Hungarian Studies Review

Vol. XIV, No 1 (Spring, 1987)

In this issue Oliver Botar traces the evolution of the fortress and city of Buda during the time of the Turkish occupation of Hungary, Thomas Szendrey writes on attitudes in Hungary to the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, Robert Blumstock examines Arthur Koestler's Hungarian literary connections, and Laszlo K. Gefin analyzes two Hungarian poets' responses to Allan Ginsberg's poem "Howl."

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Institutional subscriptions to the *Review* are $12.00 per annum. Individual subscriptions are $12.00 for one year and $20.00 for two years. Subscribers outside of North America please add $2.00 for postage.

Donations in support of the *Review* may be made through the University of Toronto. Cheques should be made to the "University of Toronto, Department of Private Funding;" please note somewhere on the cheque that the donation is in support of the *Hungarian Studies Review*. These donations are "tax deductible" in Canada. Donations in excess of $50.00 will be acknowledged in the *Review* on a periodic basis.

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Articles appearing in the *Review* are abstracted and indexed in *HISTORICAL ABSTRACTS* and *AMERICA: HISTORY AND LIFE*.

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ISSN 0713-8083 (replacing 0317-204X)
Printed at the University of Toronto Press.

Hungarian Studies Review Vol. XIV, No. 1 (Spring 1987)

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The publication of this issue was assisted by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Hungarian Studies Review Vol. XIV, No. 1 (Spring 1987)

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From European Capital to Ottoman Outpost: The Decline of Buda in the Sixteenth Century

Oliver A. I. Botar

It is generally thought that August 29, 1541, the date of the occupation of Buda by the Ottoman Turks, signalled a complete break in the development of the Hungarian capital. "The flowering urban life of one of Europe's most beautiful and... largest metropolises was brought to an end by the start of the Turks' 150 year occupation."[1] In actual fact, however, if there was one "event" that constituted a decisive break in the life of the city, it was the siege of 1686. Indeed the victorious Habsburg forces found only one *Magyar* family in Buda upon its recapture.[2] What this paper will attempt to demonstrate while describing the changes in Buda during the course of the 16th century, is that on the one hand major changes to the city reflecting Ottoman influence began after 1526, and on the other that it was during the Fifteen Years' War waged by the Habsburg Empire in an attempt to recapture central Hungary — fifty years *into* the Turkish occupation — that the old Buda finally "disappeared." Ottoman rule changed the city's administrative, political, demographic, religious and economic life, as well as its appearance. This essay will try to describe these changes as well as argue the point that the European character of Buda survived to a great extent until the turn of the 17th century.

Before beginning, it should be noted that what is now Budapest, during the 15th–17th centuries, consisted of three royal free towns: Buda, the new capital; Óbuda, the old capital; and Pest, a lively commercial town on the left bank of the Danube. There were also several suburbs of Buda at least one of which, the Viziváros (Water-Town), was walled. In the interest of brevity, this study will concentrate on Buda and its immediate environs and will make only occasional references to the other locales.

I. Historical Background

The Turkic Ottomans conquered their first major city, Bursa, in 1326, exactly 200 years before their victory over the Hungarians at Mohács.[3] After their first European conquest (Tzympe, in 1352),[4] they began to pose a potential threat to the Medieval Hungarian kingdom. The threat finally materialized with the massive defeat of the Hungarians at Mohács in Southern Hungary on August 29, 1526. The death of the young King Louis II while retreating from the battlefield left the country without a leader. The Hungarian nobles subsequently elected two kings, John of Zápolya, crowned on November 10, 1526, and Ferdinand of Habsburg, crowned on November 3, 1527, but elected earlier that year. This resulted in a disastrous civil war that ended not only with John's death in 1540 but also with the disintegration of centralized power in Hungary and the occupation of one-third of the country by the Ottomans after 1541.[5]

Buda itself fell to the Ottomans under curious circumstances. Since King John was vassal to Sultan Suleyman II (i.e., he paid an annual tribute), he ultimately depended on the Sultan's support for the maintenance of his power. After John's death in 1540, Buda, occupied by his widow Queen Izabella, saw the last of several sieges of the civil war. Ottoman aid to defend Buda against Ferdinand's troops was received in 1541, and the Habsburgs were soundly defeated. It was thereafter that the Ottomans' imperialist ambitions became evident. On the pretext of "viewing the town," some of the Sultan's troops entered and promptly occupied it, taking Izabella's troops completely by surprise.[6] This bloodless coup, staged on the anniversary of the defeat at Mohács, was the start of the 145-year Ottoman occupation of Buda. The peaceful nature of the takeover, the essentially friendly relationship between Queen Izabella and the Sultan and the general tolerance shown by the Ottomans to subject peoples were the prime reasons that the subsequent changes to Buda were of a gradual, rather than a sudden nature.

II. Administrative Changes

The bizarre turn of events on August 29, 1541, brought with it considerable changes to the administrative and legal life of the capital. The transfer of power was peaceful (the most peaceful conquest the city had experienced since 1526), except that the conquerors on this occasion had a different religion and culture and represented a foreign power intent on incorporating the kingdom into its empire.

Buda had been a bilingual (German-*Magyar*) royal free town since 1244 with a twelve-member council and a magistrate (mayor). The German-speaking burghers dominated the council membership until 1439, after which six councillors were to be *Magyar* and six German. The mayor, who previously had to be German-speaking, was to be German one year and *Magyar* the next. Latin and German had been the languages of letters, but with the increasing urbanization and cultural development of the *Magyars*, their language came to the fore by the early 16th century.[7]

The breakdown of the old administrative system began with the evacuation of the population in advance of the invading armies in 1526. Though life soon returned to a semi-normal state, the chaotic alternation of kings at Buda weakened the council's fibre and culminated in the disaster of 1529: Buda, which was then in Ferdinand's hands, was besieged by King John's troops, aided, at John's request, by an Ottoman army. After Ferdinand's defeat, the German-speaking patricians who had supported Ferdinand (an Austrian) were promised safe passage from the town. The Ottoman troops slaughtered them outside the city walls, however, as their fellow *Magyar* citizens watched helplessly from inside Buda. Some scholars call this event the greatest single break in the continuity of Buda's civic life, since these patricians, their families and forebears had established the city and had dominated its administration for the previous 300 years. The council list of 1530–31 demonstrates 50 per cent continuity with the previous year, mainly because the *Magyar* patrician families were left intact.[8]

In 1541, a month and a half after Buda had been occupied by the Ottomans, the Sultan issued the following proclamation:

> Everyone in the vilayet of Buda must stay in their places. No one will ever cause them or their children harm. All their property, their houses in the towns and villages, their shops and other buildings and their vineyards and gardens: they may dispose of them as they wish, give them away or transfer property rights in any other way and in the event of their death the property rights pass on to their heirs.[9]

The basic continuity of property and economic life thus ensured, the Ottomans began to set up their new administration. This engendered drastic changes because the Ottoman concept of town, *sehir*, was different from the European one. "Free towns," that is ones which were self-governing, were unknown in the empire; all power was vested in the Sultan and was exercised through his

governors known as *Bejlerbejs*.[10] Furthermore, towns were not viewed as unified communities of citizens, but as collections of separate communities divided along religious rather than ethnic lines, usually occupying separate quarters or *mahalles*. In Buda they recognized four such groups initially: the *Gavurs* (Western Christians, in this case mostly *Magyars*), "Copts" (Eastern Christians, mostly Gypsies), Jews and Moslems. All these groups were organized into distinct bodies and administered separately. By 1557 Dalmatian-Italian traders, mainly from Ragusa (Dubrovnik) had their own community as well.[11]

The town council, which had been dominated by the *Gavurs* and had previously ruled the town, now became a body that represented *Gavur* affairs only. The mayor even received a regular income from the new administration as well as certain tax exemptions. This payment symbolized the "mayor's" dependence on and subservience to the Ottoman administration. Furthermore, the position of mayor was denigrated to "mayor of the *Gavurs*," on an equal footing with the Jewish *Kethüda*, the Dalmatian-Italian Prefect and the Copt *Kenéz* ("Gypsy Vojvod"). There was, to all outward appearances, continuity in council life. Initially Mayor Miklós Turkovics and his council members and clerks retained their positions. Many soon left, however, and Werbőczy, the former captain of the regiment at Buda was named "head mayor" of all Hungarians. During his brief term he attempted to represent his people in this capacity and take their problems and complaints to Üzün Suleyman Pasha, the *Bejlerbej*, calling upon Hungarian law for support. It seems that the Pasha soon tired of this, however, for he apparently had Werbőczy poisoned on one of his visits.

Regular council elections and the use of the old seal of the free royal town for documents continued for the duration of the occupation. These councils soon became aware of their actual role, however (note Werbőczy's case), and referred to themselves as the "Mayor and Councillors of the Christian and Hungarian Eclesiae of Buda." This body issued edicts only when it was permitted to do so by higher powers and was often used as a mouthpiece toward Europe by the Ottoman government. Indeed the council and mayor soon lost all real power and acted solely as a liaison between the authorities and the *Magyars*. No records remain of the Jewish *Kethüdas* or the Copts' *Kenézes* during the entire period of occupation, and it is very likely that these community leaders did not keep written records or issue documents. Also, since the Copts soon converted to Islam, they lost their community status. While it is obvious that the maintenance of council elections and the continu-

ance of the keeping of records had little more than symbolic value during the term of occupation, it is difficult for us now to imagine the importance that even such tokenism had for the *Magyars*, who had ended up as the smallest community in Buda by the 17th century.

Magyar community leaders dealt with the lowest level of the Ottoman administration. The *Emins* and *Basis*, each of whom had his own office, administered such things as market weights and prices, the collecting of ferry duties and the infidel head-tax. The *Sehir emin* was in charge of religious affairs for all the communities and directed the general administration of the town in conjunction with the *Sehir Kethüdazhi* (town manager). These were titular positions only, however, and involved no real political power. Higher offices were for the *vilayet* (a military-administrative division of the empire) of Buda which, for most of the remainder of the 16th century, included all of Ottoman-occupied Hungary as well as northern Bosnia. The *Defterdar* was an important high official in charge of financial matters such as tax assessment and collection, as well as the handling of income from the Sultan's property. The Sultan owned all property in the empire except for private homes, gardens and vineyards. Thus there were no landlords in the European sense of the word.

The position of *Kadi* (judge) was a curious combination of the legal and the administrative. *De jure,* Hungarian law remained in effect for the *Magyars* and, as had always been done, the mayor was responsible for dispensing justice. In actual fact, however, Hungarian law was recognized and allowed to be exercised only in so far as it did not contradict Ottoman law. Any litigation the mayor *Kethüda, Kenéz* or the Prefect could not handle were brought before the *Kadi*. Everyone was allowed to appear before the *Kadi*, though an infidel's evidence was not admissible and a non-Moslem defendant had to have Moslem witnesses to support his case. This, in addition to the infidel head-tax already mentioned, was demonstrative of the way in which all non-Moslems were treated as inferiors. (Even this, however, was in sharp contrast to the fact that Christian rulers in general did not tolerate the existence of Moslem communities at all under their rule.) If the *Kadi* could not handle a case, he would refer it to the *Mufti*, an expert in Koranic law, or *Seriat*, which was supreme in the officially Islamic Ottoman Empire, though its everyday civil application was carried out through the *Kanun* or civil law.

Appeal was possible to the highest official of the *vilayet* government (centred in Buda), i.e., to the *Bejlerbej*. The *vilayet* of Buda was

not only the westernmost, it was also among the last ever established, and so its *Bejlerbejs* enjoyed great prestige in the empire.[12] The *Bejlerbejs* were very powerful: they were military and administrative leaders with the power to overrule any lower legal decision. They were also the final court of appeal, apart from the Sultan himself. Because of this power, they posed a potential threat to the Sultan's authority and so were replaced, often killed, to prevent them from gaining too much support or popularity in their *vilayets*. Thus during 145 years of Ottoman occupation, 75 people served 99 terms of office as the *Bejlerbejs* of Buda. Of these twenty ended their lives by strangulation in office at Buda or at other appointments. Good *Bejlerbejs* were sometimes sent back to Buda for several terms of office — but they never got too attached to their constituency; the average term of office was one-and-a-half years.

The *Bejlerbejs* of 16th century Buda were very conscious of their power and even had royal pretensions. Examples of this include Sokullu Mustafa Pasha's adoption of the royal "we" — not in use in the East — and the holding of elaborate court *divans* in the apartments of the Royal Palace where the *Bejlerbejs* were forbidden to live. (Such use of the Royal Palace ceased after the Fifteen Years' War.) Sokullu Mustafa Pasha, of Bosnian origin, served the longest term of office (1566–1578). This era has often been called the "Golden Age" of Ottoman rule at Buda because he founded so many institutions, and arranged for them to be properly housed.

In summary, administrative changes in Buda started immediately after the occupation, though the Ottomans allowed at least the appearance of continuity for the existing communities. With the drastic decline in the number of descendants of the original inhabitants by the 17th century, however, only traces of the former administrative system were left.

III. Population and Ethno-Religious Changes

Changes in population and in the ethno-religious composition of Buda began when the first refugees from the Szerémség (the region around Belgrade) arrived after their homeland was conquered in the early 1520s. Further change came when the Queen, on hearing of the approach of the Ottoman forces on August 30, 1526, fled with her court to Pozsony (also known as Pressburg, now Bratislava). This move led to mass-panic and most of the population (about 8,000 in the town proper) followed suit.[13] According to the Ottoman historian Ibrahim Pecsevi, the majority of those who remained were taken back to the empire with the Ottoman armies; the Jews were

settled at Saloniki, and the Christians in the Jedikule quarter of Istanbul.[14] In actual fact, however, some residents, including Franciscan monks, were killed, and according to István Nemeskürty, the Jews were sold into slavery because they had supported the Hungarians.[15]

Though the Ottoman armies looted and then burned Buda, they spared the Royal Palace. When the armies returned to the empire soon after, the refugees returned and reoccupied their homes, which were of stone and thus repairable. Some of those who had not fled town, including the Jews, had been lost, but their place was taken by refugees from the south.[16]

Before the siege of 1529, some of Buda's German-speaking population left in the face of the approaching armies. Most of those who did not, were massacred — as has been mentioned above. Thus, one of the two major ethnic components of Buda was almost annihilated twelve years before the actual occupation began. It was after this event that Buda began to take on the ethnic composition of a Balkan city. An Ottoman garrison, including the first group of Moslems to live in Buda, was stationed in the town from that time on. (As we shall see, not all members of the Ottoman forces were Moslems.) Balkan traders began to make their appearance at the markets of Buda after 1530. Few people suspected at that time that soon these exotic-looking people would come to form the majority of the population. In 1539 and 1540 Jews of indeterminate origin settled in the old Jewish quarter.[17] It may be that some of these families were among those who had been deported in 1526.

