The emergence of the grotesque on the Hungarian theatrical scene in the 1960's and 1970's could easily be seen as an aesthetic manifestation of a strategy. As Hungarian literature gradually incorporates elements of the absurd of the European avant-garde, by way of transformation, it congeals these very elements into an aesthetic coating on bad medicine. The technique, constituting an an/aesthetic for the provocation and the eventual pacification of intense and often very complex emotions, is a survival aid for the past and the present: used to help erase memories of the horrors of the war, or, under the neo-Stalinist regime, to comfortably numb the sensory system. However, in the long run, the side-effects carry serious implications. As we shall see, the grotesque transforms the desire for living into death itself.

Western audiences are usually not familiar with this typically East European anomaly. Particularly in Hungary, the Magyar language's resistance to translation aggravates the basic non-convertibility of feeling and form. The most widely per-formed Hungarian playwright of the grotesque, István Örkény remains relatively unknown in the West, although Pisti a vérzivatarban (Pisti in the Blood Bath) was performed at the Seattle Annex Theatre in 1990. (The play focuses on Pisti, "Everyman", who is allowed to take on a series of identities in the time of an undefined political crisis only to realize that these identities have been prescribed for him in the first place.) In addition, Macskajáték (Catsplay) was first presented in 1976 in Minneapolis by the Guthrie Theater, prefaced by Örkény's own lecture addressing the issue of this uneasy mixture of Hungarian pleasure and pain.

The ironic disjunction between style and subject matter, as we might define the grotesque, could equally characterize absurdism as a dramatic style, since in
its essence the absurd also positions perfectly normal characters in an abnormal situation, or, vice versa, abnormal characters in a normal situation. Both styles have their own inherent principles, which are imposed on the participating characters with unrelenting rigor. Thus the rules of the resulting dis/order might not resemble those of the world outside the stage, but they operate with the same consistency and cruelty. Aesthetically speaking, in both the grotesque and the absurd the contrast emerges between the horrible and the comic, stimulating intuitive rather than intellectual faculties. Moreover, both are strategic theatrical devices containing a host of components intended to achieve a certain end. The absurd, a dramatic form that abandons traditional devices of drama — such as meaningful dialogue, and normal characterization — aspires to awaken feelings of ambivalence and unease by frustrating the expectations of dramatic logic. The grotesque, although it also challenges traditional dramatic structures, has a different impact on its audience: it facilitates psychological release. The release is pleasant — albeit strictly temporary — as symptoms of devastating pain disappear into the rhapsody of what Charles Baudelaire, the French symbolist poet calls "absolute laughter."

From now on onwards I shall call the grotesque 'the absolute comic' in antithesis to the ordinary comic, which I shall call 'the significative comic'. The latter is a clearer language, and one easier for the man in the street to understand, and above all easier to analyze, its element being visibly double — art and the moral idea. But the absolute comic, which comes much closer to nature, emerges as a unity which calls for the intuition to grasp it. There is but one criterion of the grotesque, and that is laughter, immediate laughter. Whereas with the significative comic it is quite permissible to laugh a moment late — there is no argument against its validity; it all depends upon one's quickness of analysis.²

What seems unusual when one tries to apply Baudelaire's description to the post-war East European theatrical grotesque is that in this case, the intuition implied in the "absolute laughter" is a socially developed one. Therefore when we examine the relationship between the emergence of an aesthetic and a specific socio-political framework, fundamental dissimilarities appear between the absurd and the grotesque not merely with respect to the laughter they solicit but also in regards the context of such laughter. We can quite easily explore this context if we compare the plot structure of The Birthday Party (1958) by the British playwright Harold Pinter, and that of one of Örkény's most popular plays in Hungary, Tóték (The Toth Family, 1969).³ We may recapitulate the rather well known series of events in Pinter's The Birthday Party along the following lines: Two unexpected visitors arrive in the perfectly normal life of Petey and Meg, who for some time have been providing board for Stanley, a middle age man with a somewhat ambiguous past. They intend to take Stanley away and Stanley is afraid of them. Nobody understands the situation, and Stanley is apparently terrified but
never makes any physical effort to escape the visitors, so finally they carry him away. Stanley is quite obviously broken yet shows no signs of resistance.

Now let's summarize the plot of Örkény's play, Tóték. Toth and his wife live a quiet life in the countryside during the time of World War II. Their son is away in the army and they are worried about him. One day the Toths receive a letter from their son informing them about his Major's visit to the region. They decide to offer the Major their hospitality for their son's benefit. The Major takes a keen interest in Toth's occupation "dobozolás", the art of making boxes out of cardboard paper. However, the Major's initial interest soon turns into an oppressive nightmare: he insists on spending every single minute of his time making boxes, constantly harassing Toth. In an attempt to escape him Toth hides in the toilet. Yet even there the Major finds him, and the Toths can hardly wait for their "guest's" departure. The day arrives and the Major leaves to catch his train at the station. The Toths are about to settle back into their lives when the Major shows up at the door and announces that he has decided to stay on for a while. Mrs. Toth takes him to the second floor and kills him.

The two situations are structurally similar. An alien visitor(s) enter into a normal situation but as the plot unfolds the arrival transforms the normalcy of the original set-up into absurdity. The character of the outsider is never revealed or framed in psychological terms (we will never know what exactly motivates the two strangers to take Stanley away, or why the Major becomes obsessed with the boxes). In fact, psychological motivations behind the force that disrupts the initial situation are left ambiguous intentionally. The difference between the two situations lies outside of the dramaturgical structure, in the definition of details and the concretization of nuances.

Time and space are left undefined in The Birthday Party. The identity of the organization which sent the visitors is not clarified, neither is the nature of Stanley's association with it. The circumstances are too general to locate the plot in England if we disregard the obviously Anglo-Saxon names of the characters. The play sends out signs of undefined menace, guttural fear and general unease, but the relationship between these emotions and the current socio-economic situation is at best abstract. The play thus addresses the public on an existential level, where the aforementioned qualities (worry, horror and intimidation) are universalized and treated without specifics.

In Tóték careful attention is paid to contextualized details. The son is conscripted into the army, that of the Hungarian military of the Second World War. Relationships are perfectly clear: Toth's son is the Major's subordinate. The reason for the Major's visit is equally obvious — he is on leave. The parents wish to please the Major because their son's fate is in his hands, and finally kill him because, despite all this, they can no longer tolerate his imposition on their lives. The situation is quite evidently based on the Hungarian context, making the identification process relatively easy for the audience. Thus, the domestication of the details of a potentially absurd plot creates the Eastern European version of the grotesque. Örkény himself addresses this point in his 1976 lecture, delivered on
the occasion of the Guthrie Theater's performance of *Catsplay*, from the point of view of a working playwright:

We prefer to locate our dramas in time and space concretely and precisely, and start the action from the past, either from an episode taken from our history, or with a typical situation of the present. We don't feel comfortable in a vacuum, we have to touch the ground in order to gain our energies from it. I believe this is the case because — as opposed to the French and British playwrights of the absurd — we haven't lost our interest in the present and the past.4

On the basis of this comparison, we could say that Örkény historicizes the absurd by way of specification and contextualization. While the absurd operates on an existential level without any particularly defined framework (see for instance, Harold Pinter's *The Dumbwaiter*, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, or Eugène Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano*), the same plays if presented in Hungary and adapted to the Hungarian situation, will create an altogether different mode. The new aesthetic is not the consequence of fundamental changes in tone or structure but that of "domestication" by members of the audience. In semiotic terms, receivers of the code define the style of the play: a particular community makes it or breaks it. In other words, the Hungarian audience (or in fact any East European audience) will create the grotesque out of the absurd by putting it into the context of their own situation. The spectators' identifications will be based on crossing the line between horrifying vision and menacing reality.

Although both the grotesque and the absurd address "the existential tragic," i.e. suffering induced by being cast into the world, the grotesque as an aesthetic framework suggests that the imbalance between man and the world stems from social problems. This doesn't imply that the dark humour of the play is lessened in any way but, paradoxically, that it will produce a healing effect, rather than that of incomprehension or discomfort. Most Hungarian plays composed in the vein of the grotesque (Csurka: *Dögött Aknák*, 1971; *Házmeistersirató*, 1978; Örkény: *Vérrokonok*, 1974; etc.) simultaneously foreground and ridicule the predicament of having to live a primarily "social existence" amidst the political and economic upheavals of Hungary. The political impetus and the resulting aesthetics converge in the use of a black humour that constantly pervades the main theme: the presentation of the common man against the monolithical State. This produces the East European equivalent of Arthur Miller's Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*, offering an altogether new kind of dramatic hero. The Hungarian drama critic, Erzsébet Ézsiás sees the forces behind this phenomenon in the larger context of East European drama, but her point of view is closely related to Miller's argument that the common man has replaced the traditional tragic hero. As she points out:

The Hungarian grotesque is the necessary consequence of changes in life-style and perspective: the traditional types of literary heroes seem
outdated and devalued, while the life and problems of the common man are foregrounded. What characterizes its East European variants is valid for the Hungarian grotesque as well: the desire to amend through reprobation, to provide a "critique of the mundane." 5

Viewed from this perspective, the "devaluation" of the traditional hero affirms rather than eliminates some psychological responses traditionally associated with the tragic/comic dichotomy. By providing avenues for identification with the hero through laughter and pity, the grotesque produces a cathartic effect both in terms of rehearsing emotions in preparation for real life situations and by supplying a space for relief and recuperation. The plays are therapeutic in that they liberate the spectators of their fears and urge them to participate in a strategy of survival. The result is the formation of a community that "understands"; in fact, the public feels privileged, assuming that the play is particularly addressed to them as insiders. Members of the audience will deny that an outsider is capable of deciphering the message, thereby making their socio-aesthetic experiences an entitlement. This implies only one way of truly enjoying the play, in which the prerequisite of pleasure is thorough familiarity with the political context surrounding the piece. Initiation to such entitlement is only by fire, that is by living under the neo-Stalinist regime of Hungary. The "absolute laughter" thus becomes a social privilege.

Hence the political and the aesthetic join forces in creating ties between members of the theatrical community. The psychology of laughter supports their sense of uniqueness: a rather poignant illustration of Freud's interpretation of the joke based on the dynamics of inferiority and superiority. As opposed to a typical audience response to the absurd, which includes feelings of bemused incomprehension and alienation, spectators of the grotesque gain a sense of superiority by resolving the inherent ambivalence in the tone through recourse to immediate, social experience.

