lived in the atmosphere of scholarly excitement, in the world of books and dictionaries, and in the midst of great hopes that the Word of God would be made available to the people in their own language. Molnár later made a note in his diary that in Gönc he had listened to many heated discussions about theology and linguistics among Károlyi and his associates.

Having finished his primary education, Molnár entered the College of Debrecen to pursue courses in grammatics, poetics and rhetoric. The discipline of the school was very strict. Morning prayers were at 6 and there were classes until evening. Missing service in the chapel, skipping classes, galavanting in the city, excessive drinking, wearing too modern garments—all drew punishment: the stick or even incarceration. Spiritual food was aplenty, food for the body much less. The school was poor and the students even poorer: they ate when good-hearted citizens invited them to their table or gave pots of food and bread to the mendicants, the students going house to house begging for food.

Albert Molnár spent a year and a half in Debrecen and one record has it that he read every Hungarian book he was able to lay his hands on. The books had to be taken away from him to prevent him from neglecting his Latin. From Debrecen he returned to Gönc where he became the messenger who carried the manuscripts and the proofs of the first Hungarian edition of the Bible between Gönc and the printshop in Vizsoly. What an experience it was to see the printing press which, in a short time, produced 480 thousand sheets (the Bible was printed in 800 bulky copies)!

Soon the sixteen-year-old Molnár proceeded to the town of Kassa to become tutor to a burgher's son. Here he saw a Latin-German dictionary. Teaching his Hungarian pupil Latin, how he wished he had a

Latin-Hungarian dictionary! But Molnár wanted to study not to teach. So he decided to go to Wittenberg, Germany, to the cradle of the Reformation. Just like that. Students, in those times, travelled by the "apostles' horses", that is: on foot. There were no hotels, either. But that was no problem. When evening came he would knock at the door of the village pastor or teacher, who would gladly welcome him: the itinerant student was a source of news, a kind of "living newspaper." For the student such visits meant not only supper and bed but also the opportunity to make precious contacts, to secure sponsors to help him in his studies.

Albert Molnár was 16 when he left his native country. It took him five weeks to make it to Wittenberg. In his loneliness he was miraculously comforted: the first man who spoke to him in the foreign city greeted him in Hungarian; he was another student from the home country. But Wittenberg was Luther's city, while Albert Molnár wanted to hear the Reformed interpretations of God's Word. This set him out westward, to the center of Reformed theology, Heidelberg. He must have been an expert wanderer; just look at the map: he made it in 13 days from Wittenberg to Heidelberg. His next place of study was Strassburg where, at the age of 21, he received his bachelor's degree. (The wreath of laurel is still in his scrap-book.) In the time span of eleven years he attended eight different schools. Today we would call it school-hopping; then, it was the sure sign of financial hardship. Also, the desire to hear the best teachers.

Now Albert Molnár could have returned to Hungary to assume a pastorate. But he wanted to acquire still more knowledge and a master's degree. Not in Strassburg, however. First, he had no money. Even for his wreath of laurel he had to give a promissory note for two silver pieces. But the greater trouble was theology. In the continuous struggle between Lutherans and Reformed, the Lutherans gained power in Strassburg. To take holy communion in the Reformed way, Molnár used to go to a small neighboring community, Buschweiler. When he was found missing in chapel in Strassburg at Pentecost communion in 1596, he was asked where he had been. He promptly admitted the reason of his absence. Equally promptly he was forced to leave. It was done in a roundabout way: *he* had to ask permission to be dismissed. Molnár wrote that since he would rather follow the peace of his conscience than the faith of the city, he wanted to leave. The pious answer was that he would not be held back against his conscience. Before leaving the city he went to church where the pastor

was just attacking the Reformed teaching. To Molnár's great satisfaction—as he noted in his diary—lightning struck the church.

The direction now was southward and the goal Geneva, the city of Calvin. Well armed with letters of introduction, Molnár called on Theodore Beza, the saintly old successor of John Calvin. Molnár was graciously received and as the old man offered him white bread and wine he pointed to the picture of Calvin on the wall: "This is my father in Christ." Albert Molnár, the 22 year old wanderer from Hungary, was quite certain that Calvin was also his father in Christ.

The next project was Italy: all the great reformers had seen Rome, Albert Molnár could not miss it either. With all the suspicions of a Calvinist but with all the curiosity of a humanist he visited "papist" shrines; he zig-zagged through Italy like a modern American tourist (only he saw more of it). In Rome he was accorded brotherly hospitality by students of the Collegium Hungaricum, in an (as we would call it today) ecumenical spirit.

Back in Heidelberg (mostly on foot) he did not have a copper penny to his name. So he went around hunting for benefactors, collecting a gold coin here, a silver there. In Heidelberg the plague was raging which was a great help to Molnár: many of the professors and students fled the city so there was room for him in the college. But when they returned he was put out. On Easter Sunday of 1597 he spent the day in church; when the doors were locked he went to the local pastor for help and advice. He got 5 pennies to buy supper . . . All through these years it was a precarious existence: when he went to bed at night he did not know if he would have dinner the next day and as he ate his dinner he would not know if he would have a bed to sleep in that night. He rose at 4 in the morning and chanted hymns in Hungarian, German, Latin and Greek; and he prayed, in tears, because he would not give up. Amidst starvation and uncertainty he would pursue his studies and this in such a brilliant way that all his teachers would praise him and would give him emphatic letters of recommendation.

In 1599 Molnár decided to go home—but just for a visit to find new patrons and to see his dying father. For he had great plans and he followed them through to the last letter. After having secured two wealthy sponsors, burghers from Nagyszombat and Kassa, he returned to Germany.

His first dream to come true was a Latin-Hungarian dictionary. (We may recall how Molnár, as a young tutor in Kassa, wished there had been one.) In six months the work was ready for printing. Easy to

say it now, but we must think what enormous difficulties he had to cope with. Molnár's dictionary was the very first one of its kind. He could take a dictionary in Latin to pick the words but he had to find the Hungarian equivalents himself. It was not only the problem of finding them, many he had to create, describe, explain. The work, ready in 1604, had become the precursor of all Hungarian dictionaries written since. It was the private enterprise of a thirty-year-old wanderer-scholar whose only motivation was to raise the cultural level of his country and to link it to Western culture.

In those times there were no publishers, only printers. The authors had to pay for the printing of their works. How could one get money for this purpose? By dedicating the book to a wealthy sponsor, a king or a prince, a city or a college. The money thus obtained would cover the cost of printing and the livelihood of the author as well. There were no royalties, the author would receive about 25 copies he could sell. The rest of the copies would be sold by the printer as part of the cost of printing.

With his dictionary Molnár had a great idea: dedicate it to Emperor Rudolph! The dedicatory letter had to be printed in advance and bound in the book. Then the author would present it, taking the chance if the sponsor would accept it or not. There were many disappointed authors indeed!

Albert Molnár had to go to Prague to see the Emperor. So he made his way to Prague on foot, logging along copies of the dictionary. He was well armed with letters of introduction to both scholars and officials in the imperial court. The greatest of them came from Johannes Kepler, the famous scholar and the Emperor's astronomer. Through Kepler's mediation it was easy to get into the Emperor's presence: the dictionary was graciously accepted and Molnár was given 50 florins—quite a sum considering the state of the imperial treasury.

Kepler and other new friends in Prague made sure that the news of Molnár's acceptance by the Emperor travelled all over Europe's academic community, so that this sponsor of high standing should prompt others to follow suit. Still, the greatest gain for Molnár was Kepler's friendship. Kepler closed one of his letters with these words: "God provides for his people in such turbulent times; love me . . . your faithful friend, Johannes Kepler."<sup>1</sup> It is not hard to imagine what it meant to Molnár: there was the imperial mathematician, the Emperor's personal astronomer, the world-famous scholar, and here

was a young Hungarian scholar-to-be, without position or status—and the great man called him his friend!

His success with the dictionary prompted Molnár to pursue his second dream. The Reformation favored congregational singing and Hungarians loved to sing. Yet, the hymns available somehow could not gain popularity—neither the music, nor the words. Molnár's idea was to translate the biblical Psalms as they had been set into poetical form by the men from Geneva: Beza and Marot with the music of Bourgeois; in other words; the Geneva Psalter. Molnár did not know French but he had heard these Psalms sung in Geneva and he sung them himself in the German version. He wrote: "I want my Hungarian people to weep with these Psalms just as they weep in Basel." It took him 99 days to complete the job. He followed the German version but a French pastor helped him compare them with the French original. Molnár created a masterpiece. Since the first edition of 1607 there have been more than a hundred printings of these 150 Psalms in Hungarian and in the course of 360 years hardly any linguistic or poetic changes were made: they are being sung today exactly as then. Thus the best critic of his work has been the Hungarian Reformed congregation, and it is not hard to predict that as long as there will be Hungarian Reformed Psalm singing in the churches the people will "raise their hearts to God," "praise the Great Shepherd" and "proclaim His mercy" as interpreted by Albert Molnár.

At this time Molnár just left the city of Altorf, where he had studied for a while and had been tutoring at private homes. His favorite professor, Konrad Rittershausen, wrote these words in his letter of recommendation: "Albertus Molnár was an exile because of his love for knowledge, not to forget his homeland but to gather knowledge and experience in order to be capable to serve there later."<sup>2</sup>

In fact, Molnár had still other plans to serve his Hungarian nation from Germany. To realize them he found a new, mighty sponsor in the person of Maurice, the Elector of Hessen, himself a scholar, a patron of literature and higher learning. Molnár must have had a winsome personality and also the ability to present his projects very convincingly. When he was presented to the prince he was invited to join the prince's family on a boat trip at the end of which he was dismissed with a letter to the rector of the University of Marburg with the order to give Molnár free tuition, room and board as the prince's gift.

The new project was the Bible. The first full translation of the Hungarian Bible published in 1590 was bulky, very expensive and

unavailable on the book-market. Molnár wanted a Bible small in size, easily to be handled, cheap enough to be accessible to the public; he also wanted to correct the many typographical errors made by the non-Hungarian printer. And Molnár did it again: a greatly revised version, nicely printed. The first two editions yielded 3,000 copies. There was one more obstacle to overcome: it was the age of the Counter-Reformation and the Bibles had to be smuggled into Hungary. The Bibles were packed in barrels and marked as "other merchandise." The shipments got through because Molnár soon received letters telling him of the joy that the Word of God could now be read by the common people.

The Elector Maurice spoke many languages, even some Hungarian. The reason for this was that on the maternal line he was a descendant of the Árpáds, the royal house of Hungary, through—as we call her today—St. Elizabeth of Hungary (her grave is still visible in Marburg). Maurice wanted to learn the language well and so he commissioned Molnár to write a book of Hungarian grammar.<sup>3</sup> Again he produced a work usable up to this day; and again a first of its kind. It contained sections on phonetics, spelling, grammar, syntax, etc. It is acknowledged that these works, the dictionary, the psalms, the Bible, the book on grammar, had a codifying effect on the Hungarian literary language.