The year 1541 brought with it further shifts in population. The Queen and her modest court moved to Transylvania a few days after the Ottomans occupied Buda, causing many of the court nobles to move as well, though a few (Werbőczy, for example) elected to stay and help the remaining population. Since few expected the occupation to last for very long, some of the burghers also remained, and of those who left, most went to Royal Hungary or even to less conspicuous towns in Ottoman-occupied Hungary. As the tales of horror associated with the Ottomans proved to be unfounded, some of those who left soon returned. The Dalmatian traders, the Balkan-Slavs who had come after 1530, and the Greek Orthodox Gypsies all elected to stay.[18] Some of the Jews who had been deported in 1526 returned after 1541, and by 1547 (including those who had come in 1539–40) there were 75 Jewish families in Buda.[19]

The most immediate demographic effect of the occupation was the contingent of soldiers and officials who settled in Buda, initially without their families. According to estimates, three thousand

soldiers and some officials, most of whom were probably of Balkan-Slavic origin (and many of whom were Greek Catholics) remained in Buda after the conquering forces left. It is an interesting fact that ethnic Turks were actually in the minority among the occupying forces at Buda from the start. It is for this reason that it is a misnomer to use the term "Turks," as many historians do, to describe these occupying forces.[20]

The tax assessments taken by the *Defterdar* in 1546, 1559, 1562 and 1580 provide valuable clues to the ethnic composition of Buda's population during the first period of the occupation.[21] If one estimates about five members per household, then the non-Moslem population of Buda in 1546 was around 2,000.[22] Their ethnic make-up was as follows: 60 per cent *Magyar*, 20 per cent Jewish and 20 per cent Gypsy. As the years progressed, the percentage of *Magyars* tended to decrease, that of the Jews tended to remain constant, while that of the Gypsies increased. The Gypsies converted to Islam by 1580 and were subsequently not treated as a separate group, while most of the Jews moved to Székesfehérvár after 1598 to avoid the constant warring. Their numbers began to increase again only after 1627.[23] The Dalmatians also left during the Fifteen Years' War. It has been estimated that by 1580 there were 1,200 to 1,300 non-Ottoman people in Buda and 2,500–2,600 Ottoman soldiers, officials and traders (with their families) both Moslem and Greek Catholic. Of these people, 75 per cent were southern Slavs, the rest Turkish, Albanian and Greek. As an Italian traveller noted in 1567, "almost every 'Turk' here spoke Croatian."[24]

The high mortality rate between 1546 and 1559 (e.g., 209 of 366 *Magyar* men enumerated were dead by 1559) was probably due to an outbreak of plague in the early fifties. That the *Magyars* found life under Ottoman rule tolerable is illustrated by the fact that only seven families left during 1546–59. Two were noted as having "escaped," although what was meant by "escape" is not specified. Because of the high death-rate, and because the *gavurs* were not permitted to settle in Buda, however, the *Magyar* population declined by 59 per cent. Thus the number of *Magyar* families decreased from 269 in 1546 to around 190 by the 1560s. Their numbers were even more drastically reduced during the Fifteen Years' War starting in the early 1590s, especially during the sieges of 1598, 1602 and 1603. By the 17th century there were very few *Magyars* left in Buda.

The city's ethnic groups were geographically segregated during the 16th century. At first the Hungarians lived in its larger, northern end (north of the old Szent György tér — St. George's Square). The

Dalmatians and Jews lived there as well, each on their traditional streets. Soldiers and traders occupied the southern end of the town, that nearest the palace, as well as the palace area itself, where barracks were set up. By the end of the century, as the numbers of *Magyars*, Dalmatians and Jews decreased, the houses north of St. George's Square (by that time known as Orta Mosque Square) were for the most part owned by the Balkan newcomers.

By the 17th century Buda had been transformed from a town with two major and two minor ethnic groups into a Balkan-type town made up of a dozen nationalities, speaking several languages and belonging to different religions. The majority of the population was Balkan-Slav, and theirs were the most commonly spoken languages. The dominant social group was the Moslem-Turk and Balkan-Ottoman military-official class. The official language was Turkish, although documents were also issued in Hungarian as the need arose.

It is noteworthy that the Reformation spread throughout Hungary during the Ottoman occupation.[25] It created internal dissent in a community that could ill afford such divisions. Indeed it has been suggested that the Ottomans were a mediating force in these disputes, forcing all the Christians of Buda to share the Church of Mary Magdalene, for example. The Ottomans even allowed the Church to retain some of its property in order to sustain itself. In 1547, for example, it still owned a mill on the Danube and had two schools associated with it, one Catholic and one Protestant. There was even an organist among the *Magyars* in 1547. A report of 1555 stated that the Catholics used the choir of the church, and the Protestants the nave, suggesting that already then the Protestants outnumbered the Catholics. In a later report in 1587, Reinhold Lubenau noted a wooden partition dividing the nave into two sections. By that time the *Magyars* were said to have been Protestant and the Catholic community made up of Dalmatians.[26] It seems that not only had the *Magyars* become Protestant, but they had further converted from their original Lutheranism to Calvinism (the Hungarian Reformed Church) and even Anabaptism.[27]

The continuity of Roman Catholic life in Buda seems to have been broken by the wholesale departure of the Dalmatians after the sieges of 1598 and 1602 during the Fifteen Years' War, and it did not resume until 1635 when Bosnian Catholics settled there.[28] As a sign of the Ottoman administration's displeasure at this attempt to recapture the city, they closed down the Church of Mary Magdalene in 1595, and it was later converted into the Fetih (Victory) Mosque. In contrast to the fate of Catholicism, Protestant *Magyar* life

continued in Buda. Despite their vastly reduced numbers, the Protestants maintained their school, and in the 17th century they even acquired an old church, although they sometimes had to rely on ministers coming up from Óbuda to conduct their services.[29]

Jewish sources indicate that Buda became a seat of Talmudic learning during the 16th century, making it "a great city of the wise and learned, one of the strongest communities of the diaspora." There were three synagogues, one for the German-speaking Jews (Ashkenazim), another for the Spanish Sephardic Jews from Salonika and still another for the Syrian-rite Jews.[30] As has been mentioned, the Jews of Buda moved to Székesfehérvár during the Fifteen Years' War to escape the fighting.

Thus we can see how fragmented the various religious communities were. The dominant Moslem class consisted of Turks, Bosnians, Bulgarians, Greeks, Serbs, Gypsies and Albanians. The Orthodox Christians were made up of Balkan Slavs and Greeks, and the Roman Catholics of Dalmatians, later some Bosnians and a few Croatians. The Protestant *Magyars* were divided into Lutheran, Calvinist and Anabaptist groups. The Jewish community consisted of German and Polish Ashkenazim, as well as the more recently arrived Sephardic and Syrian Jews. Nevertheless, the continuity of all the communities of medieval Buda, with the exception of the Germans, was maintained until the Fifteen Years' War. This war not only caused the central Christian church of Buda to be closed down, but it also resulted in the departure of the established Dalmatian and Jewish communities and in the further drastic reduction in the number of *Magyars*. By the 17th century, only a minuscule *Magyar* community remained as a remnant of the original population.

IV. Physical Changes

The physical aspect of Buda changed the least during the second half of the 16th century. This is not particularly surprising since throughout their history the Ottomans captured towns intact whenever possible, and then used them for their own purposes, making changes only as the need arose. They were not city-builders and, consequently, did not have the skill or tradition to expand Buda. Nevertheless, the Ottomans viewed towns in general, and Buda in particular, in a way totally different from that of the original population. They regarded Buda first and foremost as a military stronghold, a garrison town on the northwestern marches of their empire. This was in stark contrast to what Buda had been previously, the Gothic-Renaissance capital of a Christian kingdom.

Nevertheless, upon taking a town the Ottomans claimed that they would raise it to a level of "higher flowering," based on the twin pillars of Islam and the military.[31] The first structural change that took place was the conversion of the "den of infidels" — the Church of the Virgin Mary (formerly the German parish church) — into a "house of God," a mosque. The mosque was originally named after Sultan Süleyman, the Sultan during whose reign the town was conquered, but it later became known as the Büjük (Great) Mosque because it was the largest religious structure, and it finally became known as the Eski (Old) Mosque because it had been the first to be established.

In preparing the church for the thanksgiving service after the conquest of 1541, all unnecessary objects such as pews, statuary and pictures were removed. Since any pictorial representations of sacred themes were considered blasphemous by the Moslems, the paintings, frescoes and mosaics that decorated the interior of the church were plastered over. Decorative quotations from the Koran were then painted on the plaster along with some geometric or floral patterns. The building was then outfitted with the necessary equipment such as the *Mihrab* (a nook where the Koran is kept) and the *Minbar* (a stand from which the Koran is read out loud). The floor was covered with carpets, their patterns oriented towards Mecca. Later, minor structural alterations were made: the bricking up of the bottom three-quarters of the windows to reduce incoming light and the construction of wooden balconies around the steeple to enable the *Muezzin* to call the faithful to prayer from "the four corners of the Earth."[32]

Two other churches were soon converted to mosques in Buda, the Royal Chapel in the Palace — which became the Seraj (Palace) Mosque — and St. George's Church — which became the Orta (Central) Mosque. (Minarets were often added to converted churches.) Historian Győző Gerő has pointed out that the conversion of the churches, the extant centres of town life, into the new focal points, the mosques, did much to preserve the traditional urban structure of Buda. The maintenance of the old market places also had this effect. Other, less centrally located churches were used for non-religious purposes, and the Church of Mary Magdalene was retained for use by the Christians until 1594.

A more obvious change in the townscape than the conversion of churches into mosques was the alterations made to the streets.[33] Hundreds of small wooden, thatch and mud booths that served as little shops, workshops and stables now crowded the streets. Narrow lanes replaced the formerly wide avenues to serve as pedestrian

walkways. The streetscape was thus significantly altered without any major structural changes taking place.

In addition to their new appearance, the newcomers did not look upon these streets as the original inhabitants did. The Ottomans, in the Eastern mode, did not orient themselves according to streets, but rather according to *mahalles*. Arabic in origin, *mahalle* referred to a quarter centering on something, usually a mosque, and usually named after it. It was the focal point of the *mahalle*, rather than its boundary, that was definite. However, the area inhabited by a particular religious or ethnic group (such as the Jews, for example) could also be considered a *mahalle*, even if it did not have one focal point in particular.[34] In Buda the city assessment of 1547 referred to two quarters, the Jewish and the Coptic, as *mahalles*; the rest were regular street names with the word *mahalle* attached.[35] As Ottoman life developed in Buda, these European street names disappeared and Eastern-style *mahalle* names appeared. By the time of the 1563 assessment, the old street names had been dropped, though there is evidence that some streets actually did acquire Turkish names in common usage. It seems that in the end, just as Gothic churches were converted as well as new buildings constructed to serve as mosques, the Ottomans adopted both systems of orientation and used whichever was more convenient.[36]

It has often been said that the Ottomans built nothing at Buda. Yet it is only fair to point out that Buda was already extensively developed, and that they did not tear anything down, but rather converted existing structures to their own use. In the Víziváros and in Pest, for example, where fewer existing structures met their needs, the Ottomans built extensively. The only new mosque in Buda proper was the one built in the former Royal Gardens in the Jeni Mahalle (New Quarter). Of the several mosques built in the Víziváros (or Varos as the Ottomans referred to it) and the Tabán (Turkish: Debaghane), the best examples are Tojgun Pasha's mosque, apparently designed by the great Greek-Ottoman architect Kosua Sinan in 1553–56, and Osman Bej's mosque, which survived well into the 18th century.

On the Buda side of the Danube the hotspring baths (*ilidje*) formed an impressive group of buildings, giving the town here an Eastern character. Buda had been famous since medieval times for its hotsprings and its baths.[37] The Ottomans, for whom baths were extremely important, began building new ones soon after 1541. By 1686 nine baths were counted on the Buda side alone. Interestingly enough, though most of the Western travellers during the occupation (Werner, Gerlach, Wratislaw, Lubenau, Brown, etc.) found

them to be the most impressive new aspect of Ottoman Buda, the baths were almost invariably omitted from the engravings of the town. This was possibly because the baths, which were low-domed structures, did not have enough of a vertical component to interest the late medieval town-view artists, who were still obsessed with verticality.[38] The best of the baths were, as were the mosques, in the late 16th century Ottoman-Turkish "classical" style, in the mode of the Sinan school but Bosnian-provincial in character.[39] At least three of these were founded by Sokullu Mustafa Pasha in the 1570s: the Yeshil Direkli Ilidjesi (Bath of the Green Column) in the Debaghane (the modern Rudas Baths), the Király Bath in the Varos and the Császár Bath (1570) outside the walls, north of the Varos. Another one, the Debaghane Ilidjesi (modern Rác Bath) also survives in the Tabán. There were at least two *hamams* (Turkish steam baths) in Buda, one in the *Bejlerbej's* Palace (built somewhere near St. John's Church) and one in the Hamam Jolu (Bath Street). These, as well as the *Bejlerbej's* Palace, were built around the turn of the century, when the Fifteen Years' War forced the *Bejlerbej* to take up residence in the castle.[40]

Other types of buildings were constructed as well. Next to the Büjük Mosque was the *bezistan* (covered market) of Buda, where hardware was sold. Another aid to commerce was the *han* (caravanserai), several of which were built on the Buda side of the Danube, one near the Yeshil Direkli Ilidjesi in the Debaghane.[41] Several schools (*madrasas*), minor mosques (*mechets*) and soup kitchens (*imarets*) were constructed as well — as the need arose and as the bequests of private individuals made possible.[42] Six *tekkes* or *dergahs* (Dervish monasteries) were also built near Buda, the most famous one being Gül Baba's, whose *türbe* (small mausoleum) still survives.[43] The Ottomans also constructed fortifications: walls, earth berms, towers and rondellas, a few of which survive to this day.[44]

We can see then that the Ottomans did build extensively during their stay. The worsening economic situation, however, and the fact that needs were by then largely met, put an end to such activity by the 17th century.