The potential for creating a community through the appropriation of a certain aesthetic is echoed through Örkény's lecture, in which he points out the following differences between the absurd and the grotesque:

...the western absurd is based upon the complete negation of communication. We (Hungarians) also see humanity aimlessly roaming around in the age of the atomic bomb, but as individuals living in our uncomfortable situation at the border of two worlds, we have not lost our relationships. ...we go on understanding each other in our private lives as well as on the stage. 5

Örkény assumes certain basic differences between the communication patterns of Western and Eastern European individuals, and typically addresses the Eastern European perspective only from a social point of view. Nonetheless, given the political climate in Hungary in the 1960's and 1970's, he is voicing an
opinion shared by most writers of the period. As Örkény's comments reveal, the East European grotesque distinguishes itself by responding to social rather than metaphysical paradoxes, with the implication that for most Hungarians metaphysical dilemmas would be considered a luxury in a pressing social situation.

Örkény continues to detail the differences between the absurd and the grotesque, yet again contextualizing them socially, this time focusing on dramatic action. He remarks on the main characters of Beckett's play, Waiting for Godot that,

Vladimir and Estragon don't act, because waiting is a passive form of behavior. Vladimir and Estragon have neither a reason nor a goal to prompt them to act. In contrast, our characters —just like the ordinary and simple people in our countries — are active. This is not a question of temperament, but of experience. We have preserved our capacity for action, because more than once we have managed to change our lives through action.7

In the lecture Örkény doesn't examine the concept of action when he extends the theatrical to the world outside the stage. Inaction as the only possible response to a rapidly changing and completely irrational social reality doesn't emerge as a dramaturgical possibility from the East European point of view. The same attitude is evident in drama critic Erzsebet Ézsiás's characterization of the absurd, which she contrasts to the grotesque on the basis of content. While maintaining that the grotesque attempts a social analysis, that it implies a complete action and provides venues for identification between hero and audience, she claims that the absurd,

...does not contain a specific action that starts and ends at a definite point. In the absurd dramas there are only fragments of an action, which, however, don't possess any organic significance, as there is nothing in the plot they could propel. Time marking the invisible coordinates of life has disappeared, and as the vision has no time dimension, the duration of the play becomes accidental. The characters are not socially and psychologically distinguished representatives of humanity; mostly they are mere indications, abstractions, or bipedal symbols. Their dialogue is often limited to empty clichés and impersonal commonplaces. No change whatsoever occurs in their situation. Identification with these characters is not an imperative.8

The comparison between the absurd and the grotesque reveals that in its East European version the grotesque becomes a perspective rather than a style. The perspective is the result of a particular geographical location as much as that of a shared historical past. The common experience creates a phenomenological
sensitivity for both the playwright and his audience, who find their channel of communication in the grotesque, in the curious mixture of dark humour, alienation, melodrama and irony. Thus besides its ability to shape a theatrical community, the grotesque provides a framework which facilitates the transformation of a potentially subversive theme into laughter.

The State understands the disarming qualities imbedded in the act of displacement, therefore the grotesque is frequently staged. Despite the inherent mobilizing capacity of the theatrical grotesque, its audience appears merely potentially, rather than actually subversive. Ties formed within the entitled group are emotional, intellectual, and above all ideological, but because the State's license to provide a new space for bondage is inherently deceptive, the revolutionary potential is suppressed by its very masquerade, as subversion is dispersed immediately after the spectators have left the auditorium.

It is because of its impact on the Hungarian audiences and the resulting reconfirmation of the power of the State that the grotesque eventually turns into "bad medicine" failing to adequately address social problems. The treatment is symptomatic, which aggravates rather than eliminates suffering. The latent call for action in the final analysis of the grotesque, which Örkény celebrates enthusiastically, dissipates through laughter. Thus the playwright, by allowing the audience to "blow off" steam, involuntarily becomes an agent of the political status quo. Reinforcing the idea of uniqueness in the "insiders", the plays themselves support the containment of subversive energies. Audiences leave the theatre with a sense of relief and satisfaction and work out the ramifications of the tension created by the piece through discussing it in terms of its bravery or veiled subversion.

NOTES

1The grotesque doesn't emerge in isolation in Hungary; in fact, the analysis that follows is in part applicable to the plays of Tadeusz Rozewicz, Slawomir Mrozek, Vaclav Havel, and Marin Sorescu, written in neighbouring socialist countries and displaying quite similar ideological and aesthetic components. Because this essay looks at Tóték in detail, I am focusing on the Hungarian variant of the East European grotesque.


3Róbert Sarlós's unpublished translation of István Örkény's play is the property of the University of California, Davis. For a published translation of Örkény's novel based on his paly see: The Flower Show: The Toth Family, translators M.H. Hein and Clara Györgyey (New York: New Directions, 1982).


Ibid.

The Social Opposition: 
Labour in Post-Communist Hungary 

Sándor Agócs 

This essay aims to re-examine the development of the labour movement in post-Communist Hungary from 1990 to 1994. In contrast to the rather narrow source-base of most work on the subject published in English, this study draws upon a full range of Hungarian sources: on newspaper reports and commentaries, as well as on interviews with union leaders, activists and Hungarian social scientists. It also relies on personal observations that the author made during extended stays in Hungary. Since the collapse of the Communist regime in 1990 left virtually all of Hungary's industrial enterprises in state hands, the role, as earlier studies appearing in English have observed, government played in labour-relations was overwhelming. The government was then the nation's chief employer. The state was also responsible for universal health care and old age pensions. Since labour committed itself to maintain these benefits, our description of the fate of the labour movement in post-Communist Hungary must necessarily present — unlike the bargaining process that takes place in the West — a confrontation between government and labour that involves larger issues than the interests of union members (i.e. wages and working conditions), issues that affect the wellbeing of the entire population. 

After 1989 unemployment fast became one of labour's greatest concerns. Virtually unknown under Communist rule, it began to grow by leaps and bounds after the change of regime and had risen to nearly 14% of the active labour force by January 1993. This development created very serious problems for the government. The sudden need to build a social safety net for the newly unemployed more or less from scratch caused massive hemorrhaging in a state budget already burdened by huge deficits. As for the workers, the impact of the avalanche of unemployment was devastating. In a remarkable series of articles published in the daily Pesti Hirlap during the Spring of 1991, András Rózssa surveyed the workers' attitudes. The refrain of their statements was fear. They feared losing their jobs and were worried about not being able to support their families. They were reluctant to talk to journalists. "If you open your mouth you'll find yourself on the street." And after "they" kick you out, you had still...
better be quiet if you don't want "the relatives who work in the plant to get into trouble." This mind-numbing, totalitarianoid fear appeared to be the basic determinant of the labour-management relationship in democratic Hungary. The perception of "us" (the workers) and "them" (the managers) whose interests were in conflict had existed already in the Communist era. But now the managers acquired even greater power of intimidation as they implemented the drastic reduction of the labour force.²

A public opinion survey revealed that by the end of 1992 unemployment was generally considered the country's most important social problem. What made the situation especially aggravating for people was that they felt they could not depend on the organizations of labour to protect their interests. When asked by Rózsa and other journalists about the unions, the workers gave responses like "they do nothing but collect dues," and "they don't care about us." This popular mistrust was demonstrated by the fact that in a Gallup survey done in June 1991 the unions came in last among the social and political institutions "that work for the people's well-being," scoring 35 out of a potential 100. The churches were judged the most useful, with a score of 60. Because of this crisis of representative institutions — to quote László Lengyel, an economist and social commentator — "the worker was not in a bargaining position."³

Labour leader Sándor Nagy complained of fragmentation. "There is no solidarity among the workers," he said, "only individual survival strategies; yet only through joint action can the employees hope to defend their interests." This indifference toward "joint action" and the unions was in part a residue of the Hungarian workers' experience with the labour movement under the Communist regime. The union had then been a tool of the Party's policies; a "transmission belt" of its power. When the Communist era ended, Nagy was the head of the National Council of Trade Unions (Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa, SZOT), the monolithic organization into which the regime had herded all the unions. SZOT's real purpose was clearly shown by the fact that Nagy was also a member of the Party's Central Committee. The organizations of labour served the Party more than they served the workers. Rudolf L. Tőkés was not far from the truth when he wrote that while the Communists were in power, the unions "did many things, but failed to represent their members' interests at the places of work."

But those "many things" — subsidized cultural activities, organized holidays and mortgages at low rates of interest — were fast becoming things of the past by 1991. The unions tried to ease the pain caused by runaway inflation by buying consumer goods, from panty-hose to milk and meat, wholesale and reselling them to members at cost. But labour now faced massive, permanent layoffs, something they had never experienced during the Communist regime, when a job had been everybody's for the taking. And the unions seemed unable to do anything about this crisis.⁴
Labour’s Fragmentation and Infighting Draws Public Anger

The collapse of the Communist system left the Hungarian labour movement divided against itself. In 1991 there were seven major union groupings in the country:


This division was rooted in the conditions of the waning years of Communist rule. During the late 1980s "alternative," dissident organizations increasingly challenged the monopoly position of SZOT. By 1988, since it could not successfully fight them, SZOT had joined the alternative unions in attacking the Communist Party and the government, and thus became instrumental in the regime’s collapse. In March 1990 SZOT held its 26th and last Congress, which declared itself the "founding congress" of MSZOSZ. The election of Sándor Nagy as the president of the new organization was met with thundering applause by the delegates. He had made himself popular among union members by standing up to the Communist government. Nagy eventually resigned from the Party’s Central Committee and attempted to turn the unions into real advocates of the workers’ interests. In doing so he drew upon himself the ire of conservatives within the Party. But these actions did not save MSZOSZ from being labelled "Communist" later on, and attacked on the grounds of its questionable legitimacy.

MSZOSZ, facing intense competition from the other unions, looked like a wounded giant in 1990. The organization still claimed 2.5 million members,
about half the country's labour force. Its members were spread over the occupational spectrum, but in certain occupational areas MSZOSZ faced extinction. Some of the old SZOT's branches refused to join its successor and established themselves as separate federations. AUTONÓMOK, one such organization, claimed a membership of 350,000. Employees of the various lines of the chemical industry provided the largest part of its membership, but AUTONÓMOK had branch organizations in the public services as well, such as transportation and energy. SZEF, another federation that was born out of the breakup of SZOT, in 1990 claimed 708,000 members. Almost all of them were public sector employees, such as educators, administrative, health and social care employees. ÉSZT, with a membership of 100,000, gathered together those working in higher education and scientific research.

