

Concluding Remarks

Americans and Canadians of Hungarian descent, as a rule, are not indifferent to the culture and history of their 'old' country, which fact often shows up in their reading and research interests. Thus, two papers represent the study of Hungary or, rather, two important aspects in the shaping of recent Hungarian society. The studies also help to throw light on the causes of newer waves of immigration from Hungary to Canada. While Professor Dreisziger's paper is entitled "The Hungarian General Staff and Diplomacy, 1939-1941," it also deals with broader aspects as well as some incidental processes that contributed to Hungary's gradual drifting into the War.

One obvious factor that emerges is the woeful inadequacy of the Hungarian General Staff of the time as regards its difficult tasks. The higher ranks included officers who were well past their prime in terms of age and military strategy, being still permeated with loyalty to the "*K und K*" (*Kaiserlich und Königlich*: Imperial and Royal) spirit of the defunct Austro-Hungarian Empire. They lacked experience with modern weapons and had been trained to keep away from politics other than that based on the status quo. On the other hand, the younger ones, owing to their quick promotions, possessed insufficient military knowledge and experience. While those in command were understandably still influenced by the traditions of German scholarship and strategy, also the more junior officers found it difficult to resist tradition. The unspoken conclusion wants to be stated that many, or perhaps most, of them suffered from a corresponding lack or ignorance of British and American political views and methods. Another point that emerges was the apparent endeavor of the military (and the one-time Hungarian government) to divert attention from social, economic, and political weaknesses by the stressing of irredentism.

Professor Blumstock, in his study "The Irrelevance of Ideology: The Fall of Marxism and the Rise of the Last Man," gives some hints of the vast changes that have taken place in Hungary in the last few decades and shares some of his apprehensions concerning the present and future. Blumstock manages to condense to a few pages his own insights combined with the impressions of authors of publications on post-1956 Hungary. He skillfully paints the picture of a growing conflict there between the Marxian "new man" and the Nietzschean "last man." He

seems to perceive, as one of the consequences of the 1956 upheaval, an overwhelming shift of interest among Hungarians from matters political to such as the satisfaction of everyday needs and the acquisition of status symbols. The premier, János Kádár, is presented as a quasi 'honest broker' who adroitly mediates, in the midst of conflicting demands, including those of the common people and the political leaders. The scene of these developments is Hungary, formerly an easternmost member of the West, now a westernmost show-window for the Eastern Bloc of Europe.

Two other studies address themselves to the discussion of immigration and settlement problems, mainly in Canada. The present writer argues in his "Searching for Land: The First Hungarian Influx into Canada" that important motives for many peasant immigrants to leave the mines and factories of the USA and settle on the Canadian plains derived from the *laissez-faire* and highly violent nature of the industrial scene in late nineteenth-century America. The other study, Professor Dreisziger's "Aspects of Hungarian Settlement in Central Canada, 1921-1931," examines the seeming contradiction between Canada's avowed immigration policy "Only Farmers Need Apply" and the flocking, from the 1920s on, of Hungarians into the cities of Central Canada. Most of these people arrived in the wake of the "new immigration" of the seven years from 1924 on and established extensive new neighbourhoods in the cities of Central Canada with particular reference to Toronto and Montreal. This development has meant, for Hungarians, a dramatic shift of emphasis from the prairies to Central Canada both as regards numbers and in the reformulation of Hungarian identity.

The relocation of emphasis and the reshaping of identity alike, are reflected in cultural creativity, with particular reference, in the present case, to poetry. Especially Hungarian Canadian poetry of the older type, constitutes the subject of the present writer's second paper, "Early Hungarian-Canadian Culture." The poetry of the peasant communities on the Canadian plain seems to have been influenced by the traditions of the *historiás* of the native villages. These folk-poems still preserved their old-time function through recording, in an epic manner, and tersely, significant happenings. Some poems, particularly the ones that suited communal expression and were accompanied by a tune, tended to discharge a cathartic role, both for the community and the individual. The Békevár community actually reached the level of a culture centre in which thoughts and emotions came to be expressed in rhymes and prose alike. Creative writing tended to be reinforced by traditional songs, dances, hymns, passage rites, long-standing culinary tastes and skills, and the

ancestral language, all forming a coherent and interacting whole. The culture shown in these facets was the most important characteristic of the prairie or old Hungarian-Canadian identity.

John Miska, himself a writer and a poet, an almost tireless observer and advocate of belles-lettres among Canadians of Hungarian stock, provides elements for the crystallization of the new or urban Hungarian-Canadian identity, with particular reference to the cities of Central Canada and British Columbia. In his "Modern Hungarian Poetry in Canada" he considers and interprets the literary creativity of contemporary Canadian Hungarian authors who, for the most part, have organized themselves into an association. They tend to be poets belonging to various "schools" and different age groups. Their common denominator — in addition to writing in Hungarian — appears to be that they are practically all urban dwellers (who, sometimes, give expression to their nostalgia for the distant countryside) and *literati*, often preoccupied with the problems of the individualistic intellectual in the context of Canadian society.

A significant connecting link among the six perspectives presented in this volume is seen in their interpretive function, between the respective cultures, of their authors. The papers exhibit some results of work carried out in different fields of competence inside the framework of Hungarian Canadian (American) studies, as contributions to a body of findings on which a more comprehensive effort may be built at some time in the future.*

* The editors do not necessarily concur with opinions expressed by individual contributors.