

BOOK REVIEWS

Thomas Spira, *The German-Hungarian-Swabian Triangle 1936-1939: The Road to Discord*. East European Monographs, No. CCLXXXV. Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1990. 275 pages.

As a result of the Versailles and Trianon peace treaties with their denial of the right of self-determination to large minorities of Germans and Magyars, the foreign policies of Germany and Hungary were revisionist in the interwar period. But Central European boundaries were impossible to revise until Hitler began to use force in 1938, a turn of events which posed both a challenge and a danger to Hungary. How could Hungary with its large ethnic German minority of Swabians benefit without being drawn into Nazi Germany's orbit? This is the central question Thomas Spira is attempting to address in his inquiry into the triangular interaction between Hungary's Magyar rulers, Germany's Nazi regime, and Hungary's Swabians.

Relying largely on relevant English, German, and Hungarian historical literature and published source materials, Spira examines systematically how Hungarian diplomacy, economic policy, and minority practices responded to Nazi Germany's expansion in Europe. Each of these issues receives separate and equal attention, and their evolution is analyzed year by year. The fourteen chapters include informative introductory and concluding ones, which provide a historical context and help to integrate the book's different aspects.

The author argues that between 1936 and 1939 Hungary managed to preserve its freedom of action by an astute combination of caution and craftiness. While eluding Nazi German designs to control Hungarian domestic and foreign policy, Hungary's leaders were able to further their country's own revisionist objectives until as late as 1939. In its diplomatic dealings with Germany and the Little Entente powers Hungary skillfully

engaged in what Spira termed *Realpolitik*, in its commercial relations Hungary reneged on contractual obligations imposed by Germany, and in its minority language policy Hungary practiced duplicity, i.e., a shrewd strategy of legislating pseudo-concessions.

Spira identifies three objectives of Hungarian foreign policy in 1936: to revise the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, to avoid war, and to prevent German domination of eastern Europe. He concludes that successive Hungarian governments, especially those of Gömbös and Teleki, came close to achieving these goals by making the best possible use of opportunities and limited resources. Spira contends that Hungarian diplomacy in 1938 slowed down Hitler's timetable in Czechoslovakia for half a year. On the other hand, Hungary appears as a willing accomplice in isolating and eventually dismembering Czechoslovakia, as evidenced by its desire to annex all of Slovakia and more. Spira maintains that Hungary was able to contain temporarily the Third Reich's advance in East Central Europe, but this contention conflicts with Hungary's apparent aspiration to restore with the help of Germany and Italy its pre-World War I boundaries at the expense of Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia.

The record of commercial relations confirms Hungary's conflicting ambitions of defying German supremacy on a wide range of issues (e.g. by defaulting on tying its allocation of agricultural produce to German requirements) while benefiting from Germany's reliable market. Not so much subservience to Germany, as the loss of its lucrative Italian and Austrian customers compelled Hungary to increase trade with Germany. Instead of a satellite, Hungary thus became Germany's uneasy ally of convenience. It is arguable whether by the outbreak of World War II Hungarian-German relations should be characterized as "thinly disguised mutual animosity."

Hungary's minority policy from 1936 to 1939, according to Spira, was largely determined by public apprehensions of the Third Reich's intervention into Hungary's internal affairs. The desire to preserve its independence stiffened Hungary's resolve to refuse meaningful educational and cultural concessions to German Hungarians. Ironically, this minority policy also encouraged the growth of pro-Nazi sentiment among Swabians and increased Hungary's difficulty of balancing its obligations to Germany without compromising Hungarian sovereignty.

Spira's in-depth study conveys a sympathetic image of the perceived dilemma of Hungarian policy-makers in the 1930s. It also raises issues begging to be addressed from a present-day viewpoint. For example, the reader needs a critical discussion of Hungarian minority practices and Hungary's enduring quest for large chunks of Rumania, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. How did Hungarian politicians and governments reconcile their persistent opposition to any form of multiculturalism with the demand for self-determination to Magyars living outside the borders of postwar Hungary?

By pointing out that the territories Hungary wanted contained non-Magyars resentful of pre-World War I Magyar assimilationist policies, Spira implies that Hungary's revisionist territorial demands ignored the principle of national self-determination. How did Hungarian leaders expect to satisfy this territorial quest short of war or a pact with the devil? Spira seems to regret that "Hungary lacked both strength and influence to bend events to suit its requirements." What policies a stronger and more influential Hungary would have been prepared to pursue is a question that deserves pondering.