Three other union groupings had emerged as "alternative" organizations of labour during the waning days of the Communist regime. MOSZ was at first the factory extension of the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), the party that became the leading force of the first democratic government. After the 1990 elections, MOSZ declared itself independent, but the attempt to break out of the MDF's orbit was never fully successful and became a source of conflict within the federation's leadership. MOSZ's membership, about 100,000, came chiefly from among factory workers. SZOLIDARITÁS, another new union, also carried the word "worker" in its name, claiming that its 230,000 members included not only industrial, but also agricultural and intellectual "workers." LIGA, the seventh of the union configurations, was born and remained a die-hard opponent of SZOT and its successor MSZOSZ, advertising itself as "the other union." LIGA claimed that two-thirds of its 100,000 members came from blue-collar occupations. In its locals and regional organizations, however, intellectuals, especially teachers, played an important role.

The need for coordination among these ideologically diverse and competing federations of labour was obvious. However, an important and widely-publicized attempt to bring them together in "round table" talks collapsed in January 1991. Commentaries in the newspapers and especially union members' "letters to the editor" sized up the situation as a clear sign of the unions' inability to come to terms with a situation that demanded joint action. To these critical voices the President of the Republic Árpád Göncz added his. The grandfatherly President — Uncle Árpi, as he was nicknamed — who consistently showed up first among public figures in popularity polls, offered to mediate in the "suicidal" conflict among the federations. If it continued, he said, it would lead not only to the disintegration of the labour movement, but would threaten even the country's political stability. President Göncz received delegations from the various federations. Aware of a growing "existential fear" among the population, he was to remind the congress of LIGA that the unions have to be "instruments of social conscience."
MSZOSZ Takes on the Government

In line with the President's perception of the role that the unions should play, MSZOSZ increasingly adopted a militant stance, assuming the role of a "social opposition" and challenging "the current power structure," which according to the union, was carrying out policies "contrary to the interests of working people." On June 3, 1991 MSZOSZ initiated a discussion with the government in order to "reduce social tensions." Its delegation, led by Sándor Nagy, brought a nine-point program to the table. Aside from guaranteeing jobs to young people at the beginning of their working careers, the union demanded that the government deal with several aspects of unemployment and job security, that a voice be given to employees and their organizations in the privatization process, shares for them in the privatized enterprises, and severance pay if they should lose their jobs. The union also demanded that the government work out a "social package" addressing the problems of low-income families, and that it raise minimum wages across the country.7

After the first discussions, the union omitted demands such as a government guarantee of jobs for young people and the shortening of the work week, which the government proved unwilling to consider. As for the remaining six demands, Gyula Kiss, the Labour Minister, and György Schamschula, the State Secretary of the Ministry, played out something of a "good cop-bad cop" routine. The Minister said that MSZOSZ was "banging on open doors" with its demands; that there was an "agreement of intentions" between the government and the union. The only disagreement was about timing. But when the union pressed for a schedule of the measures to be introduced, and also for details, Schamschula snapped that in "high-level negotiations like these, it is not appropriate to work out the details." MSZOSZ, he said, did not want an agreement, "but a confrontation" between its members and the power of the state, "and that will end with the little guys losing."8 The conflict continued to escalate. On June 8, MSZOSZ declared that the government had offered nothing but obscure promises, and organized a strike committee. It called for a two-hour nation-wide "warning strike" on June 13 if an agreement had not been reached by then.9

The First Trial of Strength: A Call for a General Strike

The threat of a general strike brought on an angry reaction from the government. Its spokesmen cried "blackmail" and they repeated the government's position over and over again: "Steps which will create social tension, and which lead to organizing strikes and demonstrations endanger the country's stability as well as investments both of internal and foreign origin, thereby threatening the living standards of the population. Especially now, at the beginning of the tourist season, it is important that Hungary appear an attractive and safe country to the world." To this Mihály Kupa, the Minister of Finance, added a strong warning
about the dire consequences of further deficits. Yet in the next breath he contradicted himself and made it known that 15 billion forints (about US $200 million) would be allocated for social projects over and above the sums originally planned. One hand waving the stick and the other holding out the carrot? The government announced its willingness to continue negotiating, and suggested in fact that it was carrying on parallel negotiations with the two "alternative" federations: LIGA and MOSZ.  

The government's success in playing up one segment of the labour movement against another was strongly suggested by these two federations' rejection of the MSZOSZ strike call. The central leadership of MOSZ condemned the call, suggesting that MSZOSZ was attempting to get a "separate deal." This accusation was not without irony given the fact that MOSZ apparently agreed to participate in separate negotiations with the government at the time. In fact, this federation assumed positions almost identical to those of the government. In rejecting the strike call, their communiqué talked of "blackmail" and the "danger to social peace," as well as the economic damage caused by the strike threat, since it would scare away foreign investment.

LIGA also announced that it would conduct separate negotiations with the government and presented a list of "themes." These gave the impression of an essentially watered-down, less costly version of the MSZOSZ demands. LIGA called for a meeting of all the federations to reconcile their positions. At the same time it condemned the strike call, since it broke up the "unity of the labour movement." Csaba Őry, one of LIGA's leaders, said that the strike call had created a dangerous situation, bringing a "hysterical union" into conflict with "a government policy very insensitive to social issues." "The country is not in the mood for a strike," he declared.

The leadership of MSZOSZ was claiming just the opposite, arguing that their membership supported the use of the strike weapon. "We have surveyed the mood carefully" said Sándor Nagy after touring union locals across the country. But on June 10, when he announced this, he conceded that only 220 of his 400 construction industry locals had responded so far to the strike call, and only 170 of them had approved it. Nagy presented the 170 approving votes as a positive sign: but they clearly showed that the support among the locals was much less than total.

The Union Locals Cooperate

The strike call went out in the West Hungarian town of Székesfehérvár. How poignant all this was: spokesmen outlining the government's position about the strike also announced that the last Soviet soldier would leave the country within a month. In Székesfehérvár, where a Soviet armoured division had been based square in the middle of town since 1945, this newly-won freedom had to be demonstrated. On June 6 people carrying large placards and chanting anti-
government slogans marched across town and held a protest meeting. It was significant that the call for the demonstration had been issued by the local leadership of both MSZOSZ and LIGA, usually bitter opponents. A letter sent to Prime Minister József Antall, complaining about rising unemployment, carried the signatures of both of these organizations. Even the Székesfehérvár locals of MOSZ signed it, although they later announced that they would not support the strike.13

The strike call, once set in motion, created a dynamism of its own, which did not necessarily coincide with the aims of the central union leadership. One cannot say that the eventual coming together of labour was a direct result of what happened in places like Székesfehérvár; yet these events, showing the members' inclination toward coordinated action, pushed the leaders of the federations toward cooperation. On June 12, the day before the MSZOSZ strike date, the government spokesmen were still speaking of holding separate talks with the "independents" MOSZ and LIGA. But on the same day six of the federations — with SZOLIDARITÁS absent — worked out and signed a joint statement which was not far in content from MSZOSZ's six-point list of demands. President Gónicz, who had invited the labour leaders for a talk the previous day, might have had something to do with the surprise agreement. At the same time, the National Association of Entrepreneurs issued a statement urging a "much greater willingness to negotiate" not only on the part of the unions, but the government as well.14

The government did indeed show "much greater willingness to negotiate" when it faced a united front of six labour federations. As a result, an agreement was reached on the evening of June 12, just about twelve hours before the strike was to begin. LIGA made what looked like a last attempt to steal MSZOSZ's show, by inviting the other federations to a meeting with the government to be held the following day. The government, which delegated a deputy secretary of state to conclude and sign the agreement with MSZOSZ, sent László Surján, the Welfare Minister, to the meeting with LIGA. But by an ironic turn of events, what Surján did was to announce the agreement signed by MSZOSZ in the name of six federations, including LIGA. In the deal the government promised action aimed at giving a say to the employees' organizations in the privatization process; to use some of the money gained from privatization for job creation; to secure severance pay to those who lost their jobs; and to address other issues involving the minimum wage and the living conditions of low-income families. The MSZOSZ strike committee, claiming victory, thanked the other federations for their support and goodwill. Even so, Csaba Óry, the Vice President of LIGA, showed everything but goodwill. On the day the agreement was signed, he declared it MSZOSZ's "attempt to escape" the problem of its illegitimacy. The strike call, he said, "had done more damage than good."15
The Conflict among Labour Federations Continues

The June 12 agreement, which, according to MSZOSZ added 5 billion forints to the employees' incomes in one way or another, brought the federations together but did not bridge the differences between them. Continuing internal struggles within the leadership of MOSZ led to the disengagement of this federation from another agreement reached on June 25 about the division of the old SZOT patrimony among the federations. Imre Palkovics, the President of MOSZ, declared that the union's Vice President (who had signed the deal) had not been authorized to do so. Palkovics announced that he intended to propose legislation in Parliament (he was a Member in the ranks of the MDF) to solve the problem of the division of SZOT property. The other federations protested, saying that this was an internal matter for the labour movement to resolve. LIGA at first walked out of the negotiations, but after asking for the tape of the discussions, decided to sign the final agreement. And so it went: the unions coming together and dividing again. The infighting within the labour movement, often triggered by politicking inside given federations, continued. The first serious test of strength between the government and the unions in June settled the question of whether labour would be a factor in the life of democratic Hungary. But it also confirmed, even dramatized the conflicts among the unions.¹⁶

As for the government, which the unions accused of being "anti-labour," the shadow-boxing involved in the June strike-call and the subsequent compromise did involve some loss of face. In attempting damage control, its communiqué pointed out that it had not really given in under pressure, since "the demands drawn up by MSZOSZ coincided with the steps the government had planned in order to solve the very same problems." In mentioning ways of resolving these problems, the communiqué also suggested that the government had not really assumed concrete obligations. Many, if not most of the issues involved in the agreement would have to go to Parliament, where even the opposition parties — except the Socialists, who, as "ex-Communists," faced like MSZOSZ continuous questioning of their legitimacy — had condemned the strike call. Or else they would end up in the Conciliation Council (Érdekegyeztető Tanács) a triangular organization which included representatives of the government, the employers, and the employees, but which had no legislative power and could only recommend action. But to say that all labour got were promises would be misrepresenting the situation. The events of the hot and tense June days forced the government to confront social problems and to revise its social agenda; or, as most labour spokesmen, even those who represented "independent" unions, repeatedly pointed out, come up with the social policy that it did not have before the June strike call.¹⁷

