

**BOOK REVIEW\***

**Remember Hungary 1956**

Francis Laping and Hans Knight, eds. *Remember Hungary 1956*. Center Square, Pa.: Alpha Publications, 1975. Pp. 381. \$30.00.

This superb compilation appears as a fitting memorial on the twentieth anniversary of the Hungarian revolution. Between October 23 and November 4, 1956, the Hungarian people, united as perhaps never before in their history, swept away the dictatorship of the Communist Party and challenged the Soviet Union's hegemonic rule. The consensual objectives of the revolution were national independence and neutrality, a pluralistic democratic system, a mixed economy and the termination of compulsory collectivization, and basic freedoms of speech, press, religion, and association.

While the revolution easily demonstrated the devastating unpopularity and weakness of the indigenous Communist Party, it could not withstand the naked might of Soviet imperialism. The restoration of Communist dictatorship was a painful process, and many years passed before the Kádár regime managed to forge a certain *modus vivendi* with the Hungarian people through an "alliance policy" reflected in the famous slogan "those who are not against us are with us." Kádár himself has described the revolution as a national tragedy, and on the occasion of the party's 11th congress in 1975 he claimed that eighteen years' experience had shown that the dictatorship of the proletariat "was not such a bad dictatorship. One can live under it, create freely, and gain honour."

In fact, the Hungarians have achieved a notable degree of affluence and even a certain cultural freedom while foregoing the democratic political system and national independence anticipated by the revolution. Notwithstanding the false promises of peaceful coexistence and

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\* Other book reviews slated for this issue will appear in Vol. IV, No. 1 (Spring 1977) of *CARHS*.

détente, this is perhaps all that they can hope to attain under Soviet tutelage.

The contemporary documents, appraisals, and photographs in *Remember Hungary 1956* provide a vivid reminder of those days of heroism, euphoria, and tragedy. The tree of liberty, wrote Thomas Jefferson, must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. The Hungarian people paid a heavy price for their challenge to totalitarianism and foreign oppression, and the memory of their historic gesture must be nurtured for the sake of future generations.

A small correction that imposes itself is that in the bibliography two works by Professor Béla Kovrig are wrongly attributed to this reviewer.

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