Overall, the book is well written and provides a balanced analysis of a complex and controversial episode. Although left with some questions, a reader who is no expert in Hungarian-German relations can be rewarded with surprising insights into little known aspects of pre-World War II European history.

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Péter Sárközy, *Letteratura ungherese—letteratura italiana*. Roma: Carucci, 1990. 248 pages.

The historical and cultural interaction between Italy and Hungary during the past millennium is a rich area for study. Volumes have already been written about such special subjects as the relationship between Hungary and the Duchy of Parma, and between Venice and Hungary during the Renaissance. Professor Sárközy's book is neither the first on this subject, nor the most exhaustive. What it is is a penetrating and selective exposition of a large field, written in lucid language and published in a respected and widely read Italian academic series ("Gaia"). As such, it fills a conspicuous vacuum in an immense production which tended to be heavily scholarly, or in a more popularizing vein, mostly written and published for Hungarian readers. This is the first time that the wider Italian reading public can learn of its country's ties with a little known neighbour.

The volume has three major sections. The first and briefest one informs the reader about the impressive development of Italian studies in Hungary. The second part surveys the stages and forms of Italo-Hungarian literary and cultural contacts, from St. Stephen's Christianizing effort to the image of Italy in 20th-century Hungarian literature. Finally, the third segment presents selected chapters that illustrate the interaction between the two countries, such as the Arcadian tradition in Hungarian literature, Fiume as a Hungarian centre of Italian studies before World War I, or Dante as a literary model for modern Hungarian poets.

Sárközy's erudite rationalism excludes any mystified "cultural affinity" of national characters from the comparison criteria. Instead, he gathers in-

formation from as many periods and sources as possible. Thus we get more than literary analogy, since the author actually offers a multi-dimensional perspective on the intellectual tradition of the two countries. He points out, for instance, the impact of Italian language and literature on Hungarian Protestantism, dwelling on aspects of Transylvania's indebtedness to Italy. Non-literary influences, those of architecture, fine arts, theatre and music, receive well deserved emphasis. According to Sárközy, this continual and uninterrupted Italian influence greatly contributed to the occidental character of Hungarian culture and was especially important after the Turks had left the eastern part of the country in shambles. Latin and Italian language and culture form a continuity in Hungarian consciousness as the poetry of Janus Pannonius, the country's first great national poet, proves.

Sárközy also offers illuminating insights into some wider theoretical questions. His survey of the debate on the concept of pre-romanticism in Italian and Hungarian literary scholarship points to interesting analogies between the bias of both conservative and Marxist criticism which regarded enlightened classicism and romanticism as incompatible phenomena. Another example may be the seemingly narrow question of the "decadent" nature of Mihály Babits' translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy* – a question that actually derives from the pre-Raphaelite movement, the source of all neo-romantic and art nouveau ("secessionist") manifestations of modern literature and art.

Laudable is any work which guides the reader fairly and intelligently through an area worth knowing. Even more commendable is a study whose implications also inspire scholars to explore literary phenomena in yet inadequately recognized directions. Professor Sárközy's book eloquently satisfies both expectations. It is a work worth reading and fully deserving translation into both English and Hungarian.

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Czigány Lóránt, *Nézz vissza haraggal*. Budapest: Gondolat, 1990. 202 pages.

The title of this essay collection is a literal translation of John Osborne's 1958 drama, *Look Back In Anger*, which was published in Hungary under a different title. As the quintessence of England's trend-setting literary generation of "angry young men," Osborne laid the foundation for a tradition of iconoclastic cultural criticism in his country. While it remains to be seen whether Czigány's volume will pilot a similar development in Hungarian literary criticism, the very slow pace of change in post-communist Hungarian culture makes one wish for such a turn of events.

Considering the sum of his activity, the author is a doyen of Hungarian literary scholarship outside of Hungary. A refugee of the revolution, Czigány eventually made Osborne's country his home. As librarian, professor, contributor to the BBC and dozens of Hungarian as well as emigrant publications, Czigány was the logical choice of the new Hungarian government for "cultural ambassador" at its embassy in London.