MSZOSZ had won a victory of a kind at the expense of its opponents and tormentors, LIGA and MOSZ. These had shown themselves inconsistent, hesitant, and on occasion, subservient to the government. MSZOSZ had fought for improvements in pensions and the minimum wage, issues involving, in one
way or another, almost the whole population of the country, and not just the interests of its members or organized labour as a whole. The question of MSZOSZ's legitimacy — that perennial argument of the "independent" unions and spokesmen for the coalition parties — had become rather meaningless. Yet the celebratory announcement of MSZOSZ's strike committee at the end of June that "several points of the agreement have already been fulfilled" was countered by union President Nagy's warning that the attainment of some parts of the agreement, like the provision for severance pay, would take a long time, since they required parliamentary action. He could have added the need for eventual enforcement by the courts, since some of the employers would obviously simply ignore the provisions even if they became law. The MSZOSZ victory celebrations were somewhat premature, in fact self-defeating. As the editorial writer of the daily *Magyar Hirlap* pointed out, if indeed the government met some of the union's demands with promises that they did not intend to fulfill, this "success propaganda" would almost certainly backfire: the newly-gained credibility of the union's leadership would be diminished among the members and future strike calls might go unanswered.\(^{18}\)

**The General Strike Fails as Labour's Weapon**

This indeed happened later the same year. To back its demands — which to a large extent suggested that the union was refighting the June battle — MSZOSZ called a two-hour general strike on December 17, 1991. The strike, when it came, was anything but general: on the morning of December 17 the strike committee conceded that only 28 of MSZOSZ's 69 member organizations had walked out, the others having reported that they would support the union's demands "by other means," such as signing solidarity declarations or hoisting blue flags at the plants' entrances. At the VIDEOTON factory in Székesfehérvár, where eventually the labour force was reduced by 80%, only a few workers went on strike. The rest signed protest declarations. János Fehér, secretary of MSZOSZ's VIDEOTON local, talked of the employees' "fear" of losing their jobs as an explanation for their lack of support. He was not alone in pointing to this factor in the virtual collapse of the strike, in which no more than 5-10% of the labour force appears to have participated. Newspapers reported managers threatening would-be strikers with firing. The failure of the strike was in part caused by division within the labour movement. After some talk of support, the "independent" federations failed to heed the strike call. This time it was LIGA that came to the defense of the government, asserting that MSZOSZ's demands, if conceded, would sink the budget. Sándor Nagy argued in vain that his union's demands would cost the Treasury only 40 billion forints (about US $300 million) and not the 100 billion (about US $800 million) that LIGA claimed. But the strike attempt was a clear failure, showing that labour would have to give up the general strike as its weapon.\(^{19}\)
In calling for general strikes the leadership of MSZOSZ acted out a conditioning acquired during the years of Communist domination when, as western observers like Richard B. Freeman, Derek C. Jones, and others rightly pointed out, the central leadership of labour dealt with the centre of political power, the Party and the government. The end of what Jones called "centralized wage determination" and Freeman "state wage and price setting," obviously would bring about a decentralization of bargaining. This change was not immediate, however, because the state had retained a strong presence in the economy. State ownership was rapidly diminishing — it had reportedly fallen by about 50% by 1993 — but in April 1994 the State Property Agency still controlled 1,100 of the 1,800 enterprises that it had held at the time of the old regime's collapse. Thus bargaining would still have to involve the government. Unfortunately many of the enterprises remaining in the agency's hands were hopeless cases, and had no chance of survival in the new market economy. The government and Parliament, struggling with huge budget deficits — in part because they tried to maintain jobs at these enterprises — were very resentful and uncompromising targets for the general strike. Furthermore the uncertainty and fear related to job losses made the workers reluctant to take part in general strikes: they had their hands full with pressing local issues such as saving their jobs, issues that brought them into conflict with the managements of their workplaces. Labour's struggle had begun to turn from centralized negotiations to local, plant-by-plant confrontations. The leadership of MSZOSZ had to come to terms with the fact that the labour's efforts would increasingly evolve on the local level, in bargaining conducted, as the "alternative" unions would have it, with the owners of particular enterprises. The "alternative" unions had in fact emerged during the waning years of the Communist regime, because — unlike the official union, SZOT — they had addressed local problems. Their links to western organizations, especially the help — in the form of advice and funds — offered LIGA by the AFL-CIO, also directed their attention towards local bargaining. Thus LIGA Vice-President Csaba Öry urged a turn toward "workplace-level" (munkahelyi szintű) action as early as 1991.

During the early autumn of 1993 reports about a wave of local strikes began to appear in the newspapers, a fact suggesting that Öry might indeed have had a point. In October 1993 MSZOSZ invited labour leaders from Austria, Holland, and Germany to serve as the main speakers at a conference on collective bargaining. President Nagy, addressing the meeting, spoke of the Hungarians' lack of expertise and experience in such negotiations. He also expressed alarm about the increasing splintering of MSZOSZ. At the time of SZOT's disintegration over 100 of these organizations were attached to SZOT, but by the Fall of 1993 only 59 remained. This splintering, Nagy argued, had left labour impotent and unable to conclude collective agreements, and weak because of the lack of strike funds. It was in such condition that Hungarian labour was apparently heading toward a "westernization": workplace-level bargaining, a new phenomenon, was becoming more frequent. This offered advantages, including...
the fact that such agreements had much better chance of being carried out since they were "owned" by the contracting parties. This system of bargaining brought an increasing localization of labour's efforts, which in turn generated a pressure toward uniting labour — a tendency prevailing currently in the West — since only large organizations could provide the sophisticated and costly research and legal facilities and, what's more important, the strike funds needed to make the workers' interests prevail. The persistence of industry-wide bargaining pointed to the growing importance of the MSZOSZ, which, because it was large, had more resources, both organizational and financial, than the "alternative unions." But it also suggested that the need for cooperation among the ideologically diverse federations of labour would become more and more acute as time passed.\(^{22}\)

The Conciliation Council Brings the Labour Federations Together

After the failure of the December 1991 general strike attempt, Hungarian labour increasingly resorted to another means, negotiations within the Conciliation Council. This organization brought together the government, the employers — represented by organizations like the National Association of Entrepreneurs — and the unions. Labour's turn toward the Conciliation Council coincided with the government's recognition of the necessity for dialogue with a society that was becoming increasingly hostile. The Council had been created in 1988, during the last full year of Communist rule, by a government encountering massive popular hostility. It was to be used for dialogue carried on outside the political framework, which was discredited and on the verge of collapse. The new democratic government first tended to ignore the Council because it was a creature of the Communists. But increasing labour troubles, culminating during late October 1990 in a taxi strike that paralyzed traffic in Budapest, drove home the point that contact with society between elections was needed. From 1991 the Conciliation Council became active, dealing with an increasing number of issues. This was in the government's interest in more than one way. By discussing pressing budgetary and social issues as well as legislative proposals in the Council, the government gathered information about the temper of the country. Furthermore, since the Council had no legislative but only an advisory function, the government gained time. The discussions in the Council also promised compromise solutions, a chance to avert explosions such as calls for general strikes, which even if eventually recalled were nerve-racking for the politicians.\(^{23}\)

As for labour, the hope for carrying on negotiations without strike action was not the only motivation in accepting the Council as a way of dealing with problems. Participation also brought the ideologically diverse federations together.\(^{24}\) It took the government six weeks to become resigned to the division of SZOT property agreed upon by the labour federations. The final treaty became part of a larger agreement reached in the Conciliation Council during late November 1992. Labour, presenting a united front, gained concessions that,
if carried out, would add 36 billion forints (about US$ 300 million) to the budget. The government promised an increase in the minimum wage; reductions in some of the new sales taxes that it had planned to introduce (medicines and household electricity were now to be exempted); increases in family allowances; and a commitment that the age of retirement would not be increased for women until 1995. Furthermore, public service employees would get a pay raise, instead of having their wages frozen as the government had originally planned. These concessions followed the pattern of the agreement reached in June 1991: they involved the interests of a broad spectrum of society and not only those of union members. However, at this time the nation's jobless came out losers: the duration of unemployment compensation was reduced from 18 months to 12.

Was this agreement one more move by the government to appear willing to respond to problems while really "passing the buck"? Mihály Kupa, the Finance Minister resorted to tautology when justifying "why the government's concessions went to the extreme limit": he spoke of "serious societal and social tensions." Even so, other members of the government openly attacked Kupa for having been "too accommodating" in his negotiations. In doing so, they ignored the real social tensions abroad in the country: railroad workers and coal miners talked of strikes; the elderly and retired were up in arms and organizing; and the actions of a grassroots coalition of the poor occupied the front pages of the newspapers. Soon Kupa was to be dismissed as Finance Minister altogether. Gyula Kiss, the Labour Minister, still showing hostility toward the unions instead of the protective goodwill labour ministers in western countries demonstrate, spoke of union "blackmail." Yet in spite of the disagreement within the government, Hungarians noticed that something truly new had occurred in the Conciliation Council. László Lengyel, a consistent critic of the government, praised it for once: "For the first time in Hungary and Eastern Europe a government has managed to come to an agreement with employers and employees about the next year's budget." The history-making first was recognized abroad too. Sándor Nagy, returning from a visit to Brussels in January, 1993, announced that the European Community — shocked at that time by the Danish rejection of the Maastricht Treaty and recognizing the need for dialogue between government and society — would give Hungary one million ECU to foster such dialogue. Most of the money was to be used in support of the Conciliation Council.

