

and then getting ordained as a female rabbi. In her dissertation she conveyed feminist messages and created for herself the term *Fräulein Rabbiner*, so as not to be confused with a *Frau Rabbinerin*, a rabbi's wife. She felt initially that a female rabbi should remain unmarried but eventually had a deep affair with a famous widowed rabbi much her senior who would not marry her. Even in a liberal community she could work only because by 1935 there was a shortage of rabbis due to their emigration. She would not leave Germany and was deported along with her mother to Theresienstadt in 1942, where she continued to tend to her flock, and she was killed in Auschwitz in 1944.

Reading the biographies in this volume makes the reader wish for more such stories of so many others who have not received their due. As examples, one might cite just two women from very different backgrounds: Jozka Jaburkova (1896-1942), born poor, a pacifist, communist, newspaper reporter, and novelist, who perished in Ravensbrück; and Else Ury (1877-1943), the best-selling author of the beloved *Nestkästchen* series of books for girls, gassed at Auschwitz. In conclusion, what Calloni says in her article on the life of Rosselli, and what Gerda Lerner stated in broader theoretical terms, is applicable to this whole volume, that the reconstruction of the life of such Jewish women is critical for the re-interpretation of history.

Louise Vasvári, Stony Brook University and New York University

Thomas Sakmyster. *A Communist Odyssey: The Life of József Pogány/John Pepper*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2012. 249 pages. ISBN: 978-615-5225-08-6

A talented and ambitious politician, even if his character is strong and his intentions pure, rarely fails to acquire enemies during his career. If the politician's character and intentions are corrupt, as was the case with József Pogány/John Pepper, the subject of Thomas Sakmyster's new biography, his fate is sealed. If he is lucky enough to escape public disgrace, avoid arrest and escape execution, his talent, ambition and character faults will ultimately catch up with him after his death, as he is judged by history. No Communist, with the possible exception of Béla Kun and Tibor Szamuely, evoked so much hostility among his conservative contemporaries as József Pogány. In contrast to Kun or Szamuely, however, Pogány was disliked and even demonized by his socialist and communist comrades. Executed during the Stalinist purges in 1938 but rehabilitated in

1956, Pogány never entered the pantheon of communist heroes in Hungary or the Soviet Union. He remained a “forgotten communist” until the collapse of the one-party state in 1989, or, rather, the publication of Thomas Sakmyster’s book in 2012.

Pogány seems to have been, indeed, a rather dislikeable character: by all evidence, Sakmyster makes it clear in his study, he was arrogant, abrasive, egotistic, conceited, immoral, deceitful and, most importantly, opportunistic. He had either betrayed or was ready to betray, every idea, person and movement with whom he had come into contact during his relatively short life but long political career. Already as a teenager, he cut ties with his family and his Jewish background; to advertise his new found faith in Marxism, he even changed his family name from Schwarz to Pogány (pagan). The young Pogány was a social democrat and a Hungarian nationalist before 1918. In March 1919, however, he switched his allegiance to Communism (a movement that he had only a few months earlier denounced). In August 1919, after the collapse of the Council Republic in August, he became a stateless revolutionary; at least after 1922, he no longer displayed any interest in Hungarian politics and culture. Sent on a mission to the United States in the early 1920s, he learned English quickly, immersed himself fully in American culture and, by the mid-1920s, was well on his way to become an American “super-patriot.” In 1929, as a Comintern functionary in a secret mission in the United States, Pogány even thought about defecting, and leaving the life of a professional revolutionary behind for the pleasures and security of private life in Canada or the United States. Pogány, according to Sakmyster, betrayed not only every ideology and political movement; he was also disloyal to friends, comrades and family members. He owed his career in the Soviet Republic to Béla Kun, yet in exile in Vienna in the early 1920s, he called his friend a “scoundrel” and sought to remove him from the leadership of the Hungarian Communist Part. In Moscow, he was a friend and ally of Zinoviev, who accelerated his rise in the Comintern hierarchy; yet, in 1926, he joined the Stalinist campaign against his mentor and watched his political demise from the sidelines. The labour leader Jay Lovestone helped him to settle in the United States and find his way in the maze of American politics; yet in 1930, he denounced him as a traitor. A hedonist by nature, Pogány betrayed his wife on countless occasions and neglected his daughters.