Now Molnár really could have returned to Hungary to take a regular teaching position there. As a matter of fact, he had an invitation to be a teacher at Sárospatak. His friends and benefactors in Hungary pleaded with him in many letters to come home and utilize his knowledge to the benefit of his "own poor people." But Molnár first wanted to get married. He was 35, after all. He did not have much experience with women ever since years earlier he fell in love with the daughter of a glass merchant's widow in Heidelberg—at first sight—but was rejected. Reason: how could an itinerant student support a family? Result: Molnár had a nervous breakdown complicated by some strange illness which left him unconscious for days; delirious, he thought his friends to be angels and devils fighting over him. It may have been a mild form of the plague.

Now, at last, he married the daughter of a professor in Marburg, Kunigunda Wildpetter, a young divorcée whose former husband, also a teacher, had run away and turned to Judaism. She was granted a divorce on the grounds of desertion. There was a big wedding in Oppenheim.

They returned to Hungary in 1612 where Molnár became the chaplain at the court of one of the country's richest aristocrats, the Count Ferenc Batthyányi. But he did not stay long. Maybe his family couldn't adjust to village life, maybe Molnár had no experience for the pastorate, or maybe it was his new dream: to establish a Hungarian print-shop where he could publish books for his people. After some delay, he made his way to the court of the great Prince of Transylvania, Gabriel Bethlen. He was presented to the Prince in Fogaras on February 14, 1615. Bethlen promptly offered him a professorship at the college in Gyulafejervár. But this was not what Molnár wanted and he humbly rejected the offer by saying that his family was afraid of the possibility of Turkish attacks. Bethlen understood and dismissed him by writing these words in his scrap-book: "Stimulus dedit aemula virtus."

They returned to Germany, to Oppenheim. Here, he first became choirmaster, then headmaster of the city school. It wasn't a high position but it meant a secure livelihood. He knew the city, he had many friends, several of his books had been printed here. At the age of 43 he looked forward to a quiet life. Everything changed, however, when he received Prince Bethlen's great commission: translate into Hungarian the chief theological work of John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

Molnár welcomed this beautiful opportunity. Hungarian Reformed theology was based on Calvin's interpretation but only through mediation, not through direct study. The knowledge of the *Institutes* was needed for both the theological consolidation of the Reformed church and the defense against the attacks of the Counter-Reformation. This is why a Hungarian translation was so necessary. In the course of his work, completed in 1624, Albert Molnár also laid the foundation and created the Hungarian theological language. Simultaneously with the work on the *Institutes*, Molnár translated and published a book of sermons by the famous German preacher Scultetus and a small prayer book for the use of pious women.

It was history's irony that while working on this translation, in Heidelberg, the city was besieged and finally taken by the mercenaries of Tilly (1622) and Molnár was not only robbed of all of his belongings (except his books) but also tortured for money. He did not want to stay in Transylvania for fear of the Turks and now, in the West, he suffered all the miseries of war.

Now he felt that he had completed all his plans: to Hungarian theologians he gave Calvin's *Institutes*, to those who wished to visit



Hungary a Hungarian grammar, to Hungarians who wanted to study Latin a dictionary, to the faithful people a handy Bible, sermons and a prayer-book, and to the congregation a book of Psalms fit to be sung at worship. At this time it was he who wanted to go home. Together with his family he arrived at the court of Prince Bethlen, now in Kassa, in 1625. With the exception of brief intervals, he had spent 34 years abroad—it was time to repatriate.

We know very little of his last years. His diary stopped and no letters are extant from this period. For a short while he was supported by Prince Bethlen; he was probably schoolmaster in Kassa. In 1629 he appears in Kolozsvár. This was after the death of the Prince and we can safely assume that Molnár was hoping to receive a gift from the Prince's legacy—not so much money but a position. There was nothing in the Prince's will for Molnár. From several contemporary remarks we know that from this time on he lived in poverty; abandoned and forsaken, he died in 1633. He was the victim of the plague.

Why was he forsaken? We can only guess. The best conjecture is that Molnár, the modern scholar, Western-oriented, who followed what today we would call a "liberal" interpretation of Calvin's theology, just did not find his place in his own church and country ruled and dominated by István Geleji Katona, the Reformed bishop, rigidly orthodox in theology, cruelly authoritarian in church government. Knowing Molnár, he would not compromise—so there was no job, no support, and there were no sponsors. A single sponsor happened to send him money in 1630, a rich nobleman, Ferenc Darholcz, for whom he translated a book about "The Supreme Good".

At the time of his death contemporary scholars wrote such epitaphs: "Germany gave him assistance, his homeland only exile;" "the only thing Transylvania gave him was his grave."<sup>4</sup>

We could well call the life of Albert Szenczi Molnár a tragic one. He himself, however, never complained, only prayed to God to help him in his endeavors. He chose this kind of life. Instead of returning home after the customary few years of study and getting settled, he continued his life as an itinerant scholar tiring his body and eyes, as he wrote it in his diary. Why? He gave the answer himself, a hundred times always the same: "Spending time at the famous academies among great teachers I am not after knowledge to bring worldly riches; I desire knowledge so I can help the most people in our suffering homeland."<sup>5</sup>

The life of Albert Szenczi Molnár did not end in 1633. He was consumed by the fire of the Spirit only to shine through the centuries

like a comet. He loved his Lord with heart and talent. No better words can be found to characterize his life than his own as he translated the 150th Psalm:

Az Úrnak nevét dicsérvén,  
És minden lelkes állat  
Dicsérje az nagy Urat,  
Dicsőség Istennek, Amen.

(Praising the name of the Lord,  
Every being with a soul  
Praise the great Lord.  
Glory be to God, Amen.)

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- \_\_\_\_\_, Rámista volt-e Szenczi Molnár Albert? [Was Albert Szenczi Molnár a Ramist?] Manuscript of a paper presented at the session of the Institute of Literary History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, at Sárospatak, May 1964. Used by courtesy of the author.
- Hargita, Pál. "Magister harmonicus." *Református Egyház*. November, 1971, pp. 245-247.
- \_\_\_\_\_, "The Friendship of Kepler and A. Szenczi Molnár." *Acta Agronomica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, Vol. 20 (1971).
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- Révész, Emeric. "Albert Molnár de Szencz. A l'occasion du troisième centenaire de sa mort." *Nouvelle Revue de Hongrie*, 1934, pp. 50-59.
- Tolnai, Gábor. "Szenczi Molnár Albert értékelésének néhány kérdése" [A few questions concerning the evaluation of Albert Szenczi Molnár]. *Irodalomtörténet*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (1954), pp. 152-162.
- \_\_\_\_\_, "Zur Geschichte der Faust-Sage in Ungarn. Gesang des Albert Molnár" [Concerning the history of the Faust-Saga in Hungary. The song of Albert Molnár]. *Acta Litteraria Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* Vol. 4, Nos. 1-2 (1963), pp. 3-16.

Turóczi-Trostler, József. "Szcenci Molnár Albert Heidelbergben" [Albert Szcenci Molnár in Heidelberg]. *Filológiai Közlöny* Vol. I, Nos. 1-2 (1955), pp. 9-18 and 139-162.

The 400th anniversary of Szcenci Molnár's birth was marked by the appearance of commemorative articles on him in Hungarian periodicals all over the world. Significant of them, and used in the preparation of this study, were the following:

Pávich, Zsuzsánna. "Szcenci Molnár Albert, 1574-1634," *Református Egyház*, Vol. XXVI, No. 7 (July 1974), pp. 145-148.

Csomasz Tóth, Kálmán. "Négyszáz év halhatatlanság" [Four hundred years of immortality]. *Theológiai Szemle*, 1974, nos. 9-10, pp. 272-276.

The Hungarian literary monthly, *Kortárs*, dedicated its August, 1974 issue to the anniversary of Szcenci Molnár's birth. It contained essays and poems by Géza Feja, Sándor Weöres, András Sütő, György Somlyó, Jenő Kiss, Magda Szabó, László Király, András Fodor, Aladár Lászlóffy, Domonkos Szilágyi, Ferenc Szemler, Lajos Létay, Sándor Kányádi and Géza Páskándi. There is also an editorial in this issue concerning the anniversary.

The weekly of the Hungarian Reformed Church, *Reformátusok Lapja*, also dedicated an issue to the memory of Szcenci Molnár (XVIII/37, September 8, 1974). The issue contained articles by Kálmán Újszászy, Endre Zsindely, Béla Takács, György Szőnyi, Imre Telegdi and a poem by János Bódás. Telegdi's article "Szenctől Kolozsvárig" [From Szenc to Kolozsvár], was continued in nos. 38 and 41 of the weekly (September 15 and October 6).

## NOTES

1. A passage from Kepler's letter, quoted by Hargita, "Magister harmonicus," p. 246.
2. Rittershausen's letter of recommendation, dated November 1, 1606, in Dézsi (ed.) Szcenci Molnár's *Diary, Correspondence* . . . p. 441.
3. Concerning the Hungarian ancestry of the Elector Maurice, see Szcenci Molnár's dedicatory preface to his bible translation, in the appendix to the text-edition by Béla Stoll *op. cit.*, p. 470; concerning the Hungarian language study of Maurice, see Szcenci Molnár's dedicatory preface to his *New Hungarian Grammar, ibid.*, pp. 472-478.
4. The two epitaphs, the first by John Henry Bisterfeld, the second by John Henry Alsted, both professors of German origin at the college of Gyulafejervár, Transylvania, quoted by Gábor Tolnay, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
5. In Szcenci Molnár's dedicatory preface to the *Psalterium Hungaricum*, in Stoll's text edition, p. 14.



## The Lyrical Poetry of Sándor Petőfi\*

Joseph A. Batori

The lyrics of Petőfi prove the rule of all great lyrical poetry: they encompass three worlds. The poet's personal inner life; the concrete exterior scene in which he lives; and the realm of ideas, the spirit of the age are the elements blended in all lyrical poetry. But, although the blending of these three elements forms the unity of a lyric, one or the other will receive greater emphasis. No matter which poet we consider in the vast spectrum of the Hungarian lyric of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these three factors strike us. Petőfi's great forerunner, Mihály Vörösmarty, as also his great follower, Endre Ady, wrote their poems under the impact of their inner world and the spirit of the age. Thus, their poetry became the powerful expression of the age in which they wrote but, at the same time, was a telling demonstration of the individual humanity, sensitivity and receptivity to the external truths of the great poetic figures. The lyric of Vörösmarty is philosophical; the lyric of Petőfi presents everyday episodes often crystalized into an experience that is deeply moving through its artistic quality and presentation of universal human truth; in Ady, the emotional impact of the external world, seen through the prism of a possibly overly-sensitive soul, becomes a wondrous, lasting experience.