Things looked good, but many expected that the government would eventually back out of the agreement reached in the Council. Some questioned for instance whether the government could deliver at all on its promises. The MDF-led coalition held, of course, a majority in Parliament, but it was falling into disarray by the summer of 1993. Internal struggles within the two parties that constituted the main Parliamentary base of the government, the MDF and the Smallholder Party, undermined its ability to pass legislation. Furthermore, the Conciliation Council agreement represented a challenge to the authority of Parliament as the arbiter of the country's affairs by facing it with something of a fait accompli, reviving the old antipathy toward labour even among the opposi-
tion parties. Under tremendous pressure not only from within its own coalition parties, but also because of a growing deficit, the government presented budget proposals during the summer of 1993 that withdrew some of the concessions of the November 1992 agreement. They increased the sales tax, for instance, and froze the salaries of public service employees, including teachers, for 1994.27

The teachers were not alone in facing the new regime with a growing mistrust. Many Hungarians were asking whether the coming of democracy meant that agreements between major representative institutions and the government had no real meaning; that concessions granted could be taken back, gains won in hard bargaining lost, and labour's wars fought again and again over the same terrain. The Conciliation Council was apparently caught up in such a situation, but this was not necessarily permanent. During the last months of 1993, the government again proceeded to "throw money at the people," as one sarcastically-inclined commentator put it, describing the promises then made in the Council. The parties that constituted the government were disastrously low in the polls and elections were scheduled for the Spring of 1994. Typically one of the last agreements negotiated in the Council in 1993 offered a tax-break to virtually the entire population by making the payments due to Social Security — 10% of one's salary — tax-deductible. This promised to leave large sums in the pay-packets of employees. The show went on: the unions demanded, and the government gave in to the "blackmail."28

Postscript

The concessions made in the Conciliation Council did not save the government. It suffered a disastrous defeat in the 1994 elections. The Socialists, who presented an essentially social-democratic program, won a 52% majority. During the electoral campaign they talked of a "social contract," an economic and wage program to be worked out in the Conciliation Council. A number of labour leaders, including Sándor Nagy, who eventually resigned his union leadership, ran and won a socialist parliamentary seat. Yet the new government did not succeed in bringing the "social contract" together. The explanation for this failure was primarily the constraint in wages and social benefits that the government, facing huge budget-deficits, had to impose. Negotiations in Council, often deadlocked, tend to deal nowadays with the specific demands of the public service unions, and rarely with national issues. This is in part due to the fact that the MSZOSZ, which used to bring to the Council issues that went beyond the sphere of industrial relations and involved the interests of large segments of the population, such as the rising cost of medicines and the diminishing value of pensions, or the living conditions of low-income families, had become much weaker by the middle of the 1990s. Once it had claimed 2.5 million members, but by the summer of 1996 it reportedly had only 500,000. In contrast to the public service unions, like the teachers', which retained substantial memberships,
the unions that belong to the MSZOSZ lost members rapidly as the old flagships of socialist industry were privatized. They shrank if they did not disappear altogether. Thus the issue is not anymore whether the union born out of the Communist era SZOT is legitimate: nationwide elections held in 1993 for the Workplace Councils and the Social Security and Pension Boards — uniquely Hungarian events — gave MSZOSZ a comfortable primacy among the organizations of labour. As time passes not the legitimacy of MSZOSZ but the very existence of its locals seems to be in question.

In fact, this applies to some extent to the whole union movement. While the Communists were in power, with all the unions herded into the official SZOT, this claimed to represent almost the entire labour force. By the summer of 1995 only about 30% of the 4 million employees were reportedly members of a union. During the summer of 1996 when this essay was completed there were signs of an increasing ferment in labour activism across the nation, suggesting that the budget restraints imposed by the government and its financial policies designed to reduce consumption had gone beyond the limits people were willing to tolerate. In response to threats of large-scale strikes by health workers, teachers and others, there were promises of wage-concessions, and members of the government talked of finally negotiating the "social pact," and thereby revitalizing the Conciliation Council.

It remains to be seen whether this will really happen, and if it does, what the much weakened six labour federations — SZOLIDARITÁS had dropped out of the Council — can win in negotiating with a Socialist-led government that by a supreme historical irony is working hard to stabilize a capitalist system. Members of the government often claim that it is pro-labour, but on national television one labour-leader after another questions this.

NOTES

1 Unemployment seems to have stabilized by 1995 around 10-11%, but experts point out that official statistics do not reflect the actual situation. People numbering in their tens, possibly hundreds of thousands have given up trying to find jobs and having been out of work for more than twelve months, ceased to receive unemployment compensation. Having thus fallen in between the boards, they do not figure any more in official statistics. See Tallózó, "Napló," Dec. 24, 1992; Magyar Hírlap, Dec. 4, 1992, Mar. 31, 1993, Apr. 8 and May 8, 1995; Népszabadság, June 28 and Sept. 28, 1993, Apr. 6, 1995; Magyar Nemzet, June 3, 1995.

presents elements of the conflict that developed between the managers of state-owned enterprises and the workers during the waning years of the Communist regime.


In Freeman (op. cit., p. 118) membership figures differ somewhat from mine, which represent the 1990-1991 claims of the federations. They could not be independently confirmed. By the summer of 1993 MSZOSZ claimed only 1.2 to 1.3 million members, half of the earlier figure. (Written communication to the author, dated July 20, 1993). Discussions with union leaders, spokespersons and researchers during the summer of 1991, and the written information they offered helped me to understand the aims of the various federations and to find a focus in the flux of contemporary events. Another series of oral and written statements received during the summer of 1993 provided additional information as well as corrections to my perceptions. While thanking those listed below for their generosity in setting time aside to help with the study, I of course assume responsibility for the errors and misunderstandings that remain. I regret if those who helped me are disappointed because their points of view are not always reflected in the study; but facing a situation ripe with conflict and ideological differences, I had to try to avoid taking sides. Indebtedness is acknowledged to: Sándor Bátonyi, Béla Berkes, Gábor Borbáth, Dr. Klára Busa, János Fehér, Dr. László Filipisz, András Hegedűs and the members of the seminar he organized, Béla Kalmár, Dr. István Kamenczky, Dr. László Kis Papp, László Könbözi, Rev. Dezso Kisérdi, Dr. György Lajtai, Paula Némethy, József Suhajda, Ilona Szőllősi, Dr. Kocsárd Székely and others, as the saying goes, "too numerous to mention."


Népszava, June 4 and 6, 1991.

During the summer of 1996, a US dollar was worth about 150 forints, which represented the price of about two kilograms of bread.
Hungarians and Americans or, at least, Hungarians and Americans who were knowledgeable about the world, have known about each other ever since the birth of the American Republic. However, the awareness about Amerika by the less then highly-educated members of the Hungarian public did not start to emerge until the 1840s, while a similar knowledge about Hungary in the US was not born until the visit of Louis Kossuth to the American Republic in 1851. Thereafter, certain historical developments tended to rekindle the mutual interest of these two nations in each other. In Hungary, the great expansion of economic opportunities in the United States during the last decades of the 19th century attracted attention, as did America's gradual rise to great power status in the first half of the 20th century. In the United States, the coming of thousands of the refugees of the 1848-1849 Hungarian War of Independence, the participation of
many of these ex-soldiers in the American Civil War and, in the three-and-a-half decades before 1914, the arrival of over a million economic migrants from Hungary, contributed to a greater interest in, and knowledge of, things Hungarian. In the twentieth century, Hungary's role in the international arena also attracted the attention of America's diplomats and statesmen, and after the Revolution of 1956 in Hungary, of the wider American masses as well. Further increasing American awareness of Hungary and Hungarians was the influx of two new waves of Hungarian newcomers, after the Second World War and, more importantly, in the wake of the 1956 uprising, respectively.

Despite these historical contacts and interactions, the images Hungarians and Americans had of each other were often imperfect and incomplete. They were in many cases mere stereotypes. Little attention has been paid by historians to the evolution of the mutual views or, more precisely, of the mutual stereotypes that Magyars and Americans held of each other through the ages. The works reviewed here each contribute, to a greater or lesser extent, to the historiography of this subject and are therefore worth examining.

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Géza Závodszy's American Effects on Hungarian Imagination and Political Thought documents the fact that interaction between Hungarians and Americans existed even before 1848, in particular, that the United States had an important impact on the evolution of Hungarian political ideas and public beliefs from the time of the Republic's birth to the eve of the 1848 Revolution. To prove this, Závodszy has examined the echoes that political, economic and social developments and trends in the United States had evoked in Hungary's press and in the writings of her political and literary elites. He demonstrates that "Amerika" had a profound impact on Hungarian political ideas and provided an impetus toward demands for changes in public life, first and foremost in the realm of penal reforms.

In those times Hungarians received information about the United States through French, German and other intermediaries, from Hungarian citizens who had travelled there (or who corresponded with Americans), and above all, from travelogues about America written by Hungarians themselves. In this category, the most important work was Alexander Bölöni Farkas's Utazás Észak-Amerikában [Journey in North America] (1834), a book which achieved unprecedented popularity in Hungary until its further reprinting was banned by Habsburg authorities fearful of its pro-republican and pro-democratic sentiments. The United States depicted in Bölöni Farkas's book became the model that the great majority of Hungarian reformers wished to emulate. The impact of a later work, Ágoston Haraszthzy's similarly entitled Utazás Éjszak-Amerikában [Journey in North America] (1844), was less pervasive, although this account alerted some of its readers to the economic opportunities provided by the United States, mainly
because of the keen interest its author seems to have had in making profit while touring and learning about America.

Závodszy's monograph fills a large gap in the English-language literature of the story of Hungary's Americanization, and a smaller one in the history of that mega-trend which the author sees as the Americanization of the whole world, a process that had started in the eighteenth century and has been accelerating ever since. His book is extensively researched and contains a useful bibliography as well as biographical notes (pp. 297-313). It will undoubtedly serve a generation of students of the American impact on Hungary of the pre-1848 era. One can only hope that in the not too distant future, works of this nature will emerge also on some of the lesser documented phases of the post-1848 age.

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Professor Wandycz's paper, given as a keynote address in the conference from which issued the volume of essays *Vampires Unstaked*, does not say much about American images of Hungary, as he deals with the larger subject of French, British and American attitudes to Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, but what he says is often interesting. His first conclusion is that "the ignorance of East European matters in the West... has not appreciably diminished in spite of the emergence of groups of well qualified regional experts." (p. 18). Secondly, Wandycz argues, the images of East Europe in the West have been, in recent decades, more negative than positive." He also suggests, in particular reference to the image of Hungarians, that whether their reputation was positive or negative, depended in large part on the ideological outlook of the Westerners who were passing judgement. (p. 18).

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In *Vampires Unstaked*, Wandycz's paper is followed by László Marác's study of the Western images and stereotypes of the Magyars. This work suggests that Western images of Hungarians through the ages remained rather consistent and contained both "positive and negative values," and that shifts between these were "triggered" by "political decisions" and changing "attitudes in the West" (p. 26). Indeed, it seems that Western opinions about Hungary, from the time of the Hungarian "plundering forays" into Western Europe in the ninth century to our age, were more the result of deliberately orchestrated propaganda than of actual realities. During the 9th century such propaganda was inspired by Holy Roman Emperors whose princely rivals had recruited the Hungarians to ravage the emperors' lands. In the 17th and 18th centuries, negative images of Hungarians were propagated by the House of Habsburg as well as Germans living in Hungary, in order to discredit the Magyars' demands for more autonomy within the Habsburg realm. Conversely, positive images of Hungarians were promoted
by popes who wanted their non-Hungarian subjects to follow the example of certain particularly pious Magyar rulers, or much later by Western liberals who wished to inspire their countries' peoples with the examples set by Hungarians struggling for modernization and independence. Later, in the 20th century, the image of Hungarians underwent drastic gyrations. English propaganda against Hungary started in 1908, at the time when the United Kingdom sought rapprochement with Germany's enemies. The war of words began with R.W. Seton-Watson's *Racial Problems in Hungary* (1908), which strove to demolish the "Kossuth myth" of a liberal Hungary and replace it with an image of Magyars as obstacles to progress and oppressors of minorities. This propaganda offensive only intensified during the First World War, especially in 1917 when the aim of British (and Allied) diplomacy became the destruction of Austria-Hungary and the Western public had to be prepared for this event. Negative images of the Magyars persisted until the events in Budapest of 1956, after which Hungarians became once again positively regarded in the West. After all, they had joined the West's struggle against Soviet expansionism.