Nonetheless, unlike the majority of contemporary conservative commentators, and later historians such as Elemér Mályus, Sakmyster does not demonize the subject of his research. Pogány, according to Sakmyster, was a man of considerable talent: he was a gifted journalist, and

imposing orator, a great organizer and talented tactician. Like the Nazi propaganda minister and fellow hedonist, Goebbels, he even harboured ambitions as a writer. As a sign of his political talent, he predicted the July Crisis would lead to a continental war, revolutions and to the destruction of multi-ethnic empires and the conservative liberal order. He recognized American “exceptionalism” as a real political force, and sought to create a moderate Labour Party on the British model and on the basis of an alliance between workers and poor farmers. He made a major contribution to history of the labour movement in the United States by publishing the *Daily Worker*. Yet, as Sakmyster makes it clear in his book, Pogány’s impact on both Hungarian and world history was, on the whole, negative. As a head of the Soldiers’ Council in 1918 and early 1919, he contributed to the demotion of two war ministers, thus making the reform of the army and the defence of the country against the invading Czech and Romanian armies more difficult. As the Commissar of War in the spring of 1919, and as minor military leader later in the summer, he made no meaningful contribution to the defence of his homeland and to the protection of the Soviet state. After the collapse of the Council Republic, with Béla Kun he helped to organize the March Action in Germany in 1921; the premature workers’ uprising resulted in thousands of casualties and led to a serious weakening of the German Communist Party in 1921. His attempt to move the American Communist Party closer to the political center by creating a moderate Labour Party after 1923 did not bear fruit. Through his vanity, self-aggrandizement, opportunism and vindictiveness, he injected poison into political debates and exacerbated tensions between political factions in every country in which he lived. Despite his considerable talent at political maneuvering, he failed to switch sides and abandon Bukharin in time in 1929. Although rehabilitated in the early 1930s, Pogány was never able to recover his earlier influence in the Communist movement. He did not prevent his own demise, foresee his arrest or change the minds of his prosecutors during the interrogation. Like thousands of Central European Communists of the first hour, he watched the unfolding of the Stalinist terror from the sidelines, until he himself was consumed by it in 1938.

Sakmyster wrote a highly important book on the life and political career of one of the most controversial characters in Hungarian history. The book is based on a number of new, hitherto unknown or underused primary sources, such as the unpublished oral memoirs of Pogány’s wife, Irén Czóbel, the archives of the Communist International and the Communist Party of the United States, and the FBI files on John Pepper. The book makes a major contribution to the study of the Hungarian civil war

after the First World War and to the understanding of complicated factions within the Communist movement both in Europe and the United States. But the *Communist Odyssey* is, first and foremost, an enjoyable read. Sakmyster is a masterful storyteller who brings places, events and protagonists back to life in his works. His well-written and engaging study should find a place in reading lists and syllabi of undergraduate and graduate courses in central European history.

Béla Bodó, Missouri State University.

Róbert Hermann, editor. *Illustrated Military History of Hungary*. Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 2012. 272 pages. ISBN 978-963-327-558-0.

Magyars on horseback! Raiding and pillaging feudal Europe! These are the images embedded in common mythology, but what are some other facets of Hungary's martial prowess through the years?

The authors of this eminently readable history give a detailed account of Hungary's military past and present, and base their results on solid research. Their stated goal in the introduction is to present the main military events and how they took place, and furthermore to show aspects of Hungarian military affairs which harmonize with or depart from European military developments. The book achieves its purpose, giving the reader a pleasant ride along the way.

Livening up the scholarly prose are the numerous maps and full-color pictures, which are useful and engaging. They tell a story in and of themselves when looked at independent of the text, showing a progression of historical events from archeological artifacts and flat medieval paintings, to manuscripts and ruins of castles, from Romantic paintings and hand-drawn maps of battle lines to grainy black and white photographs, and finally to contemporary color photographs of recent deployments. The illustrations and pictures give the reader an agreeable experience, breaking up the detailed scholarly accounts. The graphic design is superb, worthy of coffee-table status.

The chapters divide over a thousand years of military history into easily digestible chunks, from the first contacts with Europe by the Magyar marauders (by László Veszprémy), to Hungary's role as the defender of Christianity from Mongol and Ottoman hordes (József Kelenik). The ascent of the hussars (István Czigány), Hungarian participation in the Napoleonic wars, the Revolution of 1848-1849 from a military perspective (Róbert Hermann), service in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and in the Red Army (Tibor Balla and Ferenc Pollmann), the post-World War One