In contrast to the construction and maintenance of public structures, which was a very important aspect of Ottoman community life, little attention was paid to the private sphere. Thus, houses were usually left structurally untouched. The rooms were subdivided with partitions of wattle and daub, and windows blocked with bricks, mud or straw. When the houses fell into disrepair, improvements were attempted through replacing brick-vaulted ceilings with flat tile roofs and stone balconies with wooden ones. As

houses deteriorated completely, they were replaced with Turkish-Balkan style brick, wood and tile houses. This was true only in the suburbs, however, where the stringent construction standards of Buda proper (including limestone construction) had not applied before the occupation.[45]

This did not impress Western visitors to Buda during the occupation. Indeed, almost all of them noted the general decay of the town. As early as 1555 the German traveller Hans Dernschwamm noted that:

> One house after the next is falling into ruin and [the Turks] build nothing, only just enough for a Turk to live in .... The houses have become pig-sties because they have blocked the old large windows and doors to such an extent that they are unrecognizable. They do not use the cellars, which are filled with trash and dirt. Booths have been built in front of them on the streets .... The Defterdar lives in the old Fugger house, but a wooden stable extending to the old town hall has defaced it.[46]

Later, in 1573, during the builder Sokullu Mustafa's term of office, Habsburg ambassador Stephen Gerlach gave the following account:

> one must be sorry that this beautiful town has become a pig-stye and dog-house, because only the outer walls of the once fine buildings survive; the interiors are ugly and plain: the beautiful balconies and windows are destroyed, filled with mud. It must have been a glorious city. Here (as elsewhere) the Turk builds nothing and repairs nothing.[47]

This general impression of decay was noted by many other visitors as well.[48]

Of course these were Western Europeans looking at what had been a European town, maintained by European standards. There were several reasons for the low level of maintenance at Buda. First, Balkan-Turkish standards of housing were generally lower than in Europe; and consequently expectations were low. Indeed Busbecq claimed that the Moslems found it somewhat immoral to build or maintain fancy houses — the dwelling places of our short transient lives maintained as if men wanted to live forever. It was the public buildings such as baths and mosques that money was spent on.[49] Moreover, much of the Ottoman population at Buda was military in nature. Often soldiers lived without their families in these houses, or even if their families were with them, they would never stay for very

long; and so it was not in their interest to keep the houses well maintained. Also, one did not want to display too much private wealth even if one had it, because of the high taxes. This was true especially for the *gavurs*: "Never was the hiding of money more in vogue than then," writes the historian Ferenc Salamon.[50] Furthermore, even if one wanted to implement repairs, it was difficult to get permission to do so. While there is no record of a *mimar-aga* (building inspector) in Buda, as there was in other Ottoman cities, numerous records remain describing the difficulty and the bribery necessary to gain permission, especially for *gavurs*, to repair their homes and churches. *Gavurs* were also subject to height restrictions, i.e., they could not have houses taller than those of Moslems, which were already low by European standards. If repairs to churches were allowed, these were not to constitute improvements over the original state, and so repairs necessarily involved a decline in standards of construction, e.g., from a tile roof to a thatched one.[51]

Buda had sustained much damage, even before 1541, during the sieges of 1526 and the civil war, but repairs had always been carried out according to the old standards. As limestone buildings tended to be replaced with wooden and wattle and daub structures, however, the danger of fire increased. Thus, major fires broke out in 1566, 1577 and 1583. There were also gunpowder explosions in 1578 and during the Fifteen Years' War in 1603 and 1606. The gunpowder explosion of 1578 was the most serious disaster Buda had ever seen. It destroyed many houses, severely damaged the Royal Palace, blew cannons into the Danube and killed two thousand people.[52] These fires and explosions probably did more than anything else to change the face of Buda.

As a quasi-public structure with little or no public use during the Ottoman era, the Royal Palace fell into ruin. As mentioned, the *Bejlerbejs* were forbidden to live there. Presumably the Sultans wanted to prevent any pretensions to royalty and power from arising among the *Bejlerbejs*. The Ottomans, ever since Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent had ambled around the palace in 1526, had always referred to the palace with great appreciation. In the 1660s the historian Evlia Chelebi "went down on his knees" to thank Allah for allowing him to see the legendary "Kizil Elma" (Golden Apple — as the Ottomans referred to the palace).[53] It is not surprising that the Ottomans should be so proud that one of the major Medieval-Renaissance royal palaces in Europe was in their possession. What is surprising is that given this admiration, they should allow it to deteriorate to such an extent. This probably would not have happened had people other than transient soldiers been

allowed to live in its various wings. It had no enemy — as the churches had — but it had no benefactor either, and slowly, through fires, explosions and general neglect, it fell into ruin, a ruin completed by a gunpowder explosion during the siege of 1686.

V. Economic Changes

The decline of Buda's economic might began with the loss of property associated with the 1526 evacuation and burning of the city,[54] and with the loss of the economically dominant German segment of the population in 1529. These German burghers had had strong financial and trade connections with southern Germany and these ties were largely severed. Indeed, as an indication of its decreased confidence, the Fugger Bank closed its Buda office some time during the early 1530s — dealing a serious blow to the town's economic life. The nearly simultaneous appearance of Balkan traders from the south demonstrated the shift in economic orientation being caused by the Ottoman threat,[55] still several years before the actual takeover in 1541. The occupation did bring with it significant changes to Buda's economic life, but, given the Ottomans' *laissez-faire* policy with respect to the market-place and to industry, the remaining Hungarians were free to carry on with their established trades and commercial activities.[56]

Tax records show that between 1558 and 1590 (along with their numbers as a whole), the total number of non-Moslem tradesmen at Buda declined from 124 to 42.[57] Meanwhile the number of trades pursued by the non-Moslem population declined from 28 to 16 during the same period. Significant, however, is the fact that the proportions of the various industrial sectors as percentages of the total changed little among the non-Moslem population between 1558 and 1590 (the food and clothing sectors remaining the most important), except for a marked increase in the metal-working industry — perhaps a reflection of a response to the increased local market for metalware among the Ottoman peoples of Buda.

This overall continuity in sector proportions of non-Moslem industry is indicative of a continuity in the industrial life of the remaining Hungarians at Buda up to the start of the Fifteen Years' War in 1591. Indeed it has been pointed out that the elimination of the German-speaking segment of the population in 1529 meant increased economic opportunities for the *Magyar* burghers; and the influx of Ottoman soldiers and administrative personnel after 1541 meant — after the initial insecurity was overcome — increased local

markets for some of their goods. In 1547, for example, 23 flour mills were in operation at Buda (milling being largely in *Magyar* hands at that time). A generation later, however, 44 were in operation.[58]

The continuity of the commercial activities of the remaining Hungarians was aided, as mentioned, by the Ottomans' *laissez-faire* attitude to the market-place — there was no discrimination against non-Moslems in the commercial field, as there was in personal taxation and in the judicial system. The Hungarians' traditional coinage (the *forint* i.e. the Hungarian Florin) and system of weights and measures were respected, although Ottoman coinage (the *gurus* and *akche*) and measures tended to gain in importance as the level of Hungarian commercial activity declined over time.

While Hungarians at Buda were free to trade, the Ottoman occupation brought with it new circumstances for commerce — changed tariffs and tariff borders, vastly altered transportation conditions, and new markets. Buda was an important trading centre up to the time of the Fifteen Years' War, as shown by tariff records of the period.[59] As expected, the percentage of Moslem traders eventually increased. By the 1580s, for example, 60 per cent of the traders were Moslems, while 30 per cent were Christians and 10 per cent were Jews. Christians and Jews actually handled 60 per cent of the *value* of goods, however, emphasizing their continuing importance. Several *Magyar* traders of Buda were known to have had large-scale trading operations because of their links with traditional commercial partners in the West.[60] Indeed, the *Magyars* handled most of the trade with the West. Western goods such as textiles, knives and helmets — which were traded for cattle and other agricultural products — were available in Buda as long as these trade connections were maintained. A cache of money, belonging, in all likelihood, to a *Magyar* trader at Buda and hidden during the early 1570s, included coins from all over Germany, Austria and the Low Countries, as well as from Venice.[61]

That this Western trade was significant at Buda during this period is demonstrated by the fact that in 1571, fully one-third of the textiles imported to Buda were of Western origin.[62] Western trade dried up after the 1580s, however, probably due to Ottoman administrative measures — possibly linked to the increased tension that was soon to result in war.[63] Commercial interaction with the West almost disappeared with the onset of war in the 1590s.[64] This no doubt ruined the remaining Christian traders who had depended on this trade for their livelihood. The subsequent unavailability of Western goods on the markets of Buda made life for the

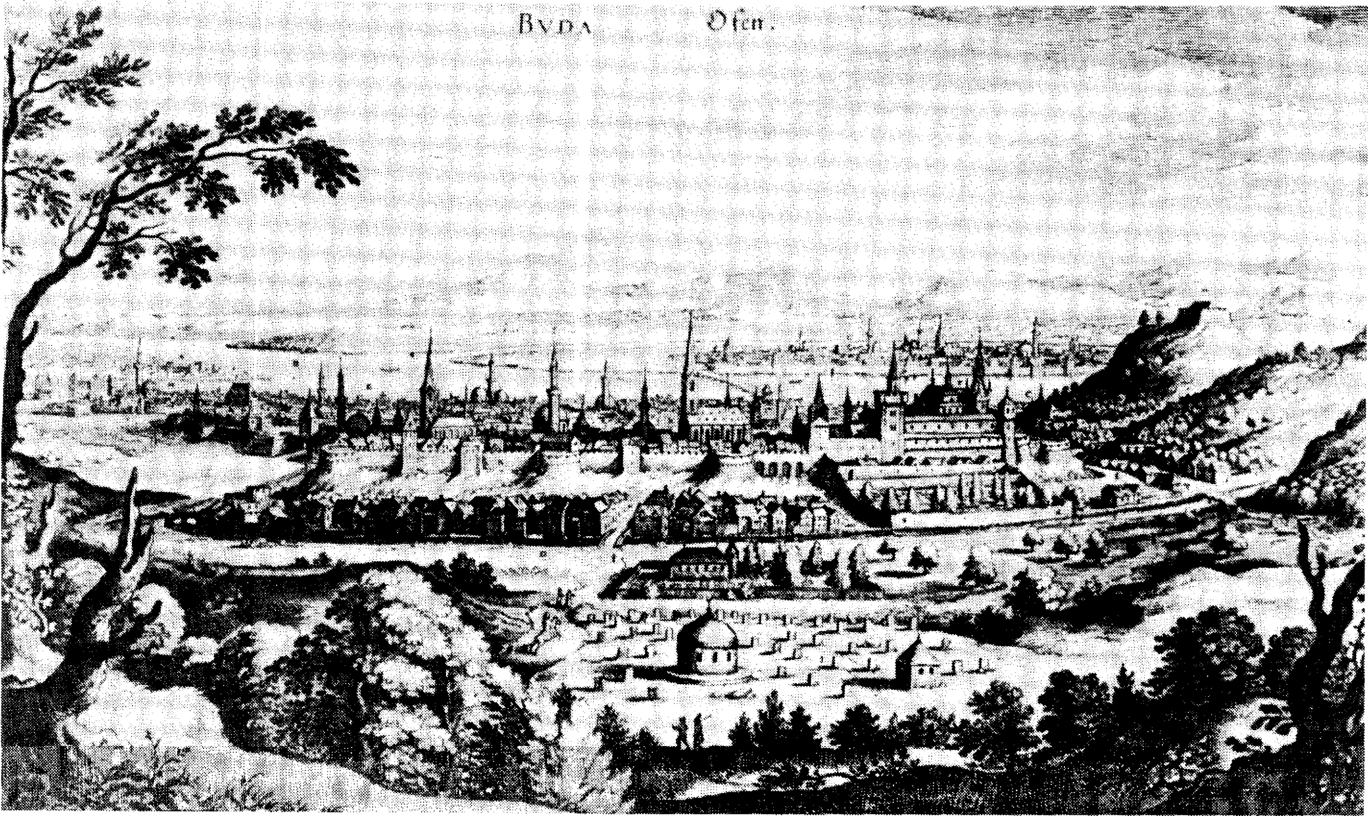

Fig. 1.
M. Mevian (Merian) Buda (and, in the background, Pest) as seen from the West, ca. 1683. Etching and engraving. 19.4 × 32.7 cm.