In what does Petőfi's originality lie? Precisely in what numerous insignificant critics of his day objected to: that he sings of the simplicity of his parents' home, of every day cares, of his own honest and exemplary life. They objected to his practice of using scenes of family life, of the life of the village and the *puszta*—seemingly insignificant events—and especially, that his poetry was always based on specific images imprinted on his memory. But Petőfi's individuality, his varied images and metaphors, his love of humanity, his patriotism and love

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\*An address delivered at Trinity College, Washington, D.C., on the opening of the Petőfi Memorial Year (1973), by the late Rev. József Batori. Translation © Enikő Molnár Basa.

of his native country made these poems lyrics. And they are personal lyrics, though his style must be called lyrical realism, for he presents himself as he is, truthfully, with his strengths and weaknesses, ideals and hates. His art lies in his ability to transform, through the magic of poetry, the harmony he creates between his personality and the realistic scenes of his environment.

Petőfi's entire life can be reconstructed from his poetry. We see him as a child, a student, wanderer, soldier, actor and lover. We see him later, a champion of the dominant ideas of the country, as he aligns his own life with the totality of Hungarian existence, proposes, suggests, judges, urges, creates new genres in poetry, writes prose, translates, criticizes, and conducts an extensive correspondence.

It is impossible not to like the personality that emerges from his lyrics, the reflection of a warm and loving person who firmly believes that God created man for happiness. Petőfi wrote, "Until a man has been happy, he cannot die." Who would not wax enthusiastic and be moved by Petőfi's nobility of soul when he cries to God in "Fate, Give me Space": "my every heartbeat is a prayer for the happiness of the world".<sup>1</sup> The more hypocritical the world in which one lives, the more one is struck by Petőfi's sincerity and steadfastness: "If you are a man, be a man; make your ideals your faith; / Profess this, even though your life is the price. / Rather deny your life a hundred times than deny yourself; / Let life itself be lost, if only honour remains."<sup>2</sup> The poet lived and died accordingly, as we now know, and we see also that "Freedom and Love" was not merely a poetic motto for him, but his creed: "Love and Liberty—These I need: / For Love I'd sacrifice my life, / but for Liberty I sacrifice my Love."<sup>3</sup> It is not accidental that Petőfi's translators, both the English and the Germans, saw this brief poem as the expression of his beliefs even before his death. And when he died, exactly as he had foretold it and as he had wished it, he stood before the world as a poet who had knowingly followed his destiny.

Another characteristic of Petőfi's poetry is dedication to the people. "The true poet", he wrote—and Petőfi strove to be a true poet—"is he who drops his heavenly manna on the lips of the folk."<sup>4</sup> Every line he wrote, he wrote so all could understand it, so even the simplest person could identify himself with the poet's fate. Therefore he idealized the family as every man's mode of life and goal, and to this end presented not only his own life, but also Hungarian domestic scenes in many of his poems. And when, after his marriage he could celebrate his own wife, his own child, his poetry soared.



But we find more than just the poetry of folk life and of the hearth, or his own personal reflections in Petőfi's lyrics. We see a rich and varied sensibility. He was not a good actor, but his instinct was right: he can assume roles masterfully in his poetry. Everyone is surprised when they learn from Petőfi's biographers that he could not tolerate wine and never drank it, since numerous drinking songs seem to suggest the exact opposite. Likewise, his personality was not suited to the flirtatious interchanges of society, although his witty, jesting, occasionally sharp poems suggest something else.

A method of expression that he brought to near perfection is the genre picture. The minor episodes of Hungarian life of the mid-nineteenth century, and its human types, gained lasting representatives on an eternally human plane: the village women, the men, the provincial noblemen, the outlaw, the young lovers, smaller and larger children are all framed in one memorable picture, as for example, the evocation of the peasant room in "Winter Evenings".

Literary histories list in detail the themes of his poems, pointing out their rich variety. But only seldom do they mention that this richness comes from his lyrical realism: the harmony and relationships of Petőfi's human and poetic personality created the poetry we know today as the characteristic Petőfi-lyric.

A prominent place among his works must be given to Petőfi's *patriotic lyrics*. Petőfi's insight into the Hungarian soul and the picture of Hungarians which emerges from his poetry, as well as the role he marked out for the nation, is unique and still valid. To fully understand this aspect of the poet we must know that Petőfi's family had been granted a patent of nobility by Leopold I in 1667, a full century and a half before his birth. Furthermore, Petőfi was aware of this, and when the Diet abolished quit-rents, and so in effect freed the peasantry, he criticized the earlier behaviour of the nobles, but that day wrote in his diary, "I did not say this by way of reproach to the nobility to which I myself belong."<sup>5</sup> Those who wish to transform Petőfi into a rootless individual do so because it seems to be perhaps more democratic or more romantic. But the facts prove otherwise. His youth was spent in a wholly Hungarian atmosphere. Where else could he have acquired the impressive and charming Hungarian idiom, that unsurpassably melodic, rhythmic Hungarian language, if not in the domain of Hungarian speech, folk poetry and folk song.

This tremendous Hungarian-experience gained a newer, wider sphere when the poet moved to Pest. Let us not forget that his is the Era of Reform; the Turkish wars had been forgotten, but the Hun-

garian soul, too, was almost extinguished under centuries of foreign rule. In a cultured society still affected by the baroque interest in universality, the young man became acquainted with the great representatives of western literature, the genius of Shakespeare, the revolutionary histories of Lamartine, Michelet and Mignet. Following in the footsteps of István Széchenyi, Petőfi becomes a leader among the young intellectuals of the Pilvax Coffee House. Thus, he affirms the duty of the poet to the liberation and leadership of the people in "The Poet of the XIX-th Century" as early as January 1847. Petőfi had been born into a society in which the ideals of the Reform—"the happiness of the majority"—had become both a political and a human goal. Vörösmarty, free of any fear, aided and encouraged the younger poet, and he himself maintained that "a nation's fate appeals to" the poet, and "when we had rescued that from the depths and have raised it as high as possible through the pure gleams shed by ideological battles, then we can say as we meet our ancestors: 'Life, we are grateful for your blessings: this was worthwhile work, this was man's work'."<sup>6</sup> Naturally Petőfi, the strongest representative of the younger poetic generation, is no longer content to prepare for "ideological battles", for compromises as the decades slip by; he wants comprehensive changes—reforms which indeed the nation was able to achieve through the first responsible ministry of 1848.

We should not be surprised that Petőfi's patriotic, or rather political poetry becomes ever more radical. The Reform-generation only wished for improvements and at first even the young generation of Petőfi only sought that long-overdue reforms be implemented within the old forms, in conjunction with Austria. After all, even beyond the borders, in Austria, too, a new generation was urging progress. When, however, the poetic message was not enough, when the alarms sounded in the "National Ode" on March 15, 1848 were dismissed by the ruling forces of the imperial court, and when, within a few months, the court revoked the reforms that had been sanctioned by the king, the "young Hungary" of Petőfi learned the final lesson: progress and liberty can not be achieved in cooperation with Imperial Austria. Petőfi was a revolutionary from the beginning, yet it was only in the final months of the Hungarian mortal struggle, during the months of the war of independence, that he became, both as a poet and as a politician, uncompromising in demanding radical reforms.

Hungary was not yet ready for comprehensive reform. Thus Petőfi, who in March of 1848 was perhaps the most popular man in the country, had lost so much ground by June that he was defeated in

his bid for a seat in Parliament. The poet of the people was denied by the people. In this bitter mood he wrote the political-philosophical poem, *The Apostle*: the tragedy of the political reformer who comes before his time. New, grand ideas emerge in it, for it contains Petőfi's poetical testament and the program and beliefs of March 1848. Later, when the poet saw that the imperial government continued the policy of "divide et impera" and incited the nationalities against the Hungarians, he wrote "Life or Death", the poem in which he demonstrated convincingly to the nation that it is impossible to turn back on freedom, to undo reforms: one must always go forward because not only the liberty of Hungarians was at stake, but the liberty of all oppressed peoples.

The rest is history. Under Lajos Kossuth a Hungarian army, the national guard, was created. Hungarian officers and soldiers in the Austrian army, as well as the masses of Hungarian citizens, joined this new unit in such force that, augmented by the youth of other lands (Poles, Italians, Austrians), victory was well within its reach. Only with the intervention of the Russian tsar, according to the terms of the Holy Alliance, was the force defeated.

Then did Petőfi become the true tempest of the Revolution. He saw he must become a soldier, and that at his own request he joined the army of Transylvania, serving as adjutant to the Polish colonel Joseph Bem, first as a captain, later as a major. His poems immortalized Bem and inspired the Hungarian troops in the face of the overwhelming Russian army. It was here that death overtook him on July 31st, 1849 during the Battle of Segesvár; here that he was buried—as he himself had wished to be—unknown, in "a mass grave with those who died for thee, sacred Liberty".<sup>7</sup>

Is it possible to compare Petőfi to any other poet? Hardly. Certainly not to any foreign poet, but not even to other Hungarian poets, for his poetry is a mirror of his life and his life was an individual, unique human life. *Petőfi is a poet for all Hungarians*. And, further, in Hungarian terms, *Petőfi is the poet of youth*, the symbol of the regenerating Hungarian nation. For the non-Hungarian who appreciates literature however, *he is the Hungarian poet*. Some of his simplest poems have been translated into forty to fifty languages. If we recall that the poetic output of Petőfi, who died in his twenty-sixth year, is 850 poems, and that this is the product of five or six years, then we can see the power of his creative energy. As the literary historian Frigyes Riedl (who published the first English history of Hungarian literature early in this century) remarked, if Shakespeare or János

Arany had died at twenty-six, we would not even know they had lived. Petőfi's career was like a comet's: what he produced in his brief life is truly a marvel. If we should list the great men of Western Literature chronologically, we must start with Homer; Dante, then Shakespeare and Goethe follow. After that, Petőfi must come. Yet, even if one would include two or three other names, Petőfi must be listed among the ten greatest poets.

There are those who learn Greek in order to read Homer, or English, to enjoy Shakespeare in the original. On the traces of Petőfi's German and English translators, several men have set out to gain Petőfi's poems in the original. My wish, as a Hungarian educator, is that the second and third generation Hungarians should turn to Petőfi not only to learn the language in which he wrote but also that they might become participants in the impressive ethical and human values which give Petőfi's poetry its immortality and its universal value.

