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Valuch, Tibor. 2013. *Magyar hétköznapok. Fejezetek a mindennapi élet történetéből a második világháborútól az ezredfordulóig* ('Hungarian Everyday – Chapters of Everyday Life from World War II to the Turn of the Century'). Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó. 347 pp.; Valuch, Tibor. 2015. *A jelenkori magyar társadalom* ('Contemporary Hungarian Society'). Budapest: Osiris. 296 pp.

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The two books by Historian Tibor Valuch reviewed here fit into the European social-historical stream called *Alltagsgeschichte* ('Everyday history') that focuses on ordinary people rather than on leaders and heroes (for a variety of treatments of this concept see: Alf Lüdtke, ed. *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*. Trans. William Templer. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995). Researchers implementing this approach record microhistorical data and use qualitative study-methods that can authentically tell the lives, experiences, and largely the story/ies of wide segments of society (Alf Lüdtke, *Police and State in Prussia, 1815–1850*. Trans. Pete Burgess. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1989). Tibor Valuch has contributed to the Hungarian version of the history of the everyday with both microhistorical and macrohistorical sources and methods. In *Hungarian Everyday* he focuses mainly on the socialist-state period, while in *Contemporary Hungarian Society* he formulates the challenges faced by present-day post-socialist Hungarian society. In order to aptly present and survey Valuch's *Hungarian Everyday* one has to consider also his previous book, *The Social History of Hungary in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century* (Budapest: Osiris, 2001), which can be seen as an antecedent to Valuch's later works, both of which likewise deal with the Hungarian socialist-state period.

Valuch's newest book, *Contemporary Hungarian Society*, can be seen as a concise analysis of the social climate of Hungary since 2001, the year when Valuch published *The Social History of Hungary in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century*, and in this later book he deals with the further implications of the regime change and with the challenges of modernization in the post-1989 Third Hungarian Republic. In the new book's first chapter Valuch analyzes the democratic functioning of the state through the three linguistically close yet semantically different concepts of *rendszer váltás* ('regime replacement'), *rendszer változás* ('regime change') and *rendszer változtatás* ('regime-change process'). Following a second chapter of further discussions of these three concepts, the third chapter presents demographic data as well as issues related to the changing structure of Hungarian families following 1989, while the fourth chapter surveys the impact of the settlement and suburbanization policies of that time from a macro



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perspective. The fifth chapter surveys central studies about the ethnic groups living in Hungary as well as research on Hungarians living beyond the border. In the sixth chapter Valuch focuses on a few chosen systems such as education, employment and salary to exemplify the social changes in Hungary following 1989. The seventh chapter addresses the transformation of elites after the change of regime, showing that presently they are divided into economic, political and cultural groups. Valuch then dedicates two chapters (the eighth and the ninth) to the issues of political influences and value orientations used by present-day Hungarian parties in their election programs. The eighth chapter explores the boundaries of political activity and the participation in elections after the regime change as well as the segmentation of political parties in the past almost-three decades. In the ninth chapter Valuch analyzes value orientation on the basis of research of national identity and religiosity. In the last two chapters (the tenth and the eleventh) he connects the study at hand with the last part of his 2013 book, *Hungarian Everyday*, which concluded with the late Kádár era. The tenth chapter accordingly deals with problems of social policy after the regime change, the argumentations about unemployment and various other social malfunctions. Finally, in the eleventh chapter Valuch returns to his more favored and previously more succinctly analyzed everyday-life topics such as eating habits, dressing changes, housing conditions and cultural differences.

As expected from the close timing of publication of Valuch's two latest studies, many of their topics and case-studies are inter-connected. For instance, in both volumes Valuch bases himself upon the manager-capitalism theory formulated by Iván Szelényi's 1995 article, "Menedzser-kapitalizmus" ['Manager Capitalism'], published in *Lettre 19* (<http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00012/00003/szeleny2.htm>), which showed how, following the regime change, managers became the main holders of power because they could use internal organizational information concerning the value and profit of particular enterprises. Valuch does not merely cite social-science sources but at times also exposes their mergers and clashes with other pertinent studies. For example, apart from Szelényi's work, he also cites György Lengyel's 2007 study, *A magyar gazdasági elit társadalmi összetétele a huszadik század végén* ['The Creation of the Hungarian Economic Elite at the End of the Twentieth Century'] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó), about the joint financial-social elites in Hungary at the close of the twentieth century. Yet, it would have been even more useful had he extended his analysis and included in it references to informal networks, qualitative results, interpretive schemes and expert estimates.

Unlike in *Contemporary Hungarian Society*, in his earlier book, *Hungarian everyday*, which relies on much less originally sought sources, Valuch analyzes and at times quantifies various media products such as lists of the contemporary richest one-hundred or one-thousand businessmen. The problem with such data is that often the grading in them turns pale compared to the scandals involved with some of the personages on these lists. In other words, such lists are questionable sources because of their so-called methodological basis, which often exemplifies that fortune may mean many other things than money. Accordingly, the conclusion of *Hungarian everyday* attributes great importance to the social representations of economic issues rather than to strict rankings of all sorts. Another area that is less tangibly explored in the older book is the life of the post-1989 Hungarian middle-class, although the very attempts to identify and conceptualize this class or entity are as yet themselves fraught with methodological problems, which hardly enables the use of dry details like income, consumption and dressing habits escape

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from simplistic treatments. Surprisingly, the discussion of ethnicity is conspicuously missing from *Hungarian Everyday*, which covers the closing decade of the twentieth century; it would have been important, though, to problematize the situation of the Roma ethnicity, even if only on the basis of sources from the end of socialist era, in order to include this group in the Hungarian post-1989 narrative.

Reading the two books by Tibor Valuch under review here, one sometimes wishes that the detailed and very powerful quantitative apparatus he uses in them be equated with more qualitative discussions. Yet, in their minute coverage of a turning-point era in the history and culture of Hungary of the recent broad half-century, Valuch's two recent studies, with his previous book serving as important background to them, constitute a valuable contribution both to the understanding of Hungarian society in this hectic period and, possibly, to the growing body of history-of-the-everyday studies of other societies as well.