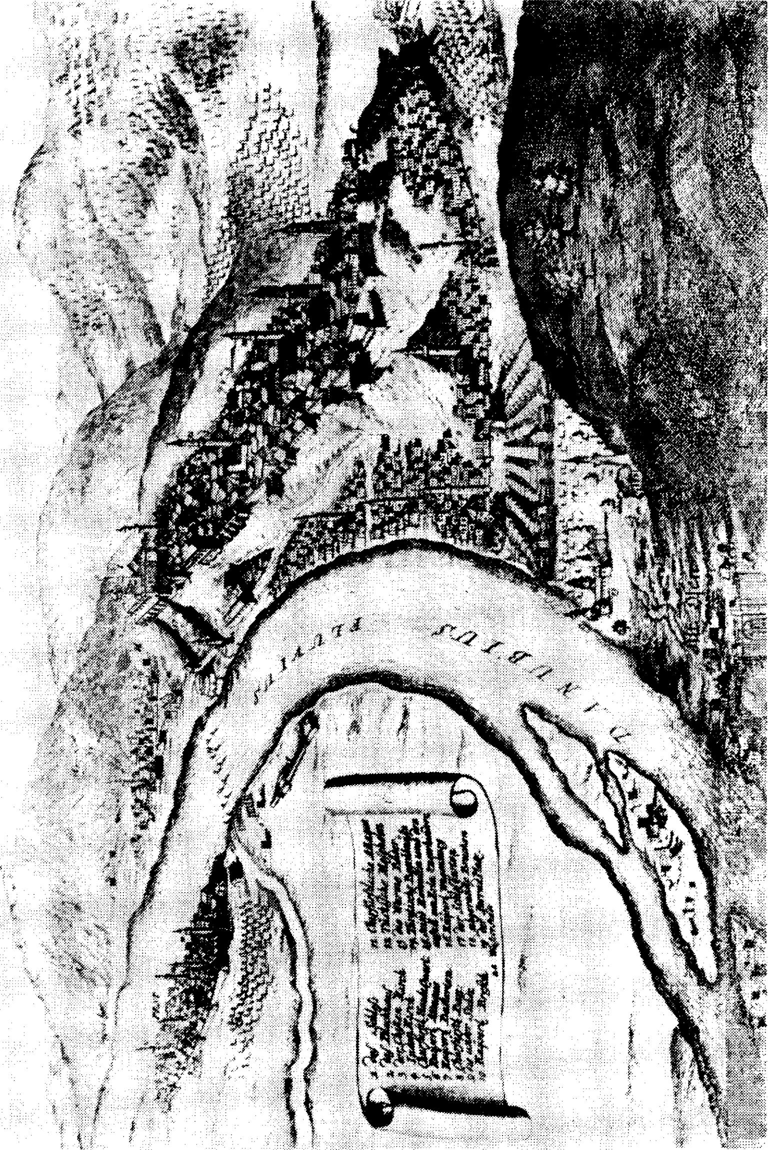

Fig. 2.
J.N. Hallart, after N. Wening. Siege of Buda in 1684 as seen from the north. At the upper left, Pest. Óbuda, at lower centre. Tabán (Debaghnane) at upper centre. Viziváros (Varos) at centre. Engraving and etching. 28.4 × 40.3 cm.

remaining descendants of the pre-1541 population even more uncomfortable, and was one more factor that led to their mass-departure during the war.[65]

VI. Conclusions

In drawing conclusions from this study it is important to keep in mind that in Ottoman-occupied Hungary, Buda represented one of three types of towns, that of the Ottoman garrison town and administrative centre. This type of settlement is to be distinguished from the suburbs of these towns (such as Óbuda, for example) and the unfortified mezővárosok (agricultural towns), which remained *Magyar*-populated, unoccupied by Ottoman forces and largely self-administering during the Ottoman period. These retained their *Magyar* character far more than did fortified towns such as Buda, Székesfehérvár and Gyula, for example. Even nearby Pest saw a far greater survival of *Magyar* life within its walls during the 17th century than did Buda.

While the occupation of Buda by the Ottomans in 1541 caused great changes in the life of the city, it is hoped that this study has demonstrated that: 1) the shift from European capital to Ottoman outpost began as early as 1526, and 2) there was considerable continuity in the life of the capital after 1541, and the final extinction, so to speak, of the European life of the city came with the Fifteen Years' War — sixty years into the occupation.[66] Indeed, it has been pointed out elsewhere that it was the Fifteen Years' War, rather than the Ottoman conquest itself, which constituted the greatest catastrophe for the people and the economy of the Hungarian Kingdom during the Ottoman period.[67] The important thing to remember here is that it was warfare, rather than the occupation itself, which caused the greatest damage to Hungary at the time.[68]

In the case of Buda, the city passed into Ottoman hands without a struggle, so there was no physical destruction associated with the act of occupation itself. By order of the Sultan, there was continued ownership of private property, a large degree of personal security under the circumstances — initially, the option to leave was also provided — and a high level of continuity in industrial and commercial life. There was, in addition, some degree of administrative and judicial tradition carried on in the form of a modicum of self-government for the remaining original inhabitants and the retention of the symbols of their former government. Though taxed for their Christianity, the remaining population was free to exercise

and change its religion, and was under no particular pressure to become Moslem.

The deteriorated political climate associated with the Fifteen Years' War, however, saw the closing down of Christian churches at Buda and the restriction of their traditional commercial ties with the West. The physical destruction caused by the sieges of the war, the fires and explosions associated with it, and the concomitant loss of population through death and emigration, meanwhile, caused the near-extinction of *Magyar* life within the walls of the former capital. Thus, while the period after 1541 had seen a steady decline in specifically *Hungarian* life in the capital, it was the Fifteen Years' War that constituted its death blow. Had the united Habsburg forces succeeded in recapturing Buda at that time, one could have assumed the continued presence of Hungarian life in the city. As it happened, such continuity — unlike even in nearby Pest and Óbuda[69] — cannot be assumed.

Notes

1. László Zolnay, *Ünnep és hétköznap a középkori Budán* [Feastday and Workaday in Medieval Buda] (2nd ed.; Budapest, 1975), p.8.
2. *Ibid.*, p.9 and Sándor Takáts, *Rajzok a török világból* [Sketches from the Turkish World] (Budapest, 1915), p. 114. It should be noted that medieval Hungary was a multi-ethnic kingdom consisting of large numbers of Germans, Slavs, Wallachians (Romanians) and smaller numbers of Jews, Dalmatians, Italians, Frenchmen and others, as well as the dominant *Magyars*, the ethnic group then still in the majority. Therefore the term "*Magyar*" will be used to denote that ethnic group, whereas "Hungarian" will be used to denote that which is of or from the Kingdom of Hungary. The term "Ottoman" denotes the conquering group commonly known as "Turks." The latter term refers to another dominant ethnic group, that of the Ottoman Empire. Modern-day Turkish historians also prefer the use of the term "Ottoman" in such cases, since many, indeed most of the conquering people in Hungary were Balkan Slav, Albanian or Greek in origin.
3. Gyula Káldy-Nagy, *Harács-szedők és ráják* [Plunderers and Rajas] (Budapest, 1970), p.11.
4. *Ibid.*, p.13.
5. Of the many historical treatments of this period, see, István Nemeskürty, *Önfia vágta sebét* [His Son Inflicted the Wound] (Budapest, 1975), pp.205–500; and, by the same author, *Ez történt Mohács után* [This Happened after Mohács] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1968).
6. Lajos Fekete and Lajos Nagy, "Budapest története a török korban" [The History of Budapest in the Turkish Age], in *Budapest története a későbbi középkorban és a török hódoltság idején [The History of Budapest during the Late Medieval Period and during the Turkish Occupation]*, eds. László Gerevitch and Domokos Kosáry (*Budapest története* [The History of Budapest], Vol. II [Budapest, 1973]), pp.229–30.
7. *Ibid.*, pp.218–19. See also: Martyn C. Rady, *Medieval Buda: A Study of Municipal Government and Jurisdiction in the Kingdom of Hungary.* (Boulder, Colorado, 1985).
8. *Ibid.*, p.218.

9. *Ibid.*, p.397.
10. The more commonly used term "Pasha" refers to the military rank of the individual *Bejlerbejs*, most of whom were "Pashas."
11. On Buda's Ottoman administration, the source was Fekete and Nagy, pp.397–407.
12. Káldy-Nagy, p.93.
13. *Ibid.*, p.108. Káldy-Nagy gives this figure as the approximate population in 1494–95.
14. Fekete and Nagy, p.200.
15. Nemeskürty, p.245.
16. Fekete and Nagy, pp.201–02.
17. *Ibid.*, pp.213–15. In all probability they too came from the Balkans.
18. *Ibid.*, p.385.
19. *Ibid.*, p.386. Twenty-five of these seventy-five families were listed as being of "recent Balkan origin." It is likely that some of them were returnees.
20. See *ibid.*, pp.386–87, and Káldy-Nagy, p.112 for the number of Ottoman soldiers in 1543. The ethnic Turks remained a minority for the entire occupation period.
21. Nemeskürty, pp.109–13.
22. Káldy-Nagy, p.115–16; 390 heads of households were counted in 1546, plus 19 singles.
23. Fekete and Nagy, p.386. On this see also David P. Daniel, "The Fifteen Years' War and the Protestant Response to Habsburg Absolutism in Hungary," *East Central Europe*, VIII, 1–2 (1981), pp.38–51; and Carl Max Kortepeter, *Ottoman Imperialism during the Reformation: Europe and the Caucasus* (New York, 1972).
24. Fekete and Nagy, p.387.
25. Nemeskürty, p.519.
26. Albert Gárdonyi, "Buda és Pest keresztény lakossága a török hódoltság alatt" [The Christian Population of Buda and Pest during the Turkish Occupation], *Tanulmányok Budapest múltjából* [Studies from Budapest's Past], V (1936), p.15.
27. *Ibid.*, p.16.
28. Fekete and Nagy, p.227.
29. The material for the preceding section was from *ibid.*, p.411 and Gárdonyi, pp.14–15 unless otherwise indicated.
30. Fekete and Nagy, p.413.
31. *Ibid.*, p.360.
32. Győző Gerő, *Az oszmán-török építészet Magyarországon* [Ottoman-Turkish Architecture in Hungary] (Budapest, 1980), pp. 31–32; Lajos Fekete, "Mohamedán vallási és szellemi élet a törökkori Budán" [Moslem Religious and Intellectual Life at Buda during the Turkish Period], in *Tanulmányok Budapest múltjából* [Studies from Budapest's Past], IX (1941), p. 120.
33. Fekete and Nagy, p.353.
34. Gerő, pp.30–31.
35. Káldy-Nagy, pp.108–09.
36. Fekete and Nagy, p.348.
37. *Ibid.*, p.361.
38. Gerő, p.33.
39. *Ibid.*, pp.124–25.
40. Győző Gerő, *Turkish Monuments in Hungary* (Budapest, 1976), pp.31–39.
41. Gerő, *Az oszmán-török...*, pp.32–34.
42. Káldy-Nagy, pp.101–04.
43. Veli Bej's *türbe* has not survived. Fekete and Nagy, pp.416–17 and Gerő, *Turkish Monuments ...*, pp.34–35.
44. Fekete and Nagy, p.360.
45. Zolnay, p.69 and Káldy-Nagy, p.66.
46. Káldy-Nagy, p.106.
47. *Ibid.*, p.107.
48. Busbecq, 1554; Schweiger, 1576; Wratislaw, 1591; Bocatius, 1605; Leszlie, 1666.

49. Ferenc Salamon, *Magyarország a török hódoltság korában* [Hungary during the Age of the Turkish Occupation] (Budapest, 1926), p.186.
50. *Ibid.*, p.193.
51. *Ibid.*, pp.189–91. 52. There were more fires in 1625, 1627, 1635, 1658, 1660 and 1669.
53. Fekete and Nagy, pp.363–64.
54. *Ibid.*, p.201.
55. *Ibid.*, pp.214–15, and Vera Zimányi, "Gazdasági és társadalmi fejlődés Mohácstól a 16. század végéig" [Economic and Social Development from Mohács to the End of the Sixteenth Century], *Századok* CXIV, 4 (1980), p.545.
56. *Ibid.*, p.215.
57. Fekete and Nagy, pp.367–68. The material for the remainder of this passage is also from this source.
58. *Ibid.*, p.367.
59. *Ibid.*, p.376.
60. Káldy-Nagy, pp.120–22.
61. Lajos Huszár, "A Fortuna utcai éremlelet Budán" [The Coin Find of Fortuna Street at Buda], in *Tanulmányok Budapest múltjából VII (1939), pp.181–87.*
62. Fekete and Nagy, p.377.
63. Ibid.
64. *Ibid.*, p.379.
65. *Ibid.*, p.380.
66. Fekete and Nagy, p.387.
67. Takáts, p.111.
68. This point is emphasized throughout Gárdonyi, "Buda és Pest...," especially pp.13, 23 and 18.
69. *Ibid.*

Hungarian Studies Review Vol. XIV, No. 1 (Spring 1987)

Remembering 1956: Some Reflections on the Historical Consciousness of a New Generation

Thomas Szendrey

In any discussion of the issues of historical consciousness — specifically the impact of historical knowledge upon the thought patterns, emotional and spiritual dimensions of human events, indeed the very life and future of a given generation at a certain moment in human history — there comes to mind a whole series of observations and maxims about the impact of historical knowledge upon life. This is especially the case for that modern man who lives in one of the most historically conscious eras of human history and whose thought-processes have become permeated with the historical dimension of our human existence. Furthermore, human beings today are not always properly aware about what informs or ought to inform their consciousness about past and present and the relationships involved.

Before turning to the specific context — namely the historical consciousness of a new generation on Hungary and, indeed, among Hungarians beyond the Hungarian frontiers — one must at the very least spend a few moments and deal with the more general dimensions of the concern, which are as significant as the details about the thought and attitudes of one generation at a particular confluence of the historical process, only because we inevitably know more about the particulars and have generally failed to attend to those general and mostly philosophical issues which make possible even the meaningful discussion of the particular. Thus, historical consciousness, to be a positive and productive phenomenon must be based upon pertinent and proper historical knowledge and by proper is meant (for our purposes) the most nearly accurate, truthful, and comprehensive account achievable, not necessarily only in its details, but more in terms of the verisimilitude of the over-all presentation. In terms, after all, of the quality of historical

knowledge, achievable comprehensiveness in details is a responsibility of the historian; verisimilitude — as well as the ability to perceive connections among events, ideas, and attitudes — belong to the level of virtue and excellence in historical scholarship.