#### NOTES

1. Sándor Petőfi, "Sors, nyiss nekem tért", in *Petőfi Sándor összes költeményei* (Budapest, Magyar Helikon, 1967), p. 449.
2. Petőfi, "Ha férfi vagy, légy férfi", *op. cit.* p. 518.
3. Petőfi, "Szabadság, szerelem", *op. cit.* p. 517.
4. Petőfi, "Arany Jánoshoz", *op. cit.* p. 351.
5. Sándor Petőfi, "Lapok Petőfi Sándor Naplójából, Pest, március 24, 1848", in *Petőfi Sándor összes prózai művei és levelezése* (budapest, Magyar Helikon, 1967), p. 406.
6. Mihály Vörösmarty, "Bondolatok a könyvtárban", in *Vörösmarty Mihály összes versei* (Budapest, Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1957) I, 482.
7. Petőfi, "Egy gondolat bánat engemet", *Összes költeményei*, p. 514.

REVIEW ARTICLES

## Hungarians in Transylvania

Andrew Ludányi

*Erdély változása: Mitoz és valóság.* By Elemér Illyés. Munich: Aurora Könyvek, 1975. Pp. 359. \$12.50.

Elemér Illyés *Erdély változása: Mitoz és valóság* (Transylvania's Transformation: Myth and Reality) is a study that is "recommended reading" for anyone who is interested in contemporary Rumanian nationalism and ethnic minority policies in Eastern Europe. The study deals with post-World War II Transylvania and the fate of its Hungarian inhabitants, thereby filling a major gap in East European studies. However, for the present, it fills this gap only in the Hungarian language.

Perhaps the healthiest feature of *Erdély változása* is that it is a very dispassionate yet simultaneously a very compassionate treatment of a neglected subject which has generated too much passion and too little compassion in years gone by. It provides a balanced and humane perspective in an area where these qualities are generally lacking. Illyés is somehow able to transcend the bitterness and nationality hatreds of the past, to provide a balanced look at this potentially volatile subject. This is an extraordinary achievement in view of the tradition of conflict, the deteriorating nationality relations of recent years and the author's personal links with the scene of action. As a consequence of this clear-headedness and fair-mindedness, both the Hungarians and the Rumanians can obtain a more complete understanding of their respective destinies in Transylvania. Indeed, his study will be difficult to surpass as "the work," "the sourcebook," on Hungarian life in Transylvania from 1944 to 1974.

It should be interjected, at this point, that the Illyés analysis extends to areas beyond the territory of historic Transylvania. While his main focus is on the area detached from Hungary by the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, he also considers the fate of Hungarians in other

parts of present-day Rumania. True, most of his observations relate to the Hungarians in the Banat, Crişana, Maramureş and historic Transylvania (since these are the areas where most of them are concentrated), but he also considers the fate of their fellow nationals in Bucharest, Bacau and the coastal region of the Black Sea. Economic necessity, the quest for employment, has dispersed many Hungarians to areas outside the protective walls of the Carpathians and the Transylvanian Alps.

*Erdély változása* effectively documents the demographic, political, social, economic and cultural existence of Hungarians in contemporary Rumania. However, there are some weaknesses in the presentation. One relates to the author's time perspective, the other to the organization of his material. Illyés himself reflects on the former weakness in his "Conclusion," which he wrote in 1975. As he points out in this section, most of his study was written in the more optimistic "reform years" between 1968 and 1973. Consequently, the subsequent period of national discrimination was not given consideration and what is more serious, the judgements of previous years are colored by the hopefulness and the expanding opportunities of the "reform years."

The organizational, or structural weakness is, perhaps, less serious. It is due, probably, to the lack of one unifying thesis that could be traced from the first chapter to the conclusion. After all, Illyés' main concern is simply to document the transformation of Transylvania in the context of the past thirty years. To this end his presentation is acceptable. Still, it could have been done otherwise, reflecting more continuity. As it stands, it is broken roughly into five identifiable parts, each of which could stand alone without necessarily being part of the same book.

The lengthy but well-written and interesting first chapter is a combination of travelogue and historical background. Illyés cleverly intermingles his travels in Transylvania with historical "flashbacks" which provide the reader with a vivid picture of the richness and variety of the area's past. He describes each important city or region as it would look to a present-day visitor. Then in flashbacks he reflects on the inter-war experience and the events of the past thousand years that are linked to Transylvania's development.

The second chapter is an essay on the legal, *i.e.*, constitutional and political position of the Hungarians in present-day Rumania. It could stand as an independent essay. It is rather dry, but contains a wealth of useful information.

The third chapter (which deals with the population dynamics of Transylvania) and the fourth chapter (which describes the decline of the traditional Hungarian village) both deal with the circumstances and characteristics of Hungarian population changes in Transylvania. The two together are a separate section with a primarily demographic-sociological and economic orientation. They too contain a great wealth of useful information.

Chapters five to thirteen deal with the cultural and educational opportunities, or lack thereof, of the Transylvanian Hungarians. Each one of these chapters could be an independent essay on a special feature (e.g., schools, drama, painting, music, etc.) of Hungarian cultural existence. Each one is well-written and again a treasure-house of data. The author's thoroughness and the space he devotes to this analysis also indicates that this section deals with the issues and the problems which are most dear to him personally.

The last section, or chapters fourteen to seventeen, are really four separate essays which have been appended to the study to complete the overall analysis. Each chapter is in reality a book-review or series of book-reviews which deals with some aspect of Transylvanian life. Thus, chapter fourteen reviews the writings of contemporary poets while chapter fifteen reviews four essayists/novelists. Chapter sixteen is a critical review of a recent history of World War II Rumanian-Hungarian relations. Chapter seventeen is a review of the first history of Transylvania's Hungarian literature published in post-World War II Rumania. In this manner the last section of the book completes the picture, its four chapters being in a sense overviews. As such, they summarize and link together some of the information which was provided in the first thirteen chapters. However, this linkage could have been achieved more smoothly by integrating the observations of the last four essays in relevant parts of the preceding thirteen chapters.

Analytical method and the effective organization of data both contribute to the success or failure of a book's function *i.e.*, to convey information to the reader. The author's polished style and meticulous research make *Erdély változása* simultaneously interesting and highly informative reading. Only its structure leads to some duplication and awkwardness. However, the latter does not significantly detract from the book's message, which is a reviewer's main concern. In reference to the substance of his work, Illyés deserves only praise. In each of the sections, in every one of his chapters—and the work as a whole—he achieves his major objective: the provision of a documented portrait of the past thirty years in the existence of Transylvanian Hungarians.

Here the reviewer must answer only one question: Does Illyés' portrait coincide with, or accurately reflect, the actual state of affairs that he has set out to describe? His documentation in itself is thorough and presented in a systematic way. He has drawn extensively on both Rumanian and Hungarian sources. True, for recent events, the documentation is based on the "reform years" noted above. However, this provides the study with a more cautious posture relative to the entire question of restrictive minority policies. He does not fall into the trap of crying wolf when there is no wolf. Consequently, when he demonstrates that key areas of Hungarian life are under the pressure of Rumanization, we can be certain that this is the case. He points out a number of such pressure points where restrictiveness expanded even during the "reform years." The most obvious examples are the Rumanization of census results, the constantly diminishing educational opportunities for the Hungarians, the newly imposed restrictions in minority publications under the guise of a declared "paper shortage," and the continued dispersal of the Hungarian population by the restriction of job opportunities in Hungarian populated areas.

Illyés' cautiousness has other consequences as well, some positive, some negative, at times both positive and negative. An excellent example of this is his report of the destruction of the "Varjuvár," (a symbol of Hungarian cultural survival) by "some of the neighboring inhabitants of the region" (p. 13). He does not specify that it was the local Rumanians who were responsible for the destruction. While "leaning over backwards" in this way means not telling the whole truth, it is at the same time a way of avoiding accusations and finger pointing. Thus, he tries to avoid exacerbating the conflict whenever possible and to lay the foundations for a possible rapprochement in the future.

Illyés' cautiousness also keeps him from making predictions about the consequences of this state of affairs in Transylvania. He does not speculate about the prospects of Hungarian unrest in the future. His omission may be intentional. After all, Transylvania is not Cyprus, Northern Ireland or Lebanon—it is situated close to Soviet power! Yet, the experiences in the mentioned trouble spots, as well as experiences with other examples of "revolutionary circumstances," would at least lead to a guarded statement relative to Hungarian unrest. After all, the Hungarians are a large minority of two million<sup>1</sup>—more than the Turks in Cyprus, the Catholics in Northern Ireland or the Moslems or Christians in Lebanon—who have a well developed national consciousness. They have just undergone a process of decom-



pression in the cultural area. As Illyés points out, from 1968 to 1973 they enjoyed a renaissance in their cultural existence. This cultural revival is now being hemmed in by government restrictions. If deTocqueville's observations about social-economic discontent<sup>2</sup> has parallels in cultural discontent, as seems to be the case in areas torn by ethnic strife, then the prerequisites exist for a "revolutionary situation" in Transylvania today. While it is unlikely that a revolution will break out, the possibility is there at least for more pronounced ethnic conflict.

The rioting and unrest of 1968 in Yugoslavia's Autonomous Province of Kosovo should be a warning signal that Communist states are not immune to this type of malady. As an excellent recent study of communist minority policies has pointed out, the strife in Kosovo came after the Yugoslav leadership had already rejected Ranković (1966) and his high-handed methods regarding the minorities.<sup>3</sup> Thus, a process of decompression, followed by efforts to break Albanian desires for more self-government, led to the outbreaks of November-December, 1968.<sup>4</sup>

Responsible statesmen—whatever their ideological preconceptions—must take into account Transylvania's precarious ethnic relations. Illyés points out that in the case of Transylvania's fate responsible statesmen of late have rarely triumphed. Blood and anguish, and more blood and more anguish has been the price paid. We should ask: when will responsible statesmen interfere *before* bloodshed and suffering prevail? In the case of Transylvania a tolerant, farsighted . . . pluralist ethnic policy is needed now! If it is not forthcoming, the efforts of *dispassionate* and *compassionate* scholars like those of Illyés, will have been for nought. For the sake of both Rumanians and Hungarians in Transylvania, let's hope responsible statesmen are listening.

#### NOTES

1. G.D. Satmarescu, "The Changing Demographic Structure of the Population of Transylvania," *East European Quarterly* VIII (Jan., 1975), p. 438.
2. Melvin Richter, "Tocqueville's Contributions to the Theory of Revolution," in *Revolution* Ed. Carl J. Friedrich. (New York: Atherton Press, 1967), p. 78.
3. Robert R. King, *Minorities Under Communism: Nationalities as a Source of Tension Among Balkan Communist States*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 140.
4. *Ibid.*



## France and the Fate of Hungary

Edward Chaszar

*The Tragic Fate of Hungary: A Country Carved-Up Alive at Trianon.* By Yves de Daruvar. Translated from the French by Victor Stankovich. Munich: Nemzetőr, 1974. (Co-publisher: American Hungarian Literary Guild, Astor Park, FL 32002.) Pp. 235, appendix, maps, illustr., \$8.00 paper.