In his brief introduction to *Vampires Unstaked* André Gerrits identified the volume's first aim as outlining the images that nations of East Central Europe have of each other, as well as those that the West has of them. The second goal was to determine to what extent these images affected political decisions in — or about — the region. The volume at hand has been more successful in accomplishing the first of these aims. Concerning the second one, only tentative, and not very convincing, answers have been given. Wandycz, for example, points out that the negative image of Poles that generally prevailed in early twentieth century United States, did not keep America's leaders from supporting the cause of Polish restoration in the wake of World War I (p. 11). On the other hand, he admits that a favourable public image of a country did not necessarily result in vigorous Western action on its behalf when it was threatened by an outside power, as had been demonstrated in the case of Czechoslovakia during the Munich crisis, and again during the Soviet occupation of Prague in 1968. When everything said is taken into consideration, the following query remains basically unanswered: would the tens of millions of East Europeans who were left stateless by the post-World War I peace settlement — or found themselves living as minorities in the nation states of other peoples — have found better treatment had their image been a more favourable one in the West?

* * *

While Zavodszky's book dealt entirely with Hungarian images of America, John F. Montgomery's book (originally published in 1947 by the Devin-Adair publishing company of New York) offers an example of an American's image of Hungary. And Montgomery's view is an unusual, almost unique one, offering a
favourable portrait of both interwar Hungary and, what is more remarkable, of her elite, at a time when Western images of Hungary were generally negative.

It is well-known from about 1910 to 1956, that Hungary did not enjoy a favourable image in the West, a circumstance that must have had a very damaging impact on the country’s evolution given the fact that it was precisely in this period that two peace settlements were imposed on the Hungarian nation. How Hungary had lost its previously good reputation in the decade leading up to the outbreak of World War I is explained in part by Géza Jeszenszky’s excellent monograph, *Az elvesztett presztíz* [The lost prestige].¹ The decline of Hungary’s reputation in Great Britain contributed to a similar decline in the United States, especially during the Great War. During the this conflict English propaganda against Hungary reached the United States and was supplemented by local anti-Magyar propaganda after the US entered the war against the Central Powers in 1917.² Anti-Hungarian sentiments persisted throughout the post-war years and into the 1920s and 1930s. They were reinforced by the propaganda that was being spread by former members of the post-war revolutionary regime of Count Mihály Károlyi, as well as spokesmen of the Little Entente countries (the newly-established Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, and the greatly enlarged Rumania) who wanted to make sure that Hungary’s reputation in North America and elsewhere stayed negative, while those of their own nations continued to be favourable.

With the outbreak of the World War II in 1939, the situation further deteriorated, as the American public came to associate Hungary with the countries that had aligned their policies with those of Nazi Germany. In December of 1941 Hungary’s reputation in North America reached its nadir when the American Republic became involved in the world conflict after the attack on Pearl Harbor by Japan, and after Hungary’s government — imitating the example of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy — declared war on the United States. During the three years that followed, Hungary was seen as Hitler’s ally, and greater credibility was gained by those who wished to condemn Hungary or, at least, her ruling elite. The Hungarian émigré left went into high gear with its anti-Horthy propaganda, lead by such publicists as Oscar Jaszi and Rusztém Vámbéry.³ These voices were echoed by Little Entente spokesmen, in particular by Eduard Beneš during his tour of the United States and Canada in 1943.

Fortunately for the people of Hungary and Hungarian immigrants in America, the leadership of the US was not uniformly anti-Hungarian in sentiment. In Washington in particular, some sympathy remained throughout the war, if not for the Hungarian government then for the people of Hungary and Hungarians in general. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, despite his undeserved reputation among Hungarians as a Hungarophobe, was not antagonistic to the Hungarian nation. When Hungary’s government declared war on the United States in December of 1941, he was instrumental in delaying a US declaration of war on Hungary, saying that the people of that country had nothing to do with the government that allied itself with Nazi Germany. The US declaration of war
was only issued half-a-year later. It should also be added that Roosevelt supported the idea of restoring the Austro-Hungarian empire in one form or another after the war.4

While the US President was not entirely unsympathetic to Hungary and Hungarians, many of his officials were. Among these were Sumner Welles, the Under-Secretary of State; Hamilton Fish Armstrong, the editor of the State Department's journal Foreign Affairs; and Alan Cranston who worked in the Foreign Newspapers section of the Office of Wartime Information for a better part of the war. One fairly influential American who was an exception in this respect, and was an avowed supporter of Hungary throughout these years, was J.F. Montgomery.

John Flournoy Montgomery was born in 1878 into an "old-stock" American family. He started his career in sales and business management and, for much of his early adult life, was an executive with various subsidiaries of what later became the giant Nestle Food Company. Throughout the years, he was a supporter of the Democratic Party. In fact, soon after the Democratic electoral victory in 1933, Montgomery resigned from most of his business directorships and accepted President Roosevelt's offer to become the American envoy to Hungary.

From 1933 to 1941, when he was recalled from Budapest, Montgomery kept sending reports to Washington that revealed his sympathies for Hungary and most of her leaders. In fact, for Montgomery, the popular practice in English-speaking countries of labelling Hungary a "backward, feudal" land, was a convenient ex-post-facto justification for the ill-treatment which that country had received in the post-World War I peace settlement. And, he continued to express these views, both in newspaper articles and in State Department circles, after his departure from Budapest. On one occasion at least, Montgomery took on the task of defending Hungary's leaders against allegations made against them by members of the Hungarian émigré left in the American English-language press. His most important act in support of Hungary and its pre-1944 regime, however, was the writing of the book: Hungary, the Unwilling Satellite. Unfortunately for Hungarians, the book did not appear in print until after the war's conclusion. Accordingly, it could not make an impact on American public opinion during the negotiations in 1945 concerning a post-war settlement in East Central Europe.6

In his book, Montgomery denied that Hungary was a "feudal" and "fascist" state, as her detractors would have had the American public believe. He argued that, for much of the time he had been in Budapest, the Hungarian regime strove to maintain a free hand in foreign policy. "Up to the time when Germany and Italy were pushed together by force of events, Hungary could and did balance between the two.... This policy... gave Hungary... considerable liberty of action...." (p. 18). But Montgomery reserved most of his persuasive skills for a condemnation of the treatment that Hungary had received at the end of World War I:
[In 1919-1920] Americans were ordered to love Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Yugoslavia and to applaud the ill-treatment meted out to Hungarians... We did. We bowed reverently to the fact that one [ethnically] mixed community, Austria-Hungary, was replaced and absorbed by a number of states, three of which,... were no less mixed than the dissected empire had been.... We bowed to this settlement. To be quite exact, we did not care.... If it suited the British and French to put millions of German-Austrians and Hungarians under Czech rule, Hungarians under Rumanian, and Croats under Serbian domination, why should we be squeamish? But having helped our allies to win, we had our share of responsibility in the results of victory. We should not have washed our hands of all the injustice committed....

Even before Hitler shocked us into realizing our blunders, the truth had dawned upon some Americans... Businessmen, having visited first Croatia and then Serbia, or first Transylvania and then old Rumania, would ask... why advanced races had been put under the rule of [relatively] backward ones....

People deprived of their livelihood by their neighbors never even had a hearing. At the same time, those who profited by the victors' arbitrary discrimination showered us with an unceasing flow of propaganda.... the object of which was to keep what had been seized....

Having been American Minister to Hungary from 1933 to 1941, my regular post of observation... was Budapest. It was a unique post because the Magyars,... were always aware of being between the two fires of German and Russian imperialism. During those years, most of us saw only one fire, the German one. Hungary's vision was far ahead of ours. Had we listened to Hungarian statesmen, we should perhaps have been able to limit Stalin's triumph in the hour of Hitler's fall.

Between the two wars,... from my watchtower on the Danube... what I witnessed was a tragic and insoluble conflict between fear and honor, in which fear was bound to win. It is an undeniable fact that on many occasions those who had been treated as stepchildren by the Western powers in 1919 showed more loyalty to the Allied cause than their spoiled favorites did. 7

In his final condemnation of the post-World War I peace settlement with Hungary, Montgomery asks the pertinent question: "Would it not have been better if we had opposed the arbitrary discrimination indulged in by the surgeons of 1919, who thereby afforded Hitler his most powerful arguments?" 8

As has been mentioned above, Montgomery's view were rare if not unique among American officials during and immediately after the Second World War. The general attitude to Hungary, and especially to her interwar and wartime regime, was one of hostility and derision. It had to be the outbreak of
an anti-Soviet revolution in Hungary in 1956 that would alter American attitudes to the country and its people.

The re-publication of Montgomery's little-known 1947 book will be welcome news for those who feel that Hungary had too much negative publicity as a result of her participation in the Second World War.

The works reviewed here, despite their varying lengths and differing scholarly qualities, are useful contributions to the subject of the images — and stereotypes — that Hungarians and Americans have of each other. While they close some of the gaps in the literature of this subject, they leave ample room for further research.

NOTES


8Ibid.
Book Reviews


Traduit du hongrois, le livre retrace l'histoire des Hongrois dès le IXe s. jusqu'à la prise du pouvoir des communistes, imposés par l'URSS après la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. Dans l'avant-propos, l'auteur spécifie ses intentions: "Le présent ouvrage est, de par son intention, un récit littéraire, une esquisse de l'évolution de notre essence hongroise". (p. 7) Tout comme la France, la Hongrie est habitée par une nation de penchant littéraire.

Dans l'ordre chronologique, les nombreux chapitres brefs évoquent, à la lumière de témoignages historiques tumultueux et percutants, les grandes périodes de l'histoire hongroise. En outre, au-delà de l'histoire connue, l'auteur renseigne le lecteur sur les faits historiques moins bien connus mais parfois révélateurs. Ainsi, même la plupart des lecteurs hongrois, ignoraient dans ses détails, que Janos Hunyadi, durant la décennie 1430, avait été un "condottiere" en Italie au service de l'empereur ou de Philippo Visconti, duc de Milan. Tout en accumulant les dignités et honneurs, en 1446 il était déjà propriétaire de 4 millions 130 mille arpents! Au total 28 forteresses, 57 villes, 1 000 villages. (p. 113) Toute cette fortune avait été acquise en une décennie.