This volume is a selection of Czigány's essays, mostly polemic in nature, from the period 1967–88. The eighteen papers vary in size, but even more in content. *In toto*, the collection is a fascinating survey of the Hungarian literary scene during the Rákosi and Kádár eras. Clearly, 1956 is a significant dividing line—yet, reading Czigány one realizes how little the criteria of the party's cultural policy changed after the revolution.

The Rákosi regime is the easier target, although one wonders why no denouncement comparable to Czigány's sixty-page essay, "Keeping Step" (*Lépéskényszer*) on the "nationalization" of Hungarian literature between 1946–51, appeared in print for more than thirty years in post-revolutionary Hungary. Could it be that the author did not talk in generalities, but called the subservient court poets of the regime by name? Or, that he challenged the myth of socialist cultural supremacy by revealing the immense devastation of private and ecclesiastical libraries after 1949? (These are just two possible explanations.) It should be noted that the production, teaching and assessment of literature was the one cultural field that demonstrated the most stable continuity from 1949–89. The same authors who contributed to the volume celebrating Rákosi's sixtieth birthday in 1952 kept publishing lavishly subsidized poems under Kádár; and the same communist professors of literature, who were appointed in 1949 to positions previously held by competent patriotic scholars, continued to teach and write propagandistic histories or criticism of literature until just recently.

This is not to say that there were no new phenomena emerging after 1956. Czigány's essays deal with several. For the extraterritorial reader, particularly interesting is the willy-nilly "discovery" of emigrant Hungarian literature during the 1960s. Naturally, the artistic values of this literature had to be underrated, and its independence from centralized, official Hungarian ideology ignored. Czigány's quotations from a number of cultural personalities and old country figureheads, actually reveal, behind the condescension and sarcasm, the envy that writers who had committed themselves to the regime felt toward the freedom of the expatriates. As one essay illustrates, some Hungarian "scholars" went so far as to claim the achievements of emigrant colleagues (the case in point being the discovery of an unpublished Bessenyei manuscript) for themselves.

Indirectly relevant to the literati's existence, *extra Hungariam*, is Czigány's irritation at the puristic zeal of certain linguists in the old country. These norm-setters "are unwilling to realize that language renewal is a

permanent process.” Reading the nonsensical mixed idiom of pretentious Hungarian journalists or various “experts” is hardly more annoying than to be continually corrected by omniscient self-made stylists, especially if they learn that the writer or speaker resides abroad (and, may we add, if they do not know any foreign language at all).

Nowadays one loud message from Budapest is about the need for a national consensus on general reconciliation. Czigány’s book is an expression of disagreement. Hungarian literature and culture will not be able to face a renewal unless the distortions and insincerities of the past are fully revealed, alongside the names of those responsible for them.

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Regio: Kisebbségtudományi Szemle [Regio: Review of Ethnic Studies], No. 1, Vol. I (January 1990), and No. 2, Vol. I (April 1990). ISSN 0865–557X

Kisebbségkutatás: szemle a hazai és külföldi irodalomból [Minority Studies: Review of Literature at Home and Abroad], No. 1, Vol. 1 (1991–92).

Ethnic or nationality studies have played an increasingly prominent role in Hungarian scholarship, and even in journalistic and political writings. Perhaps it is a reflection on this preoccupation with minority affairs that in Hungary’s first post-communist government a student of ethnic studies, Lajos Für, was appointed to the defence portfolio.

There is an obvious explanation for Hungarian concern for minority problems. Hungarians constitute some of Central Europe’s largest minorities. Millions of them live in the neighbouring states, especially Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Serbia. Hungary too has its own minorities, small in size by comparison, but not negligible in terms of minority-majority relations (one has in mind the problems of integrating the rapidly expanding Gypsy population of the country). And, Hungary had had significant minority problems in the past, during World War II and, especially, before 1919.

The two periodicals reviewed here are devoted to ethnic studies and related fields. Judging from its first two issues, we can state that *Regio*’s format resembles that of a regular interdisciplinary learned journal. This periodical contains papers, documents, commentary in several disciplines often from noted academics, including linguists, historians, sociologists, as well as observers of current affairs. Its main focus is the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia, and indeed an editorial note confirms the journal’s intention to focus on this subject, but certainly not to the exclusion of studies concerning the minority question in the entire Carpathian Basin. The contributors seem to be of various ethnic background. Though the major-

ity appear to be Hungarians from Hungary and Czechoslovakia, there are a few among them for whom a non-Hungarian or Czechoslovak affiliation is indicated. The editorial board lists numerous scholars with various responsibilities. The actual task of editing seems to be shouldered by Tamás G. Filep and László Tóth. Editorial and subscription offices are given as 1068 Budapest, Gorkij fasor 38.I.34. This reviewer does not know if this address is still correct at the time of the publication of these lines.