That great wit and also great historian (indeed a significant advocate of the philosophy of history) Voltaire quipped that history was written by the winners; if we were to accept all the implications of this pithy observation, it would be best to stop at this point and accept the fact that the history of the 1956 revolution in Hungary has already been written by the winners, or by those who have joined in some way the winning side. Some of their books have even been published in English language editions to make their version better known beyond the borders of Hungary. I am, of course, making a specific reference to the book of János Berecz as his work was obviously intended to present (to use Voltaire's dictum once again) the version of those who have emerged victorious.[1] In connection with this, however, it should be stressed that one of the things most historians know only too well is how ephemeral the notion of winners and loosers really is, even if one remains on the rather simplistic level of unexamined judgment. As historians it is obviously our fundamental obligation to search for and present the attainable truth in a truthful context. Hence, we must not accept the winner's version, although we disregard it at our peril, because the official accounts of winners sometimes harden into — sad to say — accepted historical "sources" and interpretations with the devastating consequences not only for the attainable historical truth, but also for the destiny of a people and the resultant false and thus damaging historical consciousness of many individuals, indeed sometimes of a generation or more. This concept of historical consciousness, specifically the notion of false consciousness, is not exactly unknown to Marxists and plays a role in the shaping of the proper understanding of history central to their system. The constantly revised versions of the so-called *Short Course* history of the Communist party produced in Stalin's time, or for that matter the constantly revised encyclopedias according to the dictates of the interests of the ruling elements, are some examples of the damage which can be done by the constant shifting of facts and interpretations.[2] However, let us instead turn to some examples of this from both the earlier and later eras of Hungarian history. The examples are intended to illustrate the pervasive and sometimes perverse power of historical consciousness as it is taught or communicated to a people. This is one reason why historians should be more concerned with the uses to which their scholarship is sometimes put

and thus concern themselves more with the teaching of history in the schools and the implicit — sometimes even explicit — views and conceptions of history in literary works, films, and cultural products generally. Winners, that is official historians — and certainly ideologues in power — did not and do not neglect these matters and are aware of their significance in shaping the historical consciousness of peoples.

Numerous contemporary Hungarian writers are well aware of the role of literature in contributing to the development of a better informed and more sophisticated and nuanced historical consciousness.[3]

Permit me to cite in this connection from a recent and highly acclaimed novel by Erzsébet Galgóczi: "Do you know, my dear, what great force has that truth which has been documented and committed to writing?"[4] Galgóczi also cites Maxim Gorky in this connection, namely the role of historical knowledge in shaping historical consciousness, to wit: "Gorky writes somewhere that only that has occured, the history of which has been written. This is true. Peoples will sooner or later forget about which they are constrained to be silent, about which even the written word remains silent. But what occurs when the account of an event is falsified...? Will that event always be perceived that way by future generations?"[5] The applicability of this to our present concerns should be rather obvious and the implications hopeful. Many Hungarian writers and intellectuals still remember the events of 1956 differently than the official account.[6]

However, let us turn to examples from other eras. These may be instructive, but as is the case with all examples, are by no means totally similar. The kings of the Árpád dynasty, and even later rulers of the Hungarian kingdom, had their official chroniclers — and after the Renaissance era we sometimes characterize them as court historians — portray their deeds and ancestors in such a way as to obviously promote the image, that is foster a sense of both past and present, so as to justify the then current situation and power status of the king and the nobility. Among others, the *Chronicle* of Anonymous is but a case in point. Future historians using this chronicle, even with the best of intentions and the most sophisticated critical methods, are nonetheless dealing with "official" history, as is the historian who uses, with even the utmost discretion and good will, the first accounts of the Hungarian revolution of 1956 published by the information office of the Council of Ministers,[7] or for that matter some of the ideologically motivated writings of journalists, participants, indeed even historians, published in Hungary during

the past thirty years.[8] The differences between the two eras are, of course, accentuated by the greater ideological commitments of our own times.

If, in point of fact, there were not other accounts — here disregarding opposing ideologically motivated writings, sometimes masquerading as history or chronicle — the virtual monopoly of information, no matter whether a consequence of a mostly unlettered population, as in the thirteenth century, or a population whose historical consciousness has been limited by the cultural, educational, or media policies of a regime which has made a conscious effort to control information (the degree of success or failure is but a marginal issue in the context) is more or less similar in its effects. That is why one must go beyond or transcend official histories — or historical accounts written by winners — and turn to the accounts of those who have suffered the events, have lived to write about them, and can produce that memoir literature and those historical studies which, while also suffering from the immediacy to the events, can nonetheless provide a perspective no amount of retrospective historical writing, even outstanding critical writing, can provide. That is why the accounts and writings of those who were ostensibly loosers are so necessary for any historical account pretending to completeness and comprehensiveness. Just to conclude this point, it might be added that such retrospective completeness (always limited by our human condition) was not really possible before the advent of an obvious and appreciated interest in history as a mode of thought which began emerging in the seventeenth century, and in spite of the protestations of some historians to the contrary, has been growing apace since that time, making an interest in the historical an obvious and permeating influence on our cultural condition.[9] Can one really appreciate the extent to which illusions and ideals are fostered by the historical imagination today?

One could cite another example from the early history of the Hungarian people which has had an extremely negative impact upon their historical consciousness, namely the search for ancestors and relatives amongst peoples who cannot be demonstrated to have had any conceivable — not to mention significant — contact with the Hungarians during the early phases of their history.[10] I mention this issue not in order to discuss it, but to point out that the propensity of many throughout our history to base their awareness of and appreciation for the past upon legends and obvious, but emotionally satisfying, misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the past, should serve to caution us against similar attitudes toward the history of more recent times. There can also be no doubt that

attitudes of despair engendered by a seemingly hopeless world situation can lead to serious difficulties on the level of historical consciousness and understanding.

The emergence of a more independent (and thus not official) historical profession has somewhat attenuated the preponderance of so-called winner's history, but by no means completely so and not to the same extent in different societies and nations. Futhermore, the appearance of socio-political systems informed by an obvious and stated commitment to a certain and certain-directional explanation of the nature and course of historical developments (such as the Marxist-Leninist philosophy of history officially dominant in Hungary today) have served to reintroduce perhaps in a somewhat different, but also more effective manner than in times past, problems and issues associated with official historiography; however, one must have a nuanced view of these matters, but not one so nuanced as to disregard (perhaps misunderstand) the issue of the relation of historical scholarship and politics. There is, after all, a large and impressive body of writing on this very significant issue of concern not only to historians, but to all who are concerned, or should be, with the impact of political considerations on our historical consciousness.[11]

To expand and deepen our understanding of the historical consciousness related problems of the 1956 revolution, it is useful to examine some of the issues pertinent to the revolutions of 1848 and its consequences.

After the defeat of that revolution many of its leaders were either exiled, executed, imprisoned, or went into hiding. Efforts were made, and not for the first time, to write the history of such events and causes from the point of view of the winners, in this case the Habsburgs and their supporters. Their version of Hungarian history was taught in the schools and was also reflected in much of historical and other writings, as well as in numerous manifestations of cultural and political life. However, there were widespread opposition movements, especially in the intellectual realm, and some of Hungary's outstanding historians wrote their accounts of the revolution and the subsequent war for independence while in exile. Their works were available in their homeland only clandestinely and mostly under assumed names; the most important of these writings were those of Mihály Horváth.[12] It was these works, among numerous others, written and first published during the years of Horváth's exile, which ultimately prevented serious dislocations in the historical consciousness of many Hungarians during the era 1849-1867 and even beyond. Knowledge about the revolution

was maintained in spite of official displeasure and efforts to inculcate another version of the events. Indeed, those official histories and the textbooks based upon them have been mercifully forgotten.

One should also point out — as it was pointed out to this writer by a Hungarian dissident in 1984 — that after the execution of the thirteen military leaders of the revolution and the war for independence at Arad (a fact well known to even otherwise poorly informed individuals) the bodies were turned over to their families for proper burial. A comment by Christopher Dawson in his book, *The Gods of Revolution* may be instructive as we continue: "Only a dying civilization neglects its dead" (p. xvii). They were certainly not treated as shamefully as the victims of either the Rákosi years in Hungary, those executed with Imre Nagy, nor for that matter the many young revolutionaries buried in unmarked graves in the now famous section 301[13] or in a special plot at the Kerepesi cemetery in central Budapest, the only location where participants in the 1956 revolution were buried in large numbers and contiguously. It was only through the actions of some yet unnamed individuals that the plan of the authorities to raze these graves has, to the best of my knowledge, not been carried out.[14] Quite simply, the lack of knowledge about these gravesites (and what they represent in terms of the contemporary history of Hungary) and the almost absolute insistence of the authorities that this not become public knowledge has had and continues to have, in my estimation, a very negative impact on Hungarian society generally. More specifically, it reacts negatively in terms of perspectives for the destiny of the country and its peoples and casts a long shadow over any meaningful historical outlook. It is the source of historical and psychological wounds. There are very obvious socio-psychological impacts and consequences of this wounded historical consciousness and these can be meaningfully illustrated by quoting a passage from the concluding pages of Boris Pasternak's novel *Dr. Zhivago*:

> Microscopic forms of cardiac hemorrhages have become very frequent in recent years. They are not always fatal. Some people get over them. It's a typical modern disease. I think its causes are of a moral order. The great majority of us are required to live a life of constant, systematic duplicity. Your health is bound to be affected if, day after day, you say the opposite of what you feel, if you grovel before what you dislike and rejoice at what brings you nothing but misfortune. Our nervous system isn't just a fiction, it's part of our physical body, and our soul exists in space and is inside

us, like the teeth in our mouth. It can't be forever violated with impunity.[15]

Extending upon this description of a situation in which the events of the past as experienced are not permitted to exercise their expected (if left unhampered) impact upon the historical consciousness of an individual to the socio-political context and the study and practice of history as an activity with a public dimension (historians write for their desk drawers even less than literary figures do), it should be expected that the imposition of a false sense of history would also have similar negative social effects.

This is certainly the case when one reflects — it is not really proper to say examine in this context because all one can do is reflect upon shared personal experiences and draw inferences from what one hears and reads — upon the fundamentally warped, if not partially schizophrenic, historical and social consciousness in Hungary today. Futhermore, many social indicators used to characterize the situation of Hungarians today, such as high suicide rates, alcoholism, inter-generational conflict, excessive and obvious materialism, loss of perspective, cynicism, while instructive, do not call direct attention to what was described by Pasternak in the passage cited above.

In my estimation — based to a great extent upon some focused conservations with Hungarian scholars concerned about the future of Hungary and the historical consciousness of the populace, conducted both in Hungary and here during the past three years — one can point out that the high incidence of suicide and stress-related health problems exact a heavy toll from precisely that category of individuals (the middle-aged intellectually and spiritually sensitive element) most concerned with the future of their nation.[16] The inability or the unwillingness for whatever reason, to freely examine all — and not just those officially allowed or tolerated — past events, individuals, and ideas, are enervating the collective nervous system of the most valuable members of an entire generation. It certainly is not a healthy situation. This , however, is the context in which one must examine the impact of the 1956 revolution upon Hungarian historical consciousness during the past decades.

In the study of the events of the Hungarian revolution — after an initial campaign to discredit it in any possible manner until approximately 1962 — it has, until quite recently, been generally glossed over and neglected, simply forgotten about. At the present time, after it became obvious that the younger generation was very interested,[17] and the elder generation — including but by no means

limited to the dissident community — had not forgotten the essence, even if it sometimes remembered poorly or only subjectively the particulars of those events, the regime moved from relative silence to misinformation — indeed disinformation — mostly tendentious presentations of the events or purported events in great detail to overwhelm by excessive particulars and carefully chosen facts to make points supportive of the regime and the Soviet Union. This is exemplified quite evidently in the book by János Berecz; he introduces his discussion of the events between October 23 and November 4, 1956 thus: "It is equally important that these conclusions [drawn from the discussions of the events] should be passed on to the coming generations of a constantly renewing society, in order to help them avoid errors and avert new tragedies. This is at least as important as the need to recognize the new demands of new periods."[18] Having stated the purpose of his book in avowedly political terms and noting further that interest in these events (calling it a counter-revolution) is not declining, he does his best to explain its history in terms of the interests of the regime.

Not intending to analyze in detail the attitudes and methodology of the Berecz volume, at least two examples can be cited to indicate some of the shortcomings. First of all, in what purports to be a scholarly work, sources are cited very selectively and often key statements are left without documentation whereas relatively minor points are overdocumented. The goals of the revolution, expressed perhaps most compellingly in the list of demands generally known as the fourteen points, are never cited in full, only four of the fourteen being mentioned.[19] The unrestrained use of ideological jargon is also most disturbing in what was meant to be a scholarly work.

Berecz attacks any number of times the so-called "class enemies" who in his estimation are still not reconciled to what he characterizes as thirty years of progress in Hungary. This progress is undoubtedly real and cannot be denied or dismissed, but it is limited to realms other than the basic demands and concerns of the 1956 revolution. Nor does Berecz neglect the *émigrés*, realizing that many of the writings and sources concerning the revolution have been written or published by individuals who left the country at different times after the defeat of the revolution. He in effect dismisses their efforts in the following words:

> The *émigré* reactionaries who lament their wrecked hopes, contimue to pursue a blindly incorrigible approach, deploring the passing of the ultimate opportunity for a take-over in Hungary.

> Some who played an important role in those days are overwhelmed by nostalgia and nurse fresh hopes. They are certain to suffer new disappointments, for they have broken away from Hungarian reality and the actual power relations.[20]

While it is true that there may be a danger that those who recall their participation in great events or upheavals may distort the events or perhaps view them too subjectively; it is, however, also true that this danger is easier to rectify by subsequent historical criticism than the conscious elimination of sources and obvious distortion. Ideological jargon is also made meaningless by the passage of time and thought. Nonetheless, there is no substitute for immediacy and closeness to the events, but that by itself represents only the material indispensable for the study of history, not the historical work by any means.

There can be no doubt that those who chose to emigrate at the time of a great national tragedy (there is a significant tradition for this step in the turmoil typical of the history of East Central Europe and the significance and subsequent role of the *émigré* was explained poignantly by Comenius, exemplified by Rákóczi and Kossuth among many others) bear a special responsibility to preserve their memories and the documents illustrative of their actions and times. While their activities are not the only component of the future historical account of those events, they remain nonetheless a unique part of it.[21]

There are, of course, a number of other equally significant components, including the residue of such experiences as are passed on through the forms and conventions of the culture itself, as well as the sources and documents zealously guarded by those in power. Only all of these elements together can eventually contribute — in the hands of a good historian — to the acceptable telling and the necessary retelling of the account of the revolution, as well as its cause and consequences.