For the last fifty years Hungarians have been painfully aware of the tragic fate which befell their country in June 1920, when the Peace Treaty ending World War I was forced on them at Trianon near Paris. The great majority of Frenchmen, however, were utterly unaware of what was happening to that small but valiant country which had served as Western Europe's outpost for centuries, a first line of defence against the onslaught of invaders from the East. It was the ignorance of Frenchmen about the process of treaty-making, and the silence surrounding the event once it happened, which prompted Daruvar to publish his book in France on the fiftieth anniversary of the Paris Peace Treaties.

The son of a Hungarian army officer and a French mother, transplanted to and educated in France, Daruvar fought for his adopted country in World War II, receiving high military honors and some bad wounds. "A knight in shining armour of our days," according to the words of the preface to the French edition, "he is going to war once more . . . carrying no arms; it is this book with which he proposes to fight for the honor of "mutilated" Hungary."

He does so by resorting to military tactics learned from General Leclerc: attack. Daruvar attacks the treaty-makers, and he pulls no punches in the process. Feeling morally and emotionally qualified, he makes a clean breast of the "ugly act committed by the victors of the first world war." It is this moral and emotional commitment which lends his work an eloquence and persuasiveness rarely found. No wonder a Frenchman finds his book "deeply disturbing" and hard to put down.

While not a professional historian, and using almost exclusively secondary sources, Daruvar documents his book carefully, indeed with an overabundance of quotations, for which he begs the reader's indulgence in the Foreword. In translation his style is good, his words flow freely and easily, the quotations are well integrated into the text and do not interrupt the narration. Once the reader ploughs through the first chapter, containing historical and geographic information on Hungary, the origins and evolution of the Great War are told concisely and with surprising frankness. This is followed by the fast-paced story of the armistice and the Peace Conference itself.

Defending Hungary against accusations of "war guilt" Daruvar points out the historically well-known, but often distorted or simply not mentioned, fact of the Hungarian Prime Minister's opposition to war in the Austro-Hungarian Joint Ministerial Council in July 1914, and quotes the former Italian Prime Minister Nitti: "In all honesty no one can be singled out as being responsible for it." This does not, however, prevent Daruvar from emphasizing the guilt shared by France and Russia, the latter in particular, by adding that "the real aggressor is at all events he who is bent on changing an existing situation by means of war," a reference to Russia's order of mobilization issued with French knowledge. Not even a political scientist could wish for a better definition of aggression.

Drawing mostly on Allied, chiefly French, sources, the book documents the fateful turn of events which led to the corruption of the original war aims, the distortion of the idealistic Wilsonian principle of self-determination, the abandonment of the idea of ethnographic (linguistic) boundaries in favor of military, political, and economic considerations which ultimately resulted in a patchwork of "successor states" erected on the ruins of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Instead of transforming the Habsburg Empire into what was originally intended by President Wilson: a federation based on the equality of nationalities and a potential stronghold against both German and Russian expansionism in Central Europe, the area was "Balkanized".

One can imagine how shocking it must be for the French reader to learn that "for over half a century France has kept telling herself lies, not having the courage to face reality," and then be confronted immediately with that painful reality. For this Daruvar dug up all the available self-criticism French statesmen and politicians produced belatedly, often unknown to their countrymen, and then "lays it on thick"—to use a colloquialism. Thus, the incited leaders of Austria-Hungary's Slav and Rumanian minorities who persuaded France "to

endorse and legalize the occupations by conquest, achieved after the cessation of hostilities by the armed forces of the so-called successor states, in stark violation of the armistice agreements," become in Clemenceau's own words "the jackals of our victory." One also learns the opinion of Gabriel Gobron (misspelled as Goron on p. 112), according to whom "within 10 years [after the Peace Treaty] the successor states have sinned against their minorities more often than did the Hungarians in a thousand years." Edouard Benes is "fated to become twice during his long career the grave-digger of his own country as well as of Europe," and so on.

Marshalling the protestations of the French negotiators and Parliamentarians ("if they were not guilty, what sense would make the protestations of some of them?"), Daruvar reaches the height of indignation by exclaiming: "Trianon was a criminal act; there is no other term to describe adequately the most wicked of all wartime treaties, imposed amid the vapours of blood, the haze of gunpowder, the exaltation of victory and the 'Schadenfreude' derived from torturing the vanquished. There was the generosity of France for you! Torch-bearer of civilization indeed!" (p. 164)

Commenting finally on more recent developments in Europe, such as the Soviet-caused tragedies of Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968), the author states once again that the origins of the present unfortunate situation in East-Central Europe go back to the disastrous treaties concluded in the wake of the First World War, and shortsightedly reaffirmed after the Second.

Nevertheless, the book ends on an optimistic note with the hope that eventually there will be peace in the area, based on a territorial solution freely agreed upon, bringing together all nationalities on a basis of sovereign equality in a Danubian Federation, itself part of a federated, supra-national, united Europe.

From a purely Hungarian point of view the shock value of Daruvar's book for Frenchmen is tremendous. France, after all, is a major power to be reckoned with in any future rearrangement of Europe. Whether the same is true for the English translation is a moot question. The translation itself is, on the whole, good. But, aside from certain technical shortcomings (such as typographical errors in the text, even in the Translator's Note; the employing of Anglicisms strange for the American reader; the French method of presenting notes and bibliography; the hiding of the Table of Contents in an obscure place), one may wonder whether all the French sources, and

the frequent lengthy quotations from the same, turn the English-language reader "on" or "off"? Likewise, whether the attack against the "guilty ones" will induce the enemies of Hungary to repent their sins, or merely to launch a counter-attack? The old wound Daruvar touched is not healed yet; and no matter how admirable were his intentions, his deed at first sight does not appear to have facilitated that healing. But, who can really know for sure?

Somehow, this reviewer feels, the whole affair should have remained strictly one between Daruvar and his French readers. For the latter, this book will no doubt be "brave, profoundly human, and deeply disturbing." As General Ingold, former Grand Chancellor of the French Order of Liberation, confesses in the Preface, the book "makes us think."

This, of course, may be sufficient to excuse Daruvar. To make Frenchmen think about the fate of Hungary may not be a bad thing after all.

## János Kádár: the Myths and the Realities

Barnabas A. Racz

*Crime and Compromise: Janos Kadar and the Politics of Hungary since the Revolution.* By William Shawcross. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1974. Pp. 311.

The communist system in Hungary went through various phases of change since the 1956 Revolution. From the Soviet armed intervention to the New Economic Mechanism (NEM) and the accompanying liberalization János Kádár stood at the helm of the Party and played a major role in the execution of Imre Nagy as well as in laying the foundations for a more relaxed political atmosphere since 1968. The subject of Mr. Shawcross' book is the analysis of this era and Kadar's personality as they are interrelated. Most students of the Hungarian scene agree that the political and economic system is beset with ambiguities and as Shawcross sees it, so is Kádár's personality. Because of these contradictions, the author's coherent and lucid analysis which sheds light upon the deeper aspects of the system is to be regarded as unusually incisive writing.

Kádár's political profile is tied to his personality development and this is an enlightening approach in the absence of other available evidence. He was born as an illegitimate child, a fatherless and deprived peasant boy, an unskilled laborer who came in contact with Marxism in the factory districts of Budapest, and this early experience with communism and the Party grew into his first permanent identification to which he—above all—remained attached to the present day. However, unlike other communist leaders, he was home-bred and remained forever alien to the Moscow trained party-functionaries. As leader of the underground party with Rajk during the Second World War he appeared to maintain a feeling of community with the worker-class. Kádár is a dedicated communist, not trained in the Soviet Union and this paradox may explain some of the contradictions in his political life.

The author chooses Kádár's personal life as a point of departure in each area of the Hungarian milieu examined in this volume. Kadar's early childhood took place in the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy and in Trianon Hungary. Unfortunately, the treatment of the Hungarian history before 1945 is perhaps the weakest part of Shawcross' work and is in sharp contrast with his analysis of post-war years. While he exhibits keen judgement in the latter, his understanding of the former is superficial and the reader is left in the dark regarding his sources. Not to include Bethlen and his consolidation is inaccurate and the view that all economic problems were caused by an insensitive government along with the fact that he disregards the impact of the Trianon Treaty is in serious error. To say that Hungarians in general felt "nothing but admiration and gratitude for Hitler" (p. 45) is untenable position in the light of historical data.

Shawcross puts the post-fifty-six trends into better perspective by tracing the analysis back to Stalinism and the Rákosi-regime. However, the real strength of the work lies in the discussion of the post-revolutionary and current events. There is no question that Kádár had a decisive role in shaping the political and economic institutions, yet he depended on Soviet approval which he could not and would not forsake.

In this reviewer's opinion the centrally significant reforms took place in the economic sphere. While not much is mentioned about the repressive agricultural collectivization, the permissive New Economic Mechanism receives perceptive treatment. The decentralization of planning and the expanded enterprize autonomy stand in the focus of the reform, which creates stronger individual incentives through premium distribution to increase productivity. In terms of overall economic activity and standard of living, the NEM was a considerable success. For a better understanding of the magnitude of these reforms, the author should have given more details regarding premium inequities, strengthening group conflicts and the functioning of economic regulators. It also appears that Shawcross overlooks the fact that not all economic indicators improved evenly and, more importantly, one of the key objectives of the reform, the increased productivity, remained unfulfilled.

While the NEM registered dramatic successes in some areas, it also triggered negative results in the socialist society. The spreading "petit bourgeoisie" tendencies, moon-lighting, profiteering, excessive preoccupation with material acquisitions became wide-spread



phenomena in the entire society including the Party. The "New Hungarian Man" is the "money grubber." These phenomena created even some restlessness and dissatisfaction among the worker-class and party leaders as well as sociologists who saw a growing threat to the socialist system. It was inevitable that together with economic decentralization, some political power had to be transferred from government to management, but some influence inadvertently slipped from the hands of the party leadership, thus an increasing erosion of party power was noticeable on the middle and lower levels of government and party hierarchy. As Shawcross ably points out, the Party's influence decreases in proportion to the increase in living standards and the Party eventually will have to face the dilemma (p. 198).

While the economic reforms were far-reaching, the political institutions remained more static; yet the atmosphere under Kádár's leadership changed markedly. The new alliance policy is far removed from the former terror and was expressed by Kádár in this formula: "Whoever is not against us, is with us" (p. 105). Both the "crime" and the "compromise" are Kádár's policies and express his seemingly paradoxical stance in the various crises of his life. Shawcross sheds light on this: Kádár will always adhere to Marxism-Leninism and the Soviet Union, but within these limits will search for a more human face for socialism in Hungary. Part of this new approach gained expression in the modified election laws which made the nomination of opposition candidates in the electoral districts possible. However, all candidates represent the Patriotic People's Front's platform and must be approved by the National Election Committee. Shawcross observes these limitations clearly (pp. 101-102) yet surprisingly he falls into the frequent error of Western observers and sees significant reform where there is only tokenism.