À côté de ce chef de guerre, dont la victoire sur les Turcs à Belgrade, en 1456, est à l'origine de l'angelus de midi, il est intéressant d'évoquer la famille Zrínyi, défenseurs, elle aussi de l'Europe chrétienne. Suite à la catastrophe de Mohács, en 1526, les XVIe et XVIIe s. seraient marqués, entre autres, par la lutte contre l'occupant turc, ensuite, les autrichiens.

Le comte Miklós Zrínyi, qui maniait le sabre et la plume, incarnait le patriote héroïque, qui était prêt, comme ses ancêtres, à sacrifier tout pour la patrie. La Hongrie, coincée entre l'Empire ottomane et l'Autriche, ne pouvait compter que sur elle-même. En regardant les nations européennes "chrétiennes" Zrínyi conclut qu'aucune d'entre elles ne ferait de sacrifices pour libérer la Hongrie, "bouclier" de l'Europe. Honoré par le toison d'or espagnole, aristocrate cultivé et renseigné, il émettait cette opinion au milieu du XVIIe sur la France: "La nation française, lorsqu'elle n'est pas en guerre pour elle-même, on ne peut pas en attendre grand chose. Les Français, lorsqu'ils sont victorieux, sont insupportables, lorsqu'ils sont misérables, ne valent rien". (p. 185)
Suite à l'expulsion des Turcs en 1686, vient une autre période, celle de Rákóczi, la guerre d'indépendance contre l'Autriche, soutenue par la France. Un siècle et demi plus tard, la révolution de 1848 et la guerre d'indépendance qui suivra, mettra la Hongrie à l'épreuve en affrontant à la fois les armées russe et autrichienne. Le général Lajos Aulich, avait mis l'ordre que voici: "Notre lutte, que nous menons contre deux puissances présomptueuses d'Europe, n'est pas celle de la nationalité, mais celle de la liberté générale contre l'absolutisme". (p. 250)

Le lecteur dirait qu'il s'agit d'une histoire triste de ce peuple dont le territoire de la patrie et de ses membres ont été traités comme une vulgaire marchandise et distribués par les puissances victorieuses de la Première Guerre mondiale à ses voisins par le tristement célèbre traité de Trianon...

Le livre est complété par des renseignements ponctuels et précis sur l'histoire de la Hongrie. Il s'agit d'un livre facile à lire et le lecteur francophone en Europe ou en Amérique du Nord pourrait s'initier ou compléter ses connaissances sur le Hongrois.

Paul Pilisi
Université du Québec à Chicoutimi


Qu'il soit permis au recenseur de rendre hommage à celui pour qui le destin a donné deux patries à servir: la France et la Hongrie. Sándor Lezsák, directeur de la Fondation Lakitelek a voulu honorer l'engagement infaillible de Yves de Daruvár pour la Hongrie. Ernő Raffay termine l'avant-propos en ces termes: "Chaque ligne d'Yves de Daruvár est imprégné par son engagement envers la cause magyare... et celui qui le lira, l'enfermera dans son coeur." György Fehér, à titre de rédacteur, propose au lecteur la biographie familiale des Daruvár Kacskovich, illustrée par les portraits des ancêtres. Viennent ensuite les extraits de discours, des publications de l'auteur, notamment de son livre intitulé "Le destin dramatique de la Hongrie" (1971), entrecoupés de photos illustrant sa brillante carrière. Les extraits de ses mémoires de guerre, "De Londre à la Tunisie, carnet de route de la France Libre" (1995), retraquent l'itinéraire suivi de celui qui deviendra commandeur de la Légion d'honneur, compagnon de la libération et administrateur en chef des affaires d'outre-mer. Le livre, présenté sous un format soigné, se termine par la chronologie d'activités d'Yves de Daruvár au service de la cause magyare.
La personnalité de Daruvár a été bien connue par l'émigration hongroise. À l'automne 1981, ses organisations en Amérique du Nord lui réservaient honneurs, reconnaissances et distinctions. Quel agréable surprise m'attendait à Chicoutimi, quand le regreté Miklos Zay, ami et condisciple de lycée à Paris m'a appris, qu’ils viendraient, après presque quarante années de retrouvailles, nous rendre visite. C'est à Chicoutimi qu'Yves de Daruvár m'a dédicacé son livre sur "Le destin dramatique de la Hongrie" ..., en souvenir de sa conférence au Collège du Cardinal Mindszenty de Louvain (Leuven) (de 1972) en Belgique. C'est dans la revue, "Documentation sur l'Europe centrale" de l'Institut de recherche synonyme, fondé par le père István Muzslay S.J., que les nombreuses études d'Yves de Daruvár ont été publiées. Le père Muzslay, qui a tant fait pour la jeunesse etudiantine hongroise de l'Université Catholique de Louvain ainsi que pour la cause hongroise, a été décoré par le gouvernement de Hongrie en 1991. Yves de Daruvár, né à Constantinople d'un père hongrois et d'une mère française, ne sachant pas le hongrois, mais comprenant mieux que quiconque le destin dramatique de ce peuple, a donné un service inestimable au peuple Magyare.

De la Fondation Lakitelek vient cet hommage solennel et le témoignage de vive reconnaissance d'une autre patrie à la fois proche et lointaine...

Paul Pilisi
Université du Québec à Chicoutimi


For almost three-and-a-half decades after the Revolution in Hungary in 1956, few people suspected that top secret Soviet documents will be made public in their lifetime concerning this fateful event in the evolution of the Soviet Empire. Then came Gorbachev, glasnost, and the collapse of the Soviet system. These developments made possible the release of Soviet documents concerning Hungary in 1956. In fact, in November of 1992 Russian President Boris Yeltsin delivered to Árpád Göncz, his Hungarian counterpart, a file containing nearly 300 pages of such documents.

The "Yeltsin file," as this collection of documents has become known, covers the period from April 1956 to June of 1958. That is, it deals with events in Hungary during the gestation of the revolutionary outbreak, the uprising itself, and the trial and execution of Imre Nagy in 1958 which can be seen as the final act of the drama that had unfolded in Budapest in two years earlier. The file contains a variety of documents. There are diplomatic and party reports on the situation in Hungary, intelligence and military assessments, memoranda of
discussions with Hungarian communist officials, submissions from members of the Hungarian party elite, as well as directives from the powers-to-be in Moscow to Soviet officials dealing with the Hungarian situation. The documents themselves seem to have originated from two archival collections. One of these is the Presidential Archives of the Soviet Union, a repository of historical records that apparently had been established by Gorbachev. This collection housed transcripts of decisions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, as well as those of the Party's Presidium — earlier known as the Politburo. It also contained the diplomatic, military and intelligence reports that had been directed to these Party organs during 1956-1958. The rest of the documents have come from the archives of the Soviet Union's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This archival collection housed the reports that the then Soviet Ambassador to Hungary, Yuri Andropov had sent to Moscow, as well as Marshall Zhukov's reports on the military aspects of the Hungarian situation.

Even though before the disintegration of the Soviet Union historians had no access to top secret Soviet archival collections, much of the history of the 1956 Revolution in Hungary was well known. Hundreds of books and thousands of shorter works have been written on the subject. Much has been written on the impact of the Revolution on other countries, including the leadership of the Western powers. If there was one aspect of the topic which has not been known extensively before, it has been the deliberations and actions of the Soviet leadership. The documents in the Yeltsin file have helped to clarify to a degree this aspect of the Revolution's history. They do more than this however. They throw considerable light on the issue of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. They indicate, for example, that before the outbreak of trouble in Budapest, the Soviets were suspicious of anti-Soviet activities by the staff of the Yugoslav embassy in the Hungarian capital. And, the documents also show that as soon as the Revolution was crushed by Soviet troops, Yugoslav-Soviet relations once again deteriorated, mainly over the issue of the treatment meted out by the Soviets and their Hungarian quislings to Imre Nagy and his "accomplices." Only at the moment of danger to all communist regimes, at the very end of October and the first days of November, did the Yugoslav and Soviet leadership see eye to eye on the need to reign in the Hungarian experiment in democracy and pluralism as it seemed to pose a great danger to both Soviet and Yugoslav communism.

The documents also reveal that, in most cases and most of the time, the Soviet leadership was not receiving accurate information on the situation in Hungary. Soviet decisions then, were made on the basis of misinformation. No one can answer the question what the Soviet reaction might have been, if it had been based on more accurate assessments of the situation in Hungary. Perhaps there would not have been a second intervention by Soviet troops, and the government of Imre Nagy would have been allowed to go on with its experiment in political pluralism and neutrality. This in turn might have changed the whole history of the Soviet Empire. We will never know. However, the fact that the
Soviet leadership was not getting — in fact, could not obtain — accurate information on developments in Hungary, reveals one of the great weaknesses of the Soviet system.

Evidently, the Yeltsin file is an incomplete one. It is a selection of documents, prepared in haste, from a much larger body of Soviet party and governmental records. It is no more than a sampling of the documentation that existed in two of the archives of the Russian Republic in 1992. Especially regrettable are the gaps in the documentation of the events in Moscow during the end of October, when the momentous decision was taken to crush the revolution in Hungary. The actual document, recording the October 31st decision of the Presidium to send in the Red Army, is there, but not any memoranda that would explain the circumstances of that fateful deed. Nor are there documents in the collection that would throw much additional light on the processes which saw János Kádár selected as Hungary’s new communist leader. Very few of the documents reveal much about the Soviet Union’s dealings with other great powers concerning the problems in Hungary. On the other hand, the Yeltsin file confirms many historical conjectures regarding the role of the Soviets in controlling or trying to control developments in Hungary before, during, and after the uprising. It also underlines the role that Marshall Tito of Yugoslavia and his advisers had played in the decision to crush the revolution. And the file clarifies the aggressive role that the Soviets assumed in the process of exacting retribution from the Hungarian people for participating in an anti-communist (and, anti-Soviet) uprising.

Almost as fast as the collection had been selected in Moscow, the Hungarians — in particular the staff of the Institute for the Study of 1956 — translated and prepared the documents for publication. Fortunately, they had done a credible job. The documents are amply annotated, and errors or misinformation in them are set right in the footnotes. And the collection is supplied with a comprehensive and informative introduction by historian György Litván, the Institute’s director.

N.F. Dreisziger
Royal Military College of Canada

NOTES

A few of the documents that appear in A "Jelcin-dosszié" have been published in English, in János M. Rainer, ed., “1956 — The Other Side of the Story, Five Documents from the Yeltsin File” The Hungarian Quarterly, Vol. 34 (Spring 1993), pp. 100-114.