However, the possibility of doing this well is strongly influenced by the continuity and character of the historical consciousness of a people over the course of many generations. It has been one of the recurring negative elements in the formation of the historical consciousness of the Hungarian people that very often one generation could not pass on directly its experiences and struggles to the next. The desire to do so was certainly there, but the interests of the power structures, both foreign and domestic, inevitably contributed to fractures in the tradition. The great fractures of the late seventeenth century, which were the consequences of the end of

Turkish dominance and the imposition of Habsburg hegemony, as well as the significant religious divisions, have been healed or have healed themselves as a result of subsequent events and movements,[22] but the possibility of such fractures have been by no means eliminated. The tradition of the 1956 revolution has only been incompletely passed on by the generation which made it to those who were their successors. The restoration of the continuity of tradition is always essential to the formulation and continuing vitality of a sense of historical consciousness. This too is one of the building blocks of that past consciousness so essential to the continuance of a nation and its peoples as an entity having both meaning and value beyond the satisfaction of fundamental needs.

In spite of the many difficulties inherent in the practice of history itself and coupled with the numerous concerns of the maintenance of the consciousness of the revolution, the historian must nonetheless maintain a sense of qualified optimism that the story will be told. Whether the story itself — and ever since the time of Herodotus the story has been the meaningful element — will create the needed conditions for the positive elucidation of the meaning of the revolution remains in the realm of speculation and hope, indispensable characteristics of both history and life.

However, that is beyond the competence of the historian to discuss.

Notes

1. János Berecz, *Counter-Revolution in Hungary: Words and Weapons.* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986); translation of the second expanded and revised Hungarian edition of 1981. Berecz is secretary of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party.
2. This point is briefly and compellingly discussed by Stephen F. Cohen. "Stalin's Afterlife", *The New Republic*, December 29, 1979.
3. See especially the writings of István Csurka, *Az Elfogadhatatlan realitás* (New York: Püski, 1986), pp. 47–71.
4. Galgóczi, *Vidravas* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1984), p. 246.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
6. Csurka, pp.49–53.
7. I am making specific reference to the following series, but there were other similar publications; *Ellenforradalmi erők a magyar októberi eseményekben*, 4 vols. (Budapest: A Magyar Népköztársaság Minisztertanácsa Tájékoztatási Hivatala, no date, but app. 1958); also *Nagy Imre és bűntársai összeesküvése*, same publication details.
8. A good selection of such writings published in Hungary can be found in any bibliographical guide to materials on the Hungarian revolution, esp. the bibliography compiled by Ivan Halasz de Beky. One particularly offensive example is Ervin Hollós, *Kik voltak, mit akartak*, second corrected edition (Budapest: Kossuth, 1967).
9. Concerning these points see especially the writings of John Lukacs, *Historical Consciousness* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), *passim*.

10. For a very recent discussion of these points see my introduction to the posthumous volume; Bálint Hóman, *Ősemberek, ősmagyarok* (Atlanta, GA.: Hungarian Cultural Foundation, 1985), pp. 11–17.
11 For a discussion of this point in a Hungarian context Ferenc Glatz, *Történetiró és politika* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980) and Zoltán Horváth, "Hungary: Recovering from the Past", in Walter Laquer and George Mosse, eds., *The New History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), pp. 221–235.
12. Mihály Horváth, *Magyarország függetlenségi harcának története*, 3 vols. (Geneva, 1865); published also in Hungary after 1867.
13. Michael T. Kaufman, "Section 301, Where Hungary's Past is Buried", The New York *Times*, June 23, 1986, section A1, pp. 1 and 5; also, personal communications to this writer.
14. Personal communication to this writer; I also saw some of the collected materials pertaining to the Kerepesi cemetary gravesites.
15. Boris Pasternak, *Dr. Zhivago* (New York: Modern Library, 1958), p.483.
16. Based upon discussions with a number of Hungarian scholars and writers.
17. Evidence of this can be obtained from the proceedings of the Fiatal Irók József Attila Köre; based upon discussions with a participant in their meetings. More recently there has been evidence of interest in 1956 among students and writers as well as in dissident circles; some of this was tied to the thirtieth anniversary in 1986 and caused some concern to the authorities. I followed these developments in the October and November 1986 issues of the *Foreign Area Broadcast Service*, Eastern Europe.
18. Berecz, p. 7.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 142. A recent review of the Berecz volume by Ivan Volgyes in the *American Historical Review* (vol. 92, no 4, Oct. 1987, pp. 1003–1004) expressed similar concerns.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
21. The problem of *Zeitgeschichte* or the study of our own times is discussed by many philosophically inclined historians and is of some interest in the elucidation of these matters. However, it should be extended by a discussion of the psychology of memory and its ramifications for the analysis of memoirs.
22. For a more detailed exposition of these ideas see my article "Inter Arma...; Reflections on Seventeenth Century Educational and Cultural Life in Hungary and Transylvania", in János Bak and Béla K. Király, eds., *From Hunyadi to Rákóczi: War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary* (New York, 1986, dist. by Columbia University Press), pp. 315–334.

Hungarian Studies Review Vol. XIV, No. 1 (Spring 1987)

Arthur Koestler: Hungarian Writer?*

Robert Blumstock

As long as the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party defines the parameters of what is, and what is not acceptable literature, Arthur Koestler's books will never be best sellers in Hungary.

Koestler was always out of step with the politics in the land of his birth, both in his youth as a Zionist, and later as a member of the Communist party. By the time he abandoned political questions in mid-life, Hungary was behind the Iron Curtain, and his anti-Communist reputation was hardly appropriate for encouraging a welcome reception in Hungary. Although his subsequent endeavors in attempting to bridge the gap between parapsychology, mysticism and science were less tainted with political sentiments, acceptance continued to elude him and his work in the land of his birth.

Irrespective of the frequency of the changes in the character of the regimes in Hungary during his lifetime, Koestler remained attached to his origins, and was very much a part of the Hungarian intellectual diaspora. I have argued elsewhere that his ties to both his Hungarian and Jewish roots were a continual psychological and intellectual stimulant.[1] His last major work, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, was his final attempt to resolve the Hungarian-Jewish dilemma. His solution was neither better nor more original than anyone else's of his generation, nor of subsequent generations, who even at this juncture, more than forty years after the Holocaust, are uncertain what it means to be both Jewish and Hungarian.[2]

In present day Hungary, writers, journalists and editors, perplexed by their country's relative freedom, still cannot quite bring themselves to openly accept the Koestler oeuvre, even though there is a limited and grudging acknowledgement of those portions of it, which do not conflict with Hungary's current ideological posture. This reluctant recognition was quite apparent when shortly after

Koestler's death, two memorial pieces appeared, one in *Valóság* written by Mihály Sükösd[3] and the other in *Nagyvilág*, by Erzsébet Vezér.[4]

Sükösd writes in considerable detail on Koestler's life and work, and suggests that Koestler's lack of "identity" caused him to be available for messianic and utopian commitments, only to eventually shun these involvements and to "blindly hate" that which he had once revered.[5] Although Sükösd does not deny Koestler's Hungarian origins, he does assert that Koestler cannot be included among Hungarian writers, since he never wrote anything in the Magyar language.[6] Further, and more telling Sükösd argues that Koestler's life does not provide much of an example for Hungarians to emulate. Sükösd contends that Koestler's various attempts to solve his inner emptiness through ideological attachments are seen as having driven him, in the latter half of his life, to purely solipsistic concerns: death, suicide and parapsychology.[7]

In contrast Vezér's piece offers a more tempered view of Koestler and his Hungarian ties. She notes that even after many years away from Hungary he continued to define his mother tongue as Hungarian,[8] and that he even remembered two lines of a patriotic poem that he had written as a child.[9] He was also proud of the fact that during his visit to Western Turkestan, in the 1930's he felt quite at home, since this was the area from which the Hungarians originated, and he was only the second Hungarian after Rusztem Vámbéry to have visited there. Vezér also notes Koestler's attachment to Endre Ady and Attila József, and though his last visit to Hungary was during the 1930's, and Hungarian came slowly and at times awkwardly, he still wished to speak in Hungarian to other Hungarians.[10]

Rather than the empty shell which Sükösd portrays Koestler as being, Vezér describes Koestler as a paradigmatic figure of our age: the tragic symbol of the intellectual who has lost his beliefs.[11]

A more substantial memorial for Koestler was published in Hungarian in 1985, but not in Hungary.[12] The editor of the memorial volume, Béla Hidegkúti, drew together several pieces originally published in English by George Orwell, György Mikes, T.R. Fyvel, and W.H. Thorpe. There are also sections written by György Faludy, and David Martin (an Australian writer of Hungarian background) both translated from English and an excerpt by Koestler from the *Invisible Writing*, much of which is devoted to his attempt to translate Attila József into English.

Hidegkúti in the preface notes that to this point nothing has been written in Hungarian about Koestler, and this book is an attempt to

present, in Koestler's native language, a brief introduction to what Koestler's life meant to those who knew him.

Given the fact of his eminence and his recent death, fragments of his work during his "acceptable" period, when he was a member of the German communist party, from 1931 to 1937, have recently appeared in some popular journals. Why this should be the case is no easy matter to explain. The convolutions of the reasoning behind such publication decisions go beyond the simple fact of recalling an illustrious career. Part of the motivation for this belated and cautious recognition may derive from the fact that although his books are not readily available, Koestler is well enough known for some samples of his work to appear. Another reason for publishing him now may be to contrast his early work with the recent publication of *Darkness at Noon*, which appeared in a Hungarian translation printed in Switzerland shortly before his death and which has been reprinted in a *samizdat* edition, in Hungary in 1985. It may be that the young and ill informed may not know much about his communist past, and by publishing work written during his communist period, Koestler as a subsequent critic of communism would be seen as a renegade and consequently his ideological critique discredited. Finally, publishing him may be a way for the official press to play a quasi-oppositional role in presenting Hungarian readers with the unstated premise in Koestler's transition from believer to opponent of communism. This posture is about the only one available to reproach the control exercised by the party, as any more direct criticism is prohibited.

The first piece to appear was in the February 1986 issue of *Új Tükör*.[13] It was entitled "Spanyol testamentum" (Spanish Testament) and taken from the book by the same title, which was originally published in German.[14] This brief excerpt is based on Koestler's Spanish Civil War experiences and describes the reaction of a prisoner to the random elimination of his fellow captives. In this situation where no one knew when it would be his turn to die, a paralysing fear gripped those awaiting their fate. They retreat into themselves in anticipation of their final moment. Interestingly enough, the book from which this piece was taken is the only one of his books that was reviewed in a Hungarian journal shortly after its original publication.[15]

In the foreword to the *Új Tükör* piece, a brief biographical note mentions that Koestler became one of the spokesmen of anti-communism. Reference is made to his other interests, for example that his favorite poet was Endre Ady, his best friend was Andor Németh, that he played chess with Frigyes Karinthy and that he

knew Attila József. Significantly the title of his major anti-communist work, *Darkness at Noon,* never intrudes. Although it is mentioned that his father was Hungarian, his mother Czech, and that he was born in Budapest, his name is given as Arthur Koestler which — considering the usual manner in which Hungarian names are written, with surname first — labels the author as a foreigner. However, since he established himself in the West as Arthur Koestler, the editors may have felt that because he did not write this piece in Hungarian it would be inappropriate to define him as Hungarian. More simply, it may have been that since he had made his reputation in the West he would be recognized easily enough by writing his name in the usual Western fashion.

The second piece entitled "Bizalmas küldetés" (Secret Mission) also appeared in 1986 in *Nagyvilág*[16] in an issue devoted to reminiscences of the Spanish Civil War by well known Soviet, Spanish and Western writers including George Orwell.[17] This article was excerpted from a German language edition of *The Invisible Writing.*[18] The selection deals largely with events during the Spanish Civil War, when Koestler was asked to look through the papers and documents left behind in Madrid by right-wing politicians.

Prior to this the only other work of Koestler's to appear in an official Hungarian journal is a translation of an obituary he wrote on the occasion of Attila József's death, which originally appeared in German in *Das Neue Tagebuch,* on May 13, 1939, a left wing journal produced by émigrés in Paris between the years 1933 and 1944. This was recently translated into Hungarian and appeared in *Mozgó Világ.*[19]

During the 1930's Koestler did write a play in German, *Bar du Soleil* (Twilight Bar) which was translated into Hungarian, by Andor Németh, but not produced in Hungary. In fact Koestler lost the manuscript, and later while in France re-wrote it. It was produced in Paris, but it only played a few performance.[20]

During his lifetime, this lack of recognition from his native land troubled Koestler.[21] While his Jewish origins presented him with continual problems which he felt compelled to confront, his Hungarian ties were, as for many of his generation, something which he took for granted. In the period during which he grew up in Budapest, conscious assimilation by Jews into the Hungarian mainstream was defined as the means by which to gain entry into the whole of European culture.

While it is unlikely that any changes will be made in the definition of Koestler as a Hungarian writer, there is now evidence available which indicates that Koestler did indeed write in Hungarian.[22] Two

articles appeared in the July–August and October 1927 issues of *Múlt és Jövő*, a Jewish periodical which was published in Budapest from 1911 until February 1944. At the time these articles were published, Koestler was 22 years old and had been in Palestine for about a year. Not surprisingly both articles deal with Jewish themes for it was during this period that Koestler was committed to the Zionist cause.