More importantly, the "socialist legality" improved and the power of the political police has been curbed. There are still political trials and detention camps on a reduced scale, but there is great improvement in comparison to the Rakosi era and the late fifties. As Shawcross stresses, the regime is based primarily not on suppression but on suasion and "society is ruled by a collective will, not by . . . a dictator or a group of self-appointed oligarchs" (p. 103). The first part of author's judgement is correct: suasion is more often used than terror but he stretches the point too far by stating that "collective will" is the ruling force and fails to define what he means.

The lighter atmosphere of the alliance policy filtered into numerous areas of the life in varying degrees. Preliminary censorship

was abolished and writers enjoy a latitude of expression unknown before but basic criticism is not tolerated by the informal yet effective party control and "much of the most important news is not reported in the Hungarian media" (p. 169). Kádár's friend George Aczél was in charge of the cultural affairs at the time of the writing and he followed a balanced "anti-revisionist and anti-dogmatist" policy. Within these limits, courting official tolerance, a "commercialization of cultural products" emerged under the NEM conditions. Shawcross brings the problem into sharp focus by stating that the new libertarianism generated serious concern by the left-wing "sectarians" and gave rise to a threat by petit bourgeois and anti-socialist tendencies. As George Lukács expressed it, NEM's emphasis on profit-making had drastically cheapened cultural life (p. 157). However the new Hungarian film-makers did not think so, and similarly to the progressive literary traditions of the past, some film-producers play an avante-guard role in social criticism, but their work became increasingly suspect and restrictive measures have been applied. The limits of the communication freedom are expressed by Pál Ipper, chief radio commentator, quoted by author: "the press should not be used against the general interest of the nation's development simply for the sake of informing the public" (p. 164).

Not much is written by author about the status of the academic disciplines and scholarship. This is regrettable because these questions are of paramount significance in any society. The official position stresses that Marxism-Leninism is the sole theoretical foundation of all sciences yet there is a healthy fermentation and wider intercourse with Western developments, but not freedom from restrictions. Shawcross gives an enlightening account of the story of Sociology and the demise of the "anti-party Hegedus group", expelled from the Party in 1973 because of criticism of the NEM.

One of the more serious problems for the Party is the change in social mobility. While there was a strong upward trend from peasant and worker-class members in the forties and fifties, this slowed down recently. Worker-class children have a declining enrollment and a high ratio of erosion at the universities. Shawcross attributes this to the commanding advantage of old and new middle-class students but fails to mention artificially the admission and retention of worker-class students on all levels.

Kádár's more human socialism began to attack the severe housing shortages yet not all problems are solved. The author makes excellent connections between tight housing, falling birthrate, desire for

material acquisitions and the spreading family problems. Since the time of the writing, a series of government measures, supporting larger families succeeded and the number of live births has increased significantly.

The Party faces a major problem of becoming older—the average age of membership increased to forty-four. Kádár recognized the problem and lowered the party admission age from twenty-one to eighteen but the youth shows lack of interest in joining the Party. Apathy and cynicism, noticeable everywhere in today's youth, is particularly strong in Hungary and the prevailing political emotion is indifference and skepticism toward ideology. This raises formidable questions to the political leadership in the long run—who is going to be the vanguard of socialist construction without dedicated party members? The Party tries to correct the situation through organized efforts by the KISZ and strengthening ideological indoctrination in the schools but according to author the results are meager. The question is particularly thorny in light of the fact that "tolerance of their own Communist party had led few Hungarians to tolerance of the Soviet Union: Russians are disliked more intensely in Hungary than they have ever been" (p. 230). Although this appears to be somewhat exaggerated, knowledgeable observers agree that there is deep resentment against the USSR and the youth is no exception.

Mr. Shawcross draws unusually accurate picture of the major trends and the prevailing mood in Hungary but occasionally he is in error. There is no reason to doubt the present improvements but too frequent comparisons to the darkest years of the Rákosi era distort the picture. However, the author perceives correctly the ambiguity of the situation in the '70's; while the attainment of socialism remained the theoretical aim of the Party, the economic and political evolution moved away from this objective. This is the Party's major dilemma as Shawcross posits it, will there be a crossroad where the Party either has to stop or reverse the direction of the reforms (p. 288)? Events since the writing proved that indeed the Party was aware of the crisis and undertook serious steps to stem the tide of change. The 1974 Central Committee decisions, the 11th Party Congress in 1975, and various government decrees subsequently abandoned part of the NEM and set into motion an economic recentralization and somewhat tighter political controls. The new measures probably do not represent decisive changes yet they are significant departures from the NEM era. As in the past since 1956, once again Kádár remained at the helm of political power, and reformed his reform. Who then is Kádár?

Shawcross portrays Kádár as a dedicated communist who has a genuine concern for the interests of the working people. This commitment to ideology is tempered with pragmatism yet he is above all faithful to the Party and regards dependency on Russia not only a matter of reality but also indispensable to the survival of communism in Hungary (pp. 248-49).

A more complete assessment of Kádár's moral views could be formulated through a fuller knowledge of his motives in the four major crises of his life: the Rajk-case, the 1956 Revolution, Imre Nagy's execution and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. In none of these situations is there a clear explanation as to his role according to Shawcross and any conclusions therefore are largely conjectural. There was certain complicity in the Rajk case, however Kádár's motives are uncertain and the Dubcek case seems to be less important because Kádár probably had no real input regarding the invasion decision. The two other incidents are more beclouded with mystery. Kádár's changing sides between the first and fourth of November 1956, could be explained in various ways. Whatever the reasons, it seems to be clear and this has been the predominant view in Western analyses that the Soviet invasion did not hinge upon Kádár's willingness to form a government but upon the vital political considerations of the Soviet leadership; had Kádár not been available, someone else would have played the role. Therefore, it could be reasonably argued—as Shawcross does—that Kádár's intentions under the circumstances were not all objectionable if he felt that in the long-run he could win the approval of both the Russians and at least to some extent that of the Hungarians. The same pragmatic considerations could apply in Nagy's execution, but author points out that none of these may exonerate Kádár from his ultimate moral responsibility.

Shawcross' central point is that Kádár, through his skillful reform policies became acceptable and commands confidence as he has an understanding of the national mind (p. 287) This reviewer feels that his view is somewhat unrealistic as there may be a difference between "confidence" and tolerance. My experience in Hungary convinced me that Kádár enjoys a modicum of support, a situation of *quid pro quo*; he is respected for his accomplishments and people fear a change. Nevertheless to many he is merely the "lesser evil" who can work out the best accommodation with the Russians. However realistic this sentiment may be, it emerges as the predominant feeling. Kádár's moral responsibility in his four crises is definitely not the focus of

concern in NEM's pragmatic atmosphere. His absolution would not be acceptable in the West and his culpability is rejected by many in Hungary and probably by all in the Party. The answer will be rendered only by History's future judgement if and when the necessary documentation will be released from the hitherto secret files of the Party and Kádár.

Mr. Shawcross' book makes exciting and interesting reading, and irrespective of some of its shortcomings it is certainly one of the best books which has been recently published about contemporary Hungary and its controversial leader, Kádár.



## Book Reviews

*A History of Middle Europe: From the Earliest Times to the Age of the World Wars* by Leslie Charles Tihany (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1976, pp. 280, \$16.50).

*Ktéma es*—what Thucydides said about his history is also applicable to this book. It is a possession for all time. Especially for Hungarians, with St. László on the cover and a Hungaro-centered comparative history of the peoples inhabiting the Baltic-Adriatic-Black Sea triangle between the covers. There has never been such a book; the closest to it was Halecki's *Borderlands* (1952), which was lexico-graphic, Polish-centered, and used Henrik Marczali's book of the 1890's as the most recent German-language source for Hungarian history. Tihany's new book is based on the latest available research in twelve languages. It is the work of a great historian, Hungarian-born and *non-engagé*, trained in the best American universities, and employed for nearly 30 years by the diplomatic service of the United States. Tihany knows history not only from studying it but also from participating in its making. He writes that beautiful, clear, and enthralling English which—as G.B. Shaw said in *Pygmalion*—only Hungarians are capable of using as an idiom.

Tihany's thesis asserts that history ran different courses for the descendants of the Cro-Magnon man in the coastal and landlocked areas of Europe because (1) the peoples of the latter were prey to an unceasing succession of expansionist empires (Roman, Byzantine, Carolingian, Holy Roman, Ottoman, Habsburg, Hohenzollern, and Romanov); and (2) the states they formed were barred from participation in world trade for lack of maritime outlets, except for the 14th-century period of the "Monarchy of the Three Seas" constructed by the political genius of the Hungarian Anjous.

The book is full of unforgettable vignettes. The Hungarians riding as conquerors through the ghost town of Aquincum; and as conquered, a millennium later, losing most of their country to their neighbors. We see Koppány's quartered body nailed to four city gates; diver Kund sinking the German fleet at Pozsony; Andrew II

driving the scheming Teutonic Knights from the Barcaság; Vladislav I leading his lethal cavalry charge at Varna into the Sultan's palisaded enclosure; Matthias, with imperial Luxembourg blood flowing in his veins, vainly pursuing the dream of the Holy Roman sceptre; vanguards of fugitive Gypsies (scouts, spies or refugees?) arriving in Brasso before Mohammed the Conqueror orders his ships dragged across the isthmus of the Golden Horn to capture Byzantium; Louis II sinking on his wounded mount into the Danube swamps; the Turks unwittingly safeguarding the vitality of Protestantism; the utter devastation of the land by liberators and fleeing occupiers after the recapture of Buda; Louis XIV keeping Rákóczi's insurgents under arms as a diversion to his Spanish war; Kossuth challenging the gates of hell to prevail over a Hungary embattled for freedom; the rise and fall of the compromise-based Dual Monarchy with its unfolding capitalism, socialism, zionism, and a multitude of centrifugal nationalisms pressing against its seams; carnage and party strife continuing parallel through the holocaust of the first World War.

Around this action-rich center of the stage swirls the turbulent history of Bulgarians, Serbs, Croatians, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Rumanians, Czechs, Slovaks, Ruthenians, Ukrainians, Poles, Lithuanians, Letts; Bogomils and Hussites, rebellious serfs, *haiduks*, *kuruc*, cossacks, *uskoks*, *janissaries*, and *ichoglans*. Tihany's best chapters are: as social history, the transformation of heathens into heretics along basic fissures in the structure of society; as intellectual history, the evolution of utopian and agrarian socialism into trade unionism and Marxism (a delayed process owing to the pan-German and Pan-Slav idiosyncracies of the 19th-century German and Russian socialist founding fathers); as political history, the irresistible disintegration of the Polish state during the 18th century through inability to do away with unanimity-rule aristo-democracy; and as diplomatic history, the treatment of the Eastern Question in its relationship to the whole complex of Middle European problems. Here we are shown convincingly that the coastal Great Powers never treated as *grosse Politik* any internal issue of the middle zone except where their own interests in safeguarding the sealanes and the maintenance of the balance of power were at stake.