Kisebbségkutatás is a somewhat different journal. It features reviews of literature relating to ethnic studies. The reviews are groups according to themes or disciplines. These include such categories as ethnic or national consciousness, ethnic literature, language usage, culture, ethnic politics, minority law, the history of national and ethnic minorities. A great many periodicals are surveyed by *Kisebbségkutatás*'s reviewers. Most of these are published in East Central Europe and in Germany or Austria. Regrettably, there is only one North American journal listed (*Nationalities Papers*) even though this reviewer can think of other relevant journals, and not necessarily our own periodical. The managing editor of *Kisebbségkutatás* is Győző Cholnoky, and its publisher is the Országos Idegennyelvű Könyvtár [National Library of Foreign-language Publications]. The address of both is Budapest, Molnár u. 11. Pf. 244, Hungary.

Kisebbségkutatás seems to aim above all at making Hungarian readers familiar with the basic outlines of research published in non-Magyar languages and thereby offering them knowledge and perspectives that they otherwise might not gain. While this journal's East and Central European focus is both inevitable and understandable, we can only hope that in the future more attention will be paid to other regions of the world as well, and in particular to the problems that concern the Hungarian Diaspora.

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Nádasdy Mausoleum [facsimile edition]. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1991.

As the seventeenth century approached its zenith, the royal historian Illés Berger was completing a three-volume chronicle of Hungary to be published by Lőrinc Ferencfi, the royal secretary, in his own printing house. While this project was never finished, proofs of the intended illustrations from 59 copper plates were printed in 1632. The plates became the property of the Jesuits in Pozsony, then made their way to Count Ferenc Nádasdy, the vice-palatine. Nádasdy commissioned historical annotations to accompany the pictures. The text, which was mostly compiled from available works (by Thuróczy, Bonfini, Istvánffy and others), was translated into Latin by the Jesuit scholar Avancini, and into German by the Nuremberg

writer von Birken. The prints and the bilingual text were published in Nuremberg in 1664 with preface and sponsorship by Nádasdy.

It is a matter of debate whether the eclectic Baroque publication, "Mausoleum," is primarily an artistic, literary, or historical genre. It consists of engraved representations resembling ornate tombstones with appropriate commemorative lines called *éloges*. While the pseudo-sculptures are stereotypes, often fantastic, and full of iconic symbols, and while the text adds nothing to the historiographic corpus of the time, both do, nevertheless, contribute to a better understanding of seventeenth-century Hungarian historical awareness.

The author accepted the legend of Hunnish-Hungarian relations uncritically. Attila is depicted as the first king of the Hungarians, but he is preceded by five fictitious "princes of the Hungarians," and immediately followed by Árpád, another "prince." St. Stephen's praise is the most extensive, covering ten pages. Ferdinand IV is the last king mentioned, since his successor, Leopold I, was still alive at the time of publication.

Easily missed references reveal the latent political significance of the volume, and the probable intentions of its sponsor. The author emphasizes that János Zápolya was Hungary's last national king and blames the nation's nobility for the discord which eventually led to the Habsburgs' (that is, "foreign kings' ") coming to power. He hastens to add that Ferdinand I was a good king; nor does he criticize any other Habsburgs. Yet, the fact that he represents the pagan prince Örs' struggle against two enemies as a supreme example of Hungarian gallantry is a clear indication of a seventeenth-century national ethos shared by Péter Pázmány as much as Miklós Zrínyi. Even the acceptance of the Hunnish origin myth can be regarded as an insistence on a distinct Hungarian national origin and sovereignty. It is probably not entirely coincidental that a few years after the publication of the *Mausoleum*, Nádasdy was beheaded as a participant in the so-called Wesselényi conspiracy.

As Nádasdy explained in the preface, the book was meant to preserve the memory of a national past in a turbulent age which threatened Hungary's survival. Nowadays this is not an irrelevant idea when public awareness of a more than thousand-year-old history is to be expurgated from less than half a century of extremely efficient indoctrination which has diffused slander, distortions and resulted in a national inferiority complex. Nádasdy's intention to foster patriotic education is still more than timely.

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