It was precisely at this point that Koestler had reached an impasse in his Zionist commitment. During the winter of 1926–27 he had become involved with *The Nile and Palestine Gazette* which was financed by the German legation in Cairo.[23] This venture ended after the paper had published three issues, and Koestler felt his career had reached a dead end.[24] At this crucial juncture, the possibility arose of becoming the executive secretary of the Revisionist movement[25] in Berlin and he decided to go there by way of Budapest in the Spring of 1927, thereby enabling him to see his parents, whom he had not seen for about a year. He arrived home without sufficient funds to continue his journey. In order to obtain the necessary funds to pursue his undertaking, he went to the editor of the *Pester Lloyd* with five travel pieces on Palestine and Egypt, along with an article that his mother had managed to get published for him in the *Neue Freie Presse*. The editor, whom Koestler identifies as Mr. Vészi-Weiss, but who was known as József Vészi, was an elderly gentlemen, who was impressed with the fact that such a young man had been published in the *Neue Freie Presse*. Vészi selected three of the articles, and paid Koestler on the spot. With this money, (half of which he gave to his father), Koestler set out for Berlin.[26]

The job of executive secretary turned out to be somewhat less than its title suggested and after four months Koestler applied for and got a position with the Ullstein Press as their correspondent in Jerusalem.[27] But now, the problem of returning to Jerusalem presented itself, and as was his typical predicament, he had very little money, only enough to get to Vienna. Once in Vienna, the pursuit for funds continued and he managed to obtain a contract with the *Neue Freie Presse* for two articles a month on Palestine, but Koestler was too timid to ask for a salary advance to pay his fare back to Jerusalem. Seeing his plight his good friends managed to scrape up enough money to pay the fare to Budapest.

Once back in Budapest, he again went to the editor of the *Pester Lloyd* showing his new credentials. He was now met with derision by the editor, who rebuked him by saying "You are a big shot now, so what do you need me for?" Vészi told him to "Scram."[28]

Undoubtedly Vészi no longer saw in Koestler the neophyte journalist who needed help, but someone who, if he were as accomplished as he maintained he was, did not really need to publish in his paper.

It was during this brief interlude in Europe that Koestler's articles were published in *Múlt és Jövő*. The first article is entitled "Miért küzd a revizionizmus?" (For What Does Revisionism Struggle?).[29] It describes the problems in Palestine and the positions taken by the Revisionists in opposition to the Zionist leadership. Koestler was a follower of Jabotinsky and he discusses the proposed political and economic programs of the Revisionists to ensure a viable Jewish homeland.

There is an anomaly in the presentation of this short article. In the brief introduction to the piece, the editor, József Patai, notes that Koestler had visited him within the past few days; yet Koestler's name is written Arthur Koestler which would define the author as a non-Hungarian. At this point Koestler was a rank novice, and not the international personality he was later to become. This name ordering raises the question about whether Patai and Koestler actually met. If they had met it seems unlikely that they would have spoken in German and that they would have been unaware of the other's ability to speak Hungarian. As this first article was published in the July–August 1927 issue, it is possible that Koestler may have met with Patai during this brief period prior to his leaving for Berlin. However Koestler, in his autobiography, does not mention any meeting with Patai, but only with Vészi who, one could surmise, was well acquainted with Patai. Given this, one possible explanation for Koestler's name written as if he were a non-Hungarian is that the article was written in German, the language in which Koestler was obviously most comfortable,and was one of the articles not selected by Vészi who may well have passed it on to Patai. Vészi likely told Patai about Koestler's coming from Tel Aviv and his innocence and inexperience, and since this article deals with Revisionism, Vészi may well have felt that the *Pester Lloyd* was not the appropriate place to publish it. Once Patai received it, he translated it into Hungarian. He may then have met with Koestler and decided to write Koestler's name in the Western manner as an indication of the far reaching character of the editorial links which *Múlt és Jövő* enjoyed.[30] It is hard to imagine Koestler not mentioning his meeting with Patai. Certainly the possibility exists that he simply forgot, as this was quite a frantic period for him. They may also have met after Koestler returned to Budapest in the summer of 1927; that is after his Berlin sojourn.[31] As the first article was only published in the July–August

1927 issue, and Koestler returned to Jerusalem in September, it is possible that they met during this second visit to Budapest, and that Patai accepted this first article in German in order to help Koestler get back to Jerusalem.

There is much less to speculate about in the second article. It is not a political report, although its political overtones are clear, but a short story entitled "Meta."[32] Now the author's name is given in proper Hungarian fashion as Koestler Arthur, even though within the title of the piece, Tel-Aviv is mentioned as the origin of the author. Quite possibly after the acceptance of the first article, Koestler wrote the second one in Hungarian in a simpler vein, with its political intentions veiled in a story about the hazards of being young and Jewish in the Hungary of the late 1920's.

In the story a young boy, Wajsz, tearfully describes to his father a game which was played in school during recess. The game, Meta, is one in which each boy first picks a nationality. They then gather around a ball. Someone calls out the name of a nationality and the one called has to grab the ball and try to hit one of the others with it. If a boy is hit five times, he is out and the game is over. Now as Wajsz is near the end of the alphabet, all of the other boys choose their nationalities before he does. Given this, Wajsz chooses to be Jewish. The other boys quickly gang up on him and he is hit by the ball five times and the game is quickly over. The teacher then tells him, that since he lost, he can now be the first to choose a nationality in the next game. In something of a pique he again chooses to be Jewish and the second round of the game begins. This time, however, someone else's nationality is called and he, Wajsz, throws the ball hard enough to cause the boy to fall, while he, Wajsz falls against a wall.

In describing this to his father, Wajsz says that as a consequence of the other boy's falling, the teacher gave him a demerit for his poor conduct. He tries to dismiss this punishment by saying that it does not really matter, as he will emigrate eventually to Palestine. His father quite upset at the boy's attitude, tells him to stop that kind of talk.

The boy continues by saying that in the next class, religious instruction, the teacher told his class that the mission of the Jews is to suffer until such time as the Messiah comes, because that is God's will. Wajsz then asked his religion teacher if it was part of God's plan for the Jews to be singled out in the Meta game, and if attempts to strike back should be punished by a demerit from the teacher. The religion teacher avoided the question and said that if he was given a demerit he probably deserved it. Wajsz then tells his father that he

will no longer allow himself to be bullied and that he is now a man. He fully intends to go to Palestine where he will obtain a sling shot and, like King David, will slay all those who try to take advantage of him.

This simple story is an explication for Revisionism as well as a critique of Jewish life in Hungary. The uncompromising posture of the boy is a means of justifying the "tough" image fostered by Revisionism, while the choice of Jew as nationality is intrusive, as Hungarian Jews made a constant point at this time of arguing that they were not a nationality, but only a religion. The whole point of the story is a reaffirmation of Koestler's own ideological commitments at the time.

These two articles are probably the only ones Koestler ever had published in Hungarian during his lifetime. Now that he had obtained both the contract with the *Neue Freie Presse* and the Ullstein position, the German audience was obviously far larger than he could have reached by writing in Hungarian.

Neither article is likely to influence anyone about Koestler being included among the ranks of the great Hungarian literary giants. In fact he well knew that much of what he wrote as a young man was quite forgettable.[33] However, with the inclusion of this material into the Koestler oeuvre, there is clear evidence of his brief Hungarian literary career.

Koestler frequently admitted that his early publications were often written under the duress of survival and that he lost track of them. Surely these articles pale in comparison to his later work, but it is certain that he would welcome their rediscovery.

Notes

* The research upon which this article is based was supported by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada grant no. 410-84-1370.

1. Robert Blumstock, "Going Home: Arthur Koestler's Thirteenth Tribe," *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (1986), pp. 93–104.
2. *Medvetánc*, No. 2–3. This publication was sponsored by The Young Communist League's Social Science Committee at Loránd Eötvös University in Budapest. About half of this issue is devoted to papers dealing with Jewish themes. See especially, "Hogyan jöttem rá, hogy zsidó vagyok," [How I Came to Know That I am Jewish] by F. Erős, A. Kovács, and K. Lévai, pp. 129–144.
3. Mihály Sükösd, "Sors és sorstalanság: Arthur Koestler," [Destiny and Lack of Destiny: Arthur Koestler] *Valóság*, December 1983, pp. 109–119.
4. Erzsébet Vezér, "Az ismeretlenbe kilőtt nyíl nyomában: Arthur Koestler útja" [In the Track of Arrow in the Blue; Arthur Koestler's Road]. *Nagyvilág*, August 1984, pp. 1228–1241.
5. Sükösd, p. 116.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 116–117.
8. Vezér, p.1239. It should be noted that Koestler probably did not mean this literally since his mother hated living in Hungary, and she never learned to speak the language properly. See *Arrow in the Blue* (London, 1952), p. 27.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 1240.
10 *Ibid.*, p. 1239.
11 *Ibid.*, p. 1241.
12. *Koestler Emlékkönyv* [Koestler Memorial Volume] (Chicago, 1985) edited by Béla Hidegkúti.
13. *Új Tükör*, Vol. 23, No. 6, February 9, 1986, pp. 18–19.
14. Arthur Koestler, *Menschenopfer unerhört...* (Paris, 1937). This book first appeared in French, with the title *L'Espagne ensanglantée*. When it was published in English its title was *Dialogue with Death.*
15. *Századunk*, Vol. 12, No. 6–7, p. 216, 1937. Although the Horthy regime was virulently anti–communist, it was possible for Koestler's work to be reviewed in Hungary, if not published at that time.
16. *Nagyvilág*, July, 1986, No. 7, pp. 1017–1019.
17. George Orwell's *Animal Farm* has also appeared in Hungarian, as *Állati gazdaság*, Chicago, 1985. It is available in Hungary as a *samizdat* publication issued by the AB Független Kiadó in 1985.
18. *The Invisible Writing* (Boston, 1954), Chapter 23, "In Dubious Battle," pp. 323–335.
19. Arthur Koestler, "Egy halott Budapesten" [A Corpse in Budapest], *Mozgó Világ*, June 1983, No. 6, pp. 62–64. This short obituary is placed in context by Erzsébet Vezér in "Véletlen találkozások József Attilával," [Chance encounters with Attila Jözsef], *Ibid.*, pp. 60–62.
20. Iain Hamilton, *Koestler* (New York, 1982), pp. 115–118.
21. George Mikes, *Arthur Koestler* (London, 1983), pp. 12–13.
22. In the latest edition of *Világirodalmi Lexikon* (Budapest, 1979), p. 392, it is suggested that Koestler may have written a piece in Hungarian entitled "A század párbaja" [The Duel of the Century] for the London-based Hungarian language journal, *Irodalmi Ujság*, October 13, 1957, since no translator is noted.
23. *Arrow in the Blue*, p. 155.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
25. "Revisionism is associated with Vladimir (Zev) Jabotinsky (1880–1940). Its main principles were the emphasis on the establishment in Palestine of a Jewish state on both banks of the Jordan, its sharp opposition to what Jabotinsky regarded as Chaim Weizmann's policy of appeasement vis–a–vis the British and the Arabs, its hostility to socialism as a 'foreign creed' within the Jewish national movement, and its belief in the efficacy of military means to win Palestine for the Jewish nation." Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington, 1983), p. 76.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 156–157. For more information on József Vészi, see *Zsidó Lexikon*, ed. Péter Ujvári (Budapest 1929), p. 948. Vészi was a prominent figure in the Budapest Jewish Community, but he may well be best remembered for the fact that his daughter Margit, was the first wife of the playwright Ferenc Molnár.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 162–163.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 164–165.
29. Arthur Koestler, "Miért küzd a Revizionizmus" *Múlt és Jövö*, July–August 1927, pp. 262–264.
30. *Múlt és Jövő* was an important educational forum for Hungary's Jews about Palestine and Zionism. However, Zionism had clear political implications, which were avoided by defining the role of *Múlt és Jövő* as educational and cultural, and not political. Patai had wide contacts with other Jewish publications and the cover of the journal indicates that *Múlt és Jövő* had correspondents in Berlin, Prague and Vienna.

See Oral History Interview with Professor Raphael Patai, February 20, 1980, *Columbia University Oral History Project*, pp. 3, 21.
31. *Arrow in the Blue*, pp. 164–165.
32. Arthur Koestler, "Meta," *Múlt és Jövő*, October 1927, pp. 339–340.
33. *Arrow in the Blue*, p. 172.

Hungarian Studies Review Vol. XIV, No. 1 (Spring 1987)

"Through Images Juxtaposed:" Two Hungarian Poetic Responses to Allen Ginsberg's "Howl."

Laszlo K. Gefin

Allen Ginsberg's poem "Howl" was published by City Lights Books in San Francisco on November 1, 1956. Two events marked the thirtieth anniversary of the publication: first, there appeared an annotated edition of the poem, containing facsimiles of original drafts, author's emendations, correspondence, and other para-textual material.[1] The publisher's blurb on the front flap of the book's jacket states what should by now be a critical common-place, namely that "Howl" is "a prophetic masterpiece that helped change... the course of American poetry in this century." Second, the Modern Language Association at its 1986 convention in New York allocated a special session to honoru both poem and poet. The session leader, Professor Gordon Ball, introduced the panel and the subject of the session by saying that to many readers "Howl" has come to represent "the greatest achievement in American poetry since T.S. Eliot's *Waste Land*," and "one of the most influential poems of the past generation."[2] These statements round out a host of similar comments made by poets and critics during the past decades, affirming Ginsberg's, and "Howl"'s significance and influence in America and Western Europe.[3] Also, both poet and poem have received unusual attention among poets in the Central and Eastern European countries behind the Iron Curtain, as well as Polish, Czech, and Hungarian writers living in the west. It is not difficult to imagine that a poem such as "Howl," which was found shocking, daring, and iconoclastic even by more tolerant western standards, should be particularly offensive and/or liberating in the repressive and centrally controlled atmosphere of socialist literatures. "Howl"'s transgressions of social, religious, nationalistic, and above all sexual taboos ought to have influenced the poetic practices and attitudes of a wide variety of poets, loosening up old forms, inspiring more free expression.

Such an image is not wholly inaccurate from a somewhat distant, generalizing vantage point, but the issues involved are not so simple. If we consider, moreover, that of all the litera-tures of East-Central Europe, Hungarian is perhaps the prudest, most "Victorian" ("Francis-Josephian?") and self-censored, it should be more than just a routine scholarly exercise to assess the influence of Ginsberg's "Howl." It may be worth demonstrating (1) the effect of the poem's formal innovations; (2) the resistance to, or acceptance of, Ginsberg's verbal "excesses;" and most important, (3) what attitudes did the poem engender and/or change toward American literature and American reality as a whole on the part of Hungarian writers.