An earlier collection of papers dealing with the revolution in Hungary — its origins, events and aftermath — is still available: *The Hungarian Revolution Twenty Years After: Selected Papers and Perspectives* (Ottawa, 1976). To order this 140-page paperback volume, send a cheque for $10.00 (payable to the Hungarian Studies Review) to N.F. Dreisziger, Department of History, ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE OF CANADA, PO BOX 17000 STN FORCES, KINGSTON ON K7K 7B4 CANADA. (Please print the last three lines of the address in capital letters, as given here).

In Place of Obituaries: Remembering Robert Blumstock, Gyula Juhász, and Andrea Horváth.

In the 1970s and the 1980s occasionally obituaries appeared in our journal, marking the passing of one or another member of our editorial advisory board, or a stalwart contributor. We have not published such notices in the past several years. The reason for this was not the absence of death in the HSR's circle of friends and associates. In fact, in the period in question, we lost three people who have had an impact on our journal in one way or another. These were sociologist Robert Blumstock, historian Gyula Juhász, and linguist Andrea Horváth.

When Robert Blumstock died in April of 1995, the HSR lost a friend and editorial colleague who had cooperated with the journal's principal editors for nearly two decades. He had come to Canada from his native United States in 1964 to teach sociology at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. It was Professor Blumstock's interest in Hungary, the birthplace of his mother, that brought him in contact with our journal. He also took a leading role in the establishment and early work of the Hungarian Studies Association of Canada, and served as President of that organization for a term. His publications also tended to deal with Hungarian or Hungarian-Canadian topics. One of the latter was his edited volume: Békevár: Working Papers on a Canadian Prairie Community (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1979). Among his other publications were a half-dozen chapters in books, a dozen articles in scholarly journals, and a great many conference papers and short, popular writings. He would often appear in print in the local newspapers, commenting on some public controversy. On one occasion, he had half-seriously recommended, in one of the Hamilton dailies, that Canada adopt Hungarian as its official language. He argued that this would make Canada less vulnerable to the impact of American mass culture and would also solve the problem of linguistic sexism: as is well-known, Magyar is gender-neutral. The suggestion was a reflection of Bob Blumstock's sense of humour.

Robert Blumstock had fought a long battle with cancer. Even though he was ill during the last several years of his life, he continued to teach, to participate in academic life — he had planned to attend a Hungarian studies conference in Rome during the last days of his life — and to research and write. His book
on the *Jewish Question in Hungary, 1848-1948* was accepted for publication not long before his untimely passing.

** **

Gyula Juhasz was a prominent historian and academic administrator in the Hungary of the 1960s to the early 1990s. He had not participated in our journal’s editorial work, nevertheless he contributed to the *HSR*'s well-being nearly a decade ago when, as chief executive officer of the Országos Széchényi Könyvtár or National Széchényi Library of Hungary, he had helped to cement the link between the *HSR* and his institution. Because Gyula Juhasz’s list of publications would take pages to reproduce, it will have to suffice to enumerate only his most prominent books: *A Teleki-kormány küllpolitikája, 1939-1941* [The Foreign Policies of the Teleki Government, 1939-1941] (1964); *Hungarian Foreign Policy, 1919-1945* (1979); *Magyarország küllpolitikája a nyugati hadjáráttól a Szovjetunió megtámadásáig, 1940-1941* [Hungary's foreign policy from the time of the Western Campaign to the invasion of the Soviet Union], vol. V of the series *Diplomáciai iratok Magyarország küllpolitikájához, 1936-1945* [Diplomatic documents on Hungary's foreign policy, 1936-1945] (1982); *A háború és Magyarország, 1938-1945* [The War and Hungary, 1938-1945] (1986). His last book, *A történező jólzansága* [The soberness of the historian] (1994), was published posthumously. (For comments on this book, see below, pp. 127-128.)

** **

Andrea Horváth’s passing is perhaps the most difficult for us to accept and report. The reason for this is not the fact that she had been a long-term associate of the journal. Indeed, fate had prevented Andrea from having a chance to offer such help to the *HSR*. She had hardly passed her final doctoral examination when the diagnosis of a potentially incurable disease was made. For some time before then she had participated in our work, the work of the Hungarian Studies Association of Canada, and had been close to the journal, both in the figurative and literal sense of that word: she often used the *HSR*'s office at the University of Toronto to study or to receive her students. Her passing is particularly painful because it comes at a time when scholars in the field of Hungarian studies — many of whom are contemplating retirement within a decade — often lament that there are very few young people to follow in their academic footsteps.

N.F. Dreisziger

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Others remember Robert Blumstock:

Bob Blumstock came to McMaster in 1964. His special fields of sociology — ethnicity, ideology, and religion — enriched the Department's course offerings. From the beginning, he showed a strong interest in the development of the Department and played a key role in the evolution of the undergraduate and graduate programmes. By 1968, he had become the Department Chair, and during this time he saw the Ph.D. programme approved and the first of a long line of students accepted into the programme. He was instrumental in attracting foreign students to McMaster, especially from Hungary, and he contributed to the study of comparative industrial studies.

The only child of Jewish immigrants to New York from Hungary, he attended City College of New York for his B.A. and M.A. (1957), then the University of Oregon... When he obtained his doctorate in 1964, he had already been teaching for two years at the University of Connecticut; from there, he came to McMaster. The culture of civility which he saw here, and which he believed to be quintessentially Canadian, suited him just fine; so he became a citizen and remained at McMaster for the rest of his career.

During the first third of his tenure at McMaster, Bob enjoyed informal contacts with students and colleagues. He talked to people in the hall, at lunch, wherever. He and his wife, Ruth, were generous hosts for parties in their home for students, colleagues, friends, and visitors to the Department....

He was a contributing author and editor of two books, a half-dozen book chapters, a dozen articles in refereed journals, and innumerable works in the popular press. He was past Vice-President and President of the Hungarian Studies Association... He was visiting professor at Attila Jozsef University in Szeged in 1990; visiting lecturer at Karl Marx University in Budapest in 1972; and at the University of Lethbridge in 1988.

He was a neo-liberal long before it became fashionable to be one. He knew about Marxism, not just as a field of study, but as only someone who has lived in a Marxist state can know it; for years before the implosion of socialism in Eastern Europe, he had been commenting on the "irrelevance of ideology" for that region in both English-language and Magyar scholarly journals and books. His ongoing work on civil religion, on ideology, and on contemporary trends in Eastern Europe reflected that knowledge; so did the countless Hungarian refugees who were welcomed, given practical aid, and offered friendship.

During the latter part of his career, his substantive interests shifted somewhat and focused on Hungarian-Jewish intellectuals in the interwar period,... Although very ill for many years, he continued working on his research projects: a paper on values in post-communist Europe...; another, on Herzl and Heltai before Zionism, was to be presented at a conference in Rome just days after he died...
He had a gift for satire, an unerring eye for sacred cows, a fine sense of the ridiculous. He was a respected lecturer and supervisor. "His" graduate students and others who worked with him or knew him will remember a man who took pains to see them through, who acted like a catharine-wheel of sparking ideas, who brought humour and friendship to the academic environment. We have lost the wit, the insights and the advice that were his hallmarks.

Frank E. Jones, Roy W. Hornosty, and David Lewis
Department of Sociology, McMaster University

And Gyula Juhasz:

The book, A történész józansága [The soberness of the historian], is a mirror image of Professor Juhasz's work of a lifetime, it is a brief and somewhat incomplete summary of his career. It consists of three parts: the first contains scholarly studies, the second popular articles, and the third, interviews that he had given. If we had to categorize his writings by subject, three groupings would emerge as well: the development of Hungarian diplomacy between the two world wars and particularly during the second and, within this theme, especially Anglo-Hungarian relations; national self-awareness, the knowledge of things Hungarian, and the question of "who is a Hungarian?"; and last, the related issue of intellectual and cultural life between the wars and during World War II. The book at hand contains first rate studies relating to all three of these themes. And in every one of these there is revealed Gyula Juhasz's basic approach as a historian: one that is free of emotionalism, that places emphasis on archival sources, and an approach that is strictly scholarly....

For me, the most exciting writings [in this book] were those that explored the evolution of Anglo-Hungarian relations. These relations became most serious during the Second World War, especially after 1943 when through diplomatic and other channels secret negotiations started between the two countries. The theme of these discussions was exploring the possibility of Hungary's departure from the war and the avoidance of a German and, in time the increasingly obvious prospect of a Russian occupation. We know the outcome: we were not able to avoid either a German or a Russian occupation.

The question why we were unsuccessful in this finds possible answers in several of Juhasz's studies. I will mention only three, the one about the foreign policy of Count Teleki, the other about the Second Vienna Award, and the third about Hungarian revisionism. These writings depict Hungary's most important statesmen: Pál Teleki, whose diplomatic orientation and efforts to keep Hungary neutral in the war] proved bankrupt [in the spring of 1941], and who — no
longer able to shoulder the pressure brought upon him by the Germans — committed suicide.... But beyond Teleki, these writings trace the politics of László Bárdossy. Yes, Bárdossy, who, contrary to popular belief, was not a pro-German politician from the beginning. And, of course, there is Miklós Kállay and his increasingly desperate efforts to get out of the war.... And, above all, there is Miklós Horthy. The very Horthy whose politics are subject of lively debate in the media of our days, and whose image often finds overly favourable or excessively unfavourable depiction depending on the political tastes of his advocates or critics. A real historian, however, cannot be partial.... He or she can like or dislike the dramatis personae [of his works], he or she must judge them with unclouded intellect, and on the basis of the facts. What also emerges from Gyula Juhász's book, is an estimate of in what way and to what extent Horthy was responsible for what happened in Hungary between 1920 and 1945. In the interview entitled "the need for accounting," which appeared originally on the 40th anniversary of the Holocaust, deals with the question how it was possible that in May and the early summer of 1944 the Germans were able to deport in short order the majority of rural Hungary's Jews, some 435,000 people.

That Horthy shouldered a great deal of the responsibility for this tragedy, we know and cannot disregard. But before we look for scapegoats, it does not hurt to look at the facts and the archival and other sources. What had transpired during the discussions between Hitler and Horthy at Klessheim on March 18, 1944? What is it that we know for sure about these discussions, and what is it that we still don't? What prompted Horthy to stop the deportation of the Jews of Budapest in July of 1944?...

These are some of the questions to which Juhász had sought answers in his works. What we can also learn from the papers in this volume is... that we must take care to examine historical events from various points of view, and that we must travel a long road before we can come to the drawing of conclusions....