What emerges from this scholarly yet highly readable and fascinating book is the continuity, through the ebb and flow of historical impermanence, of the millennial state-forming genius of the Magyars,



a nation situated in the continental heartland for the performance of memorable deeds, past and future.

Northern Kentucky University

Alfonz Lengyel

*Esterhazy and Early Hungarian Immigration to Canada*. Canadian Plains Studies No. 2. By Martin Louis Kovacs. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 1974. Pp. x + 170.

The study presents the most recent research of Professor Kovacs concerning the early history of Hungarians in Western Canada. Specifically, the author reconstructs the role of Paul Oscar Esterhazy, surveys the history of the Esterhaz colony to 1903 and assesses Esterhazy as immigrant leader in the late nineteenth century. In addition, he publishes the full text of an historically significant pamphlet on the colony, compiled in 1902, and provides critical commentary on its value as historical documentation.

An important contribution of the study is the clarification of the early history of the Esterhaz colony. First settled in 1886 by Hungarian and other East European settlers arriving from the United States, Esterhaz refers to a compact area of settlement in the eastern Qu'Appelle Valley of Saskatchewan. The author documents the decisive role of Esterhazy in selecting the site for settlement and relates his personal efforts leading to the establishment of the village of Esterhazy in 1902 as a railway junction and agricultural market serving the entire colony. As a result, the village of Esterhazy became subsequent to 1902 the major centre for Hungarian settlement in Western Canada. Professor Kovacs explains the origins of this significant process on the basis of original source materials, including the Paul Oscar Esterhazy Papers, documents from the Public Archives of Canada and the Saskatchewan Provincial Archives.

Also noteworthy is the author's assessment of Paul Oscar Esterhazy as founder of Hungarian settlements in Canada, as an advocate of Canadian immigration for East European peasants and as a particular type of ethnic leader to immigrants from Eastern Europe. Professor Kovacs sees Esterhazy as an effective and influential advocate of Hungarian settlers in Saskatchewan. He also suggests an explanation for Esterhazy's interest in Canadian immigration. Deeply affected by the exploitation of East European immigrants in United

States mines and factories, he thought that Canadian homestead settlement would provide a better haven of protection for them. This aspect of Esterhazy's activity is worthy of further exploration, since it would clarify the background of East European peasant migration from the United States to Western Canada.

In publishing the pamphlet compiled by Esterhazy in 1902, Professor Kovacs had made accessible an important historical record for all scholars of immigration relating to Western Canada. In addition to a brief historical survey of the colony, it includes 22 contemporary photographs of early homesteads and homesteaders, the personal statements of 31 original settlers on their Canadian life prior to 1902 and a map of the colony.

The present study offers, essentially, an indispensable foundation for a badly needed scholarly assessment of Canadian-Hungarian life. It is to be hoped that the author will continue his scholarly efforts by preparing such a comprehensive historical study relating the story of Hungarian immigrants in 20th century Canada.

Ohio State University

Paul Bódy

*The Hungarians in America 1583-1974: A Chronology & Fact Book.* [Ethnic Chronology Series Number 18]. Edited and compiled by Joseph Széplaki. Dobbs Ferry, New York: Oceana Publications, Inc., 1975. Pp. vii + 152. \$6.00.

Joseph Széplaki's *The Hungarians in America 1583-1974* is one of the volumes in "The Ethnic Chronology Series" initiated by Oceana Publications, Inc. in 1971. Currently the series contains close to two dozen volumes, with several others in various stages of preparation.

Oceana's Ethnic Chronology Series is one of several such serial publications that came into being in consequence of the so-called "ethnic revolution" of the past decade. Its editors claim that this series "seeks to reflect unpolemically and objectively the role of America's minorities in the development of a democratic, multi-ethnic society." This is indeed an ambitious and commendable goal, although one may perhaps question whether such basic "fact books," geared to the non-specialists, can really fulfil all that. The Oceana ethnic volumes are neither histories, nor synthetic assessments of the contributions of the individual ethnic groups to the general makeup of American civili-

zation. Rather, they are compilations of basic factual information. Thus, while they are useful as handy reference works, they can hardly hope to reflect their subjects' real contributions to the making of America.

Joseph Széplaki, the editor-compiler of the Hungarian volume in the series, is known to us from several similar publications, all of which contributed something to our knowledge about Hungarians in America. He again did his best to give us a factual summary of Hungarian-American history, and to compile many other useful and hardly easily accessible information about Hungarian contributions to American civilization. Thus, in addition to about 40 pages of chronology, stretching from Stephen Parmeneus' landing in 1583 to our own ways, he has compiled over 50 pages of useful documents. These include a wide selection, from Parmeneus's letter of 1583, to U.S. Governmental documents pertaining to the admission of over 30,000 Hungarian immigrants after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. The documents are followed by a series of useful lists, containing the names of "famous Hungarian Americans," the titles of Hungarian American newspapers, journals and serial publications, the names and locations of Hungarian societies, churches and schools, statistics on Hungarian immigration and on Hungarian population in the United States, the names and location of American universities offering Hungarian language courses, as well as those that have courses in the history, politics and culture of East Central Europe. Moreover, Széplaki's work also contains a list of Hungarian book collections (both public and private), as well as a selected bibliography of Hungarian-American publications in English. All in all, Széplaki made an honest and commendable effort to be comprehensive in his coverage. If he did not fully succeed, this is due less to the lack of effort on his part, and more to the pioneering nature of his work—a fact that must not be overlooked.

Insofar as there are problems with Széplaki's *Hungarians in America*, these are twofold: there are a number of factual mistakes, and the inclusion or exclusion of facts, events, personalities, university programs, book collections, etc. in his list appears—at times—to be less than fully balanced. Some of the factual mistakes were undoubtedly unavoidable, for the facts of the Hungarian-American past are not always easy to ascertain. Others could perhaps have been eliminated had the editor-compiler consulted a number of other specialists in the area, before publishing his work. These specialists

could also have expanded and balanced his chronology and his list of notable events, institutions, publications and personalities; and the result would have been an even more useful work on Hungarians in America.

Széplaki's work is thus not without flaws. Even so, however, it is a useful pioneering work, and a good beginning in the right direction. We would still urge the author that—before preparing the second edition of his work—he should consult with several specialists in the area (e.g. Rev. Edmund Vasváry and others), even though we know that such efforts are not always successful. We are certain that by doing so, his work will improve considerably, and it will become an even more useful handbook in the rising field of Hungarian-American studies.

Duquesne University

Steven Bela Vardy

*Attila József, Selected Poems and Texts.* Ed. by George Gömöri and James Atlas. Carcanet Press, Cheadle. 1973.

Proletarian by origin, representative of a special brand of Marxism and Freudism, Attila József (1905-37) is one of Hungary's outstanding poets. The present collection of his poetry is thus far the most extensive available in English. The translator's John Bátki's brief note is followed by George Gömöri's expert introduction, discussing the poet's "psychoanalytic Marxism," "humanistic socialism," and suicide. The extensive supplementary material includes the often cited Curriculum Vitae (1937), a list of the main events of the poet's life, three letters written by him, a note on an early attempt at suicide, and an English language bibliography.

The fifty poems selected are fairly representative of Attila József's poetry. They include the celebrated socialist pieces (*A Breath of Air*, *Night in the Slum*), samples of the Freudian poetry (*Belated Lament*, *It hurts a lot*) and his most famous love poem, the *Ode*. The editors may well be right in giving less share to the great political poems of socialist persuasion than to personal lyrics (*Coral Beads*, *Summer Afternoon*, *Without Hope*). Their translation would, the editors contend, involve enormous thematic and technical difficulties and no poet in the English language is up to the task at present.

When compared with the 1966 selection of twenty poems, this

volume more closely resembles poetry. There are fewer awkward expressions and concern for fidelity is less to the detriment of poetic effect. All in all, the English version only seldom matches the brilliance of the original. This may disappoint but need hardly surprise bilingual readers who are well aware of the tremendous difficulties in translating a major poet from one language and culture so vastly different into another. Yet, it has been done with better results into other languages. For example, the French adaptations by such eminent poets as Guillevic, Tzara and Rousselot, seem to lose less in translation.

Imagery comes through well in Bátki's version. Such lines as "A small breeze shakes silver laughter" or "silvery axe strokes play on poplar leaves" are not without some inspiration. Attempts at preserving rhyme and rhythm proved generally rewarding. Short of rhyme and rhythm, though, the English version can do little more than to convey the content. Moreover, rhyming is frequently employed arbitrarily and with irregularity resulting in unevenness, as in the well-known "With a pure Heart." More attention ought to have been given to final lines: when clumsy, they can ruin the musical organization of the entire stanza.

Some translations lose in intensity what they gain in faithfulness to the original (Belated Lament, It hurts a lot). This may be due to the wrong choice or arrangement of words, or, at times, to the differences in the verb systems; unlike the Hungarian "ülni, állni, ölni, halni" the English infinitives do not rhyme: "to sit, to stand, to kill, to die". As a combined effect of these and other causes, both the lightness or the graveness of a poem may suffer. Pasternak says in *Doctor Zhivago* that art is the commonplace touched by the hand of genius. A poet of the commonplace in many instances, Attila József never becomes pedestrian and would hardly approve of the expressions "nationwide rain," "not even a piece of bread," "time pretends to be nothing," "I kept thinking," "I have been working all day." They just sound too plain in English.

A work of literature loses much of its appeal when deprived of local colour. The omission of geographic names was wise as they would mean little to a foreign reader. But the line "Kis lábaskában hazahozta kegyelmeséktől vacsoráját" loses its flair when translated as "She brought home in a tiny skillet the food they gave her where she worked." Another expression "puli pillanat" with its alliteration is a lovely image in the original. Its transfer into "puli moment" makes no sense in English.

It is not very likely, that even in the best translation, Attila József could occupy the place in the English world that he rightly deserves. Foreign poets, in any case, seldom if ever have the same impact on the English culture that they have on the Hungarian. Shortcomings notwithstanding, Bátky's and the editors' joint effort should be congratulated as an important step in bridging gaps separating cultures.

It should be added that this book has been accepted into the Unesco collection of Representative works, European series.

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Paul Varnai

## Review of Reviews

*A History of Hungary*. Ervin Pamlenyi, editor. Translated by Laszlo Boros *et al.*, (Compiled under the auspices of the History Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.) London: Collet's, 1975. Pp. 676.

This is not the first history of Hungary in English but the earlier works are mostly dated and out of print, and even if they are available . . . they are too brief to be of real value to anyone but the casual reader. The present volume is of undoubted interest even to the specialist, enriched as it is with ninety-two plates, sixteen maps, brief biographies of outstanding Hungarians, a detailed chronology, and a good bibliography of works in Western languages. The text itself is a much improved, albeit abbreviated, version of the now standard two volume *Magyarország története* (History of Hungary), published in Budapest in 1964 . . .

With about two thousand years of tortured history to account for, and with a prospective readership that conceivably knows nothing of Hungary, the authors occasionally overwhelm us with data and names, while, as befits Marxist historians, they do not shun broad generalizations and hard conclusions. Their style is perfectly adequate, as is the English translation, accomplished by a team of Hungarian experts and a second team of Hungarian-speaking native Anglo-Saxons. The reader would look in vain for the dramatic historical accounts or colorful human portraits so dear to the preceding generations of Hungarian historians. What we get instead is a conscientious briefing in political and economic history, with occasional and often excellent excursions . . . into social and cultural history . . .

. . . It is with the events of the early 1940s that truth and what the authors tell us begin to part ways; by the time we reach the late 1940s, the parting is almost complete. It is comforting to have Lacko, author of the last chapter, denounce "the enormous political and economic errors" made between 1948 and 1956; but it is heartbreaking to have this fine historian accuse the leaders of the Smallholders' party of conspiring against the nation that gave them the absolute majority of

votes at the free parliamentary elections of 1945, to have him slander the Hungarian Independence party of the bourgeois-democrat Zoltan Pfeiffer as "openly extreme-right wing," to have him argue that, notwithstanding the election results, the Hungarians supported the Communist take-over almost to a man, to have him ignore the show trial of Cardinal Mindszenty and the execution of Imre Nagy, and to have him suggest that the armed Soviet intervention in Hungary dates from November 4, 1956, and not October 23. Were it not for the last chapter—and for some outrageous falsifications in the brief biographies—we could celebrate this volume as the very best and the most useful of all Hungarian histories.

Istvan Deak (Columbia University) in the *American Historical Review*, Vol. 81, No. 2 (April 1976).

*Eötvös József olvasmányai.* By Miklós Benyei. Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1972. Pp. 231.

The recent upsurge of interest in Baron József Eötvös (1813-71), Hungarian liberal statesman, political thinker and novelist, was undoubtedly intensified by the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of his death in 1971 . . . . Eötvös spent his life expiating the sins of his class, and particularly of his family, whose unbroken tradition of providing servile civil servants to the Habsburg crown brought its name into disrepute. For a long time Eötvös seemed to be largely the property of literary scholarship, and not without reason. His novels possess remarkable artistic qualities, and at least one of them, *The Village Notary*, a panoramic portrayal of Hungarian society in the 1840's, is a masterpiece . . .

His political ideas . . . never gained much support. He was criticised by contemporaries for relegating the cause of national independence to second place and by later critics for the comparative lack of influence his ideas had on Hungarian political thinking. On the other hand, Marxist scholars, until quite recently, have also found fault with Eötvös because, like Széchenyi, he never claimed to be a radical, let alone a revolutionary . . .

Miklós Benyei's painstaking examination of the literature that influenced Eötvös' intellectual development deserves high praise. Eötvös read in five languages and, fortunately, his library was pre-



served. Benyei divides Eötvös's library collection into five categories—fiction, philosophy, history, political science, and natural science—and discusses each category in detail. Evidence is offered by the author to support Eötvös's competence in philosophy (sometimes questioned) and his surprising proficiency in the natural sciences . . .

Lorant Czigany (London) in *Slavic Review*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Sept. 1975).

*A Hungarian Count in the Revolution of 1848.* By György Spira. Translated by Thomas Land and Richard E. Allen. Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1974. Pp. 345.

. . . historian György Spira quite successfully describes the thought process and politics of Count István Széchenyi. With great power of expression the author reconstructs—with the aid of his hero's voluminous diary and correspondence—six months in the life of a truly important historical figure . . . Spira also introduces a new thesis that satisfactorily proves the famous count's active participation in the revolution of 1848, his cooperation with Kossuth, and his struggle for Hungary's limited sovereignty.

Count István Széchenyi was an initiator and leader in the reform era that preceded the events of 1848 in Hungary. Not only did he advocate the economic, social, and political modernization of his country, but he dedicated most of his energy and wealth to such purpose. Reform was his vehicle for progress . . . In 1848 the count had not abandoned his ideals but now believed that the process of reform should simply accelerate. As his cabinet colleagues adopted more and more radical measures for the pursuance of a *de facto* independent Hungary, Széchenyi's doubts multiplied and culminated in the loss of his rational faculties . . .

Spira's work, a faithful translation of the 1964 Hungarian version of the same book, contributes to our understanding of 1848 and of Széchenyi's role in those turbulent times . . .

Peter I. Hidas (Dawson College, Montreal) in the *American Historical Review*, Vol. 81, No. 2 (April 1976).

*A magyarországi Szocialdemokrata Párt és az agrárkérdés—1900-1914 között.* By Dezső Farkas. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1973.

*A magyarországi Szocialdemokrata Párt ellenzéke és tevékenysége, 1906-1911.* By Lajos Varga. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1973.

Contemporary Marxist historians in Hungary have an avid interest in the period between the 1890s and 1914, a period that exhibited agrarian unrest in a countryside characterized by the extremes of landless millions and giant estates . . . This period also witnessed the birth and growth of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party which, however, was primarily concerned with socialist education and organization of industrial workers in the cities.

The books by Dezső Farkas and Lajos Varga deal respectively with the agrarian position of the party and with its overall political tactics. Both are critical of the Social Democratic leadership, which, torn between faithful adherence to orthodox Marxism and the realities of a primarily agrarian country, alternated between emphasis on revolutionary rhetoric, strikes and demonstrations and a policy of compromises and negotiated deals.

The critical approach is certainly warranted in the case of the party's agrarian policy, described by Farkas in a thorough, scholarly, and well documented, though somewhat dry manner . . .

Farkas's criticism is basically sound and valid in the theoretical sphere. It does not deal with the methods and tactics actually used by the party in the countryside. Such an omission, whether intentional or accidental, saves his book from the pitfall confronting Varga's treatment of tactical issues in the party's uphill struggle . . . Varga has written an interesting, lively, and dynamic book on this subject. He carefully avoids painting a one-sided picture by acknowledging the genuinely socialist credentials of the leadership and the human frailties of the opposition within the party . . . Yet he maintains the impossible assumption (pp. 114 and 186) that somehow a more radical socialist policy could have succeeded in pre-1914 Hungary. In fact, the socialist leadership could be faulted for doctrinaire rigidity, mistaken notions on many issues, misplaced trust in opponents, and occasional tactical errors, but their basic instinct toward caution was a critical choice of self-preservation over self-annihilation in the best interest of the Hungarian working class . . .

In conclusion, both books are important and valuable contributions to our knowledge of the period immediately preceding World War I. However, neither a purely theoretical nor a somewhat unhis-

torical approach can do full justice to the complex problem of Hungarian socialism at the turn of the century.

Gabor Vermes (Rutgers University, Newark) in *Slavic Review*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (September 1975).

*The New Found Land of Stephen Parmenius: The Life and Writings of a Hungarian Poet, Drowned on a Voyage from Newfoundland, 1583.* Edited by David B. Quinn and Neil M. Chesire. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972. Pp. XII, 250.

Given Hungary's geographical location, it is only natural that Hungarians have failed to distinguish themselves in the area of seafaring and maritime explorations. Thus, discounting a number of unsubstantiated claims about Hungarian travelers in pre-Columbian America, the first Hungarian to visit this continent was Stephen Parmenius of Buda (ca. 1555/60-83), who joined Sir Humphrey Gilbert's second expedition in 1583 and then drowned along with Gilbert off Sable Island near Newfoundland.

But not even Parmenius was an "explorer" in the traditional sense of that term. He was a young Protestant scholar and poet, and an accomplished Latinist, who was drawn to Oxford in order to further his studies . . . Once in England, however, he became acquainted with Richard Hakluyt and, through Hakluyt, with Sir Humphrey Gilbert, who soon persuaded the young Hungarian to accompany him on his colonizing effort to North America as a "chronicler." . . .

Parmenius's claim to fame rests largely on two Latin poetic works in praise of the American expedition, and especially on his long and informative letter to Hakluyt about his experiences in America, which he penned about three weeks before his death . . . Parmenius's description is still valuable, and the two editors should be commended for making it available to modern scholars.

Both of the editors have excelled in scholarship. Their painstaking introductory chapters on Parmenius are the best in any language, as are their meticulously annotated translations of his writings . . .

Steven Bela Vardy (Duquesne University), in the *American Historical Review*, Vol. 81, No. 2 (April 1976).

*Xántus János*. By István Sándor. Budapest: Magvető könyvkiadó, 1970. Pp. 408.

. . . In this work, Sándor presents a substantial semi-popular biography, giving equal space to Xántus's life before he left America and to his travels in Asia and his museological work in Budapest until his death in 1894. This latter half of Xántus's life is here presented for the first time in book form. A list of Xántus's 243 writings and a number of bibliographical notes complete the volume, which is handsomely printed and bound.

It is curious to note that Sándor's short biography of 1953 gives some attention to a supposed interest of Xántus in the "international workers' movement," whereas his biography of 1970 does not mention this fantasy . . . Aside from revealing welcome ideological change in Hungary, Sándor's later work is a useful, if somewhat turgid, survey of the life of a man who deserves far more attention in the history of science in the United States than the mere bestowal of his name on a murrelet and a lizard.

Henry Miller Madden (California State University, Fresno), in *American Historical Review*, Vol. 81, No. 2 (April 1976).

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CONTRIBUTORS (continued from page 2)

istical history. His major work is *A domonkosrend Magyarországon a reformáció előtt* [The Dominican Order in Hungary before the Reformation] (Debrecen, 1938). Presently he is editing some unpublished works of his late father, the author and playwright Zsolt Harsányi.

The Very Reverend JOSEPH A. BÁTORI (1900-1975), Piarist Provincial (1960-67), received his doctorate in Hungarian and Latin in 1923. Assigned to the Piarist Gymnasium in Budapest, he continued his interest in Hungarian literature and the training of youth, especially in developing the unique Hungarian Scouts movement, becoming its national Vice-Scoutmaster in 1930. Later he became Headmaster of the Piarist Gymnasium in Debrecen. Sent in 1951 to Buffalo as Father General to the Piarists in the United States, he established the houses in Buffalo and Derby, N.Y., Devon, Pa., and Washington, D.C. Even after his retirement in 1967, Father Bátori continued his interest in the Hungarian Scout movement in America and often lectured on topics related to Hungarian literature and culture.

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