The aim of this brief study is to attempt to assess this influence, but even at the risk of stating the obvious, I should begin by saying that poetic influence is the most difficult intertextual, or *transtextual*, "fact" to prove,[4] especially if one does not subscribe wholeheartedly (as in my case) to Harold Bloom's theories of poetic influence, their stress on anxieties of filiation, and consequent, mainly unconscious battles with, misprisions and misreadings of, the fateful poetic ancestor(s). Bloom's thesis, that "the profundities of poetic influence cannot be reduced to source study, to the history of ideas, to the patterning of images" is a de facto dismissal of textual evidence as a basis of establishing relationships of influence between literary works of art.[5] In contrast, I believe that as in all cases of attempted proof and validation, persuasive evidence can only come from the texts themselves, from the transtextual and contextual play and echo of signifiers, juxtaposed or, even if only conceptually, "superposed," in a variety of configurations.

An instance of just such transtextual genealogy may be observed in the new annotated edition of "Howl," where Ginsberg himself provides the reader with a mini-anthology of "precursor texts" to the poem (175–188). On reproducing *in extenso* various poems by Christopher Smart, Guillaume Apollinaire, Kurt Schwitters, Vladimir Mayakovsky, William Carlos Williams, and others, Ginsberg notes that "these poems were familiar to me by summer 1955," and adds that "memory of these verse rhythms superimposed on my own breath passed into the inspiration of 'Howl'." The mystery of precisely how these lines and rhythms "passed into" the mind of the poet is of course impossible and fruitless to probe; but from the little collection a great deal becomes evident. Taken singly, the precursor poems identify certain verbal, figurative, rhythmic, and other components that became changed and fused by Ginsberg during the writing of the poem; taken together, they testify to a basic poetic attitude, a poetic-philosophic-existential *stance* on Ginsberg's part

that made him receptive to all of them, in spite, or perhaps because, of their thematic differences. Thus, "Howl" is both a textually provable composite and a poetic whole with its own unique combination and shift of tones, redoublings, pathos and parody. With "Howl" "superposed," as it were, on now this, now that precursor text, simulating the effects of a palimpsest, overlaps of certain similar (though never identical) modes of diction, figuration, and rhythm may be shown to actually exist: the long line is Whitmanesque, the brash tone resembles Mayakovsky's, the repetitive syntax recalls Christopher Smart, the ellipses (such as "hydrogen jukebox" and "skeleton treasuries") may have been inspired by the surrealists, etc. In their fusion, of course, the final product can be seen to have been transformed into something wholly Ginsbergian, but still sharing with all precursor texts a spiritual kinship in terms of revolutionary fervor, a transgressive desire to "recreate the syntax and measure of poor human prose" (6), all of it suffused with a tenderness and compassion for which Whitman's "adhesiveness" is the most appropriate term.

Ginsberg's generosity of providing readers with a list of his own predecessors is unique, and I have not seen it repeated by Hungarian poets, particularly in relationship to "Howl." In my search for evidence I have looked at only those writers who have demonstrably been associated with Ginsberg's poetry, and I have finally settled on two poets who are also translators of "Howl." For the sake of contrast, I chose one poet from Hungary proper, and another from outside Hungary.. The former, Ottó Orbán, lives in Budapest; the latter, György Vitéz, has lived in Montreal, Canada since 1957. Needless to say, I am not interested in comparing their translations of "Howl;" that exercise may in any case be of some limited profit to Hungarian readers only.[6] As stated above, my interest lies solely in establishing evident links, echoes, traces of transmission that testify to some forms of domestication, ingestion, and continuation of the spirit of "Howl."

As demonstrated by a common interest in Ginsberg, the works of the two poets in question are linked by a number of resemblances (although, as we shall see, the resemblances are superficial). Both are in their early fifties; both are innovators, though Vitéz has gone much further than Orbán in deconstructing traditional poetic patterns in his experiments with unusual word couplings, puns, cutups, and the like. Vitéz has increasingly used language, as suggested by John Cage, as "material" — i.e., without the customary respect and awe for the sanctity of tradition and language evinced by all Hungarian poets of his, and the older, generation — including

Orbán. In fact, evidence and influence of the Ginsbergian spirit as embodied in "Howl" is the best litmus test by which the signal differences between Orbán's and Vitéz's basic poetic attitudes may be most conveniently and conclusively measured. For this reason, I have concentrated on a single poem from the canon of each writer, both texts dealing with the art of poetry and the poet's role in contemporary society, which will make it possible for me to reveal "through images juxtaposed" ("Howl" 6), truths about both their positions and dispositions.

Of the two poets, it is Orbán who invokes quite frequently Ginsberg's name, makes references to his visits to America, and generally employs Ginsbergian devices, such as long lines, a good deal of confessional autobiographical data, and a large, at times loud public and/or prophetic voice. Orbán, however, stylistic and formal elements to the contrary, can hardly be considered anything but a very distant poetic comrade of the Beat writers. His strongly entrenched European, or more particularly Central-European, bias has prevented him from becoming truly receptive to the wide cosmic sweep of poets like Ginsberg, Corso, Ferlinghetti, and others. In several poems written over the past decade and a half, Orbán's references to his friendship with Ginsberg, his view of American poets and literature in general, and matters having to do with America have been characterized by a condescending desire to show up their naivete and amateurishness in contrast to the socially committed public stance he claims to profess.

The most telling example is found in the provocatively titled poem "Ginsberg Budapesten" [Ginsberg in Budapest]. Here Orbán asks several important and vexing questions regarding the role poets may play in the present age — an age when they are either ignored or viewed with hostility, depending on their place of residence. Orbán imagines two possible choices available to poets, as follows:

> Should we be Buddhists or quarrelsome queers in New York riding on the broomsticks of our obsessions to the witches' sabbath of our angelic dream talk or on the contrary keeping our fingers on the pulse of events do we know more or less what's on the mind of the average citizen under definite circumstances?[7]

From the way Orbán positions and articulates his choices, there seems to be no contest as to the alternative he prefers. Buddhists and "queers" (the Hungarian term employed by Orbán is the partly homophonic yet still homophobic *homokos*, a slangy variant of

buzeráns, the Czech form of which [*buzerant*] Ginsberg carefully noted in his memorable poem "Kral Majales")[8] are grouped together, and since the reference to Ginsberg is obvious, his being both Buddhist and homosexual, the terms serve as indices to a kind of Ginsbergian pseudo-alternative or artistic irresponsibility. This is followed by the image of the Ginsbergian poet as a devotee of the occult. Orbán alleges that instead of concepts or ideals, such a poet can have only obsessions, which then can only transport them to some weird non-place, outside the sphere of normal socio-historical human reality, to the *walpurgisnacht* of their "dream talk." "Dream talk" is Orbán's patronizing term for a poetic language that has transgressed the rules and regulations of traditionally sanctioned *rational* discourse, while also being a reference to the language of dreams, i.e., the unconscious — in other words, the very essence of Ginsberg's and the surrealists' attempt at unifying through ecstatic poetic language the artificially separated conceptual pairs of conscious/unconscious, rational/irrational, etc.

The putdown is followed by the obviously privileged image of the poet as some sort of physician, fulfilling his properly defined duties. Even if we disregard the incongruity of the image — a medical [medicine?] man taking the pulse of some such nebulous entity as "events" and then reading the mind of something equally abstract like the "average man" — there remain some problems with the role of the poet as diagnostician. One implication is relatively straightforward: the image may allude to the poet as shaman and tribal encyclopedist, endowed with obviously superior knowledge vis-à-vis the "average citizen." On another level, Orbán (unwittingly?) invokes the Marxian substructure/superstructure dichotomy in terms of which the poet first examines the fundamentally determining economic and material factors in a given grid of "definite circumstances," proceeding only then to find out about the citizen's mental and cultural welfare, the latter being at all times dependent on the former. In socialist realist terms, it means the praxis of "going among the people," mingling with workers and peasants, learning about the way they live, listening to them ("what's on their minds"), and then write about them in a responsible and sensible manner. Considering the fact that in the more liberal political climate in Hungary no writer would dream of reinstating such practices (reminiscent of the Rákosi era of the late 1940's and early 50's), Orbán's references are somewhat anachronistic, to say the least.

Another overtone embedded in the image of the poet as man of science recalls Stalin's infamous designation of writers as the "engineers of the soul," and Zhdanov's subsequent degradation of

them to the middle rungs of the party hierarchy. Whether on the most lowbrow, schematistic level, or employing sophisticated literary styles, the writer in the Stalinist era had no other role than to articulate the program of the party for the masses. For Orbán to invoke, albeit obliquely, this veritable ghost from the past, and with it, on the one hand, all the still untold suffering of individual writers, and, on the other hand, the still unassessed cultural damage caused by Stalin's (and his Hungarian representatives') policies, is far more "irresponsible" than any poetic "dream talk."

"Ginsberg in Budapest" ends on a somewhat paradoxical note. Before Ginsberg's departure from the Hungarian capital Orbán says farewell not only to the American poet, but to other things as well:

> G'bye Allen g'bye I take leave of our muddled salvation of the howling poem of our youth of the illusions of the sixties when we imagined the intellectual as a knight in the shining armor of his reform projects we have nothing in common though it's good to know our essence is the same.[9]

It is in this leave-taking that the superficial resemblances between Orbán's and Ginsberg's (and, as we shall see, Vitéz's) poetic attitudes disappear, to give way to substantial differences. Orbán renounces the enthusiasm and fervor of his youth, discarding in the process the "howling poem" (i.e., "Howl") as so much embarrassing excess baggage, discomfitingly reminding him of a poetic and human identity with which, as with Ginsberg, he has "nothing in common." Orbán's farewell to his past is not fraught with nostalgia or regret: if anything, he sounds blithe and relieved, as if to suggest that the arduous enterprise of pulse taking and mind reading allows no sentimentality or even memory. Be that as it may, to speak of an identical "essence" uniting Ginsberg and himself — this being their never-ending curiosity of asking questions about the world — is a little disingenuous; for the questions the two poets ask, the answers they receive, and the "reports," medical or otherwise, in which they articulate them are irreconcilable. Poetic curiosity is not an ideal attribute devoid of historical contingencies — a fact one should not forget even when playing doctor.

György Vitéz's poetic program is markedly different from Orbán's, not the least because of having lived outside of Hungary for three decades. Instead of finding and/or inventing reasons for living and writing in North America (in contrast to Orbán who in several poems finds it necessary to justify why he has not emigrated

to America),[10] he has devoted his energies to attempt to answer other questions. For example, what are the outer limits of consciousness and poetic communication; how can one engage in newer and newer explorations and experiments without severing one's connections and commitments to the "howling poems" of one's youth.

Vitéz's relationship to Ginsberg's work in particular, and American poetry as a whole (apart from "Howl," he has translated several works by Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, and Sylvia Plath, in addition to poems by a number of important Canadian writers such as Al Purdy and Gwendolyn MacEwen)[11] is less obviously visible than Orbán's. Yet the spirit seems to be closer than in the work of any Hungarian writer writing at home, except some of the most talented members of the newer generation of poets.[12] It is no exaggeration to say that Vitéz (and a few other Hungarian writers who settled in Canada and the United States after 1956: Tamás Tűz, József Bakucz, András Sándor, László Baránszky) succeeded in flying by the Joycean "nets" of nationality and religion/ideology. Although he continues to write poetry in his first language, even there by both necessity and inclination he has shown an openness and inclusiveness, a serious playfulness which in not typical of poets who remained geographically, psychologically, and culturally bound to Hungary, to Europe. In this context, then, "Howl" could show possibilities of new poetic structuring, a welcome nonrationality of diction and metaphor. Perhaps even more important, Ginsberg's poem could come alive and stay alive for Vitéz because it spoke in its frenzied eloquence of a common experience — of exile, of pain, of otherness, of being homeless, marginal, and unaccepted. But it also spoke of a need for communion, and Vitéz's poetry, in spite of its having evolved to a level of incessant word play and various ingenious language games — a practice which, in George Bisztray's estimation, may be fraught with the danger of reducing poetry to "an endless combination of signs"[13] — has preserved a will to maintain some form of meaningful communication. In a relatively early poem, entitled "Amerika" [America], most of the issues relevant to his relationship to Ginsberg, and a declaration of poetic intentions may be observed.[14] Apart from the title, the poem has little or nothing to do with Ginsberg's poem by the same name; more significantly, Vitéz's "America" replays in its own way the suffering, accusation, and reconciliation of "Howl."

The poem recounts a bus trip from Boston to Montreal, the scene of some harrowing feelings of alienation and disorientation resulting from the poet's inability to feel at home in his new-found environment. Part I begins with questions:

What night is this, the darkness playing with its crumbling blocks what roads are we rushing on, what country is this, why is the bus empty as it takes me over the horizon? Why has the March snow melted on the hills of New Hampshire? (The rocks of the moonscape — Vermont — make the heart run faster why why the anxiety, — one wipes sweating palms on trousers as the snubnosed bus with its shiny underbelly lunges through the gates of a small town.[15]

In the poet's feverish mind one question stumbles after another, communicating his overwhelming sense of estrangement from even the most familiar components of the landscape, as if he were on a strange planet, and the seemingly recognizable elements were some sort of deceptive camouflage. The lonely traveller feels trapped in the bus, like a latterday Jonah inside his whale; also like the biblical prophet, the poet appears reluctant to play the customary poetic/ prophetic role. For in partial answer to his angst-ridden questions, the reality he sees around him does not appear to be in need of a voice from the desert:

The peace is palpable over the houses hushed in dreams of sauerkraut not even the ghosts of the TV screen can scream it away. For here soldiers in wigs (history book) and redskins (Last of the Mohicans) were shooting at each other with arrows, whatever.[16]

The confrontation with a reality known up till now only from history books and novels becomes less threatening precisely because of the humanizing memories of those books; yet the difference between the world of books and the actual world of experience is not dissolved. Additional answers begin to emerge in Part II:

I've stumbled into a world where the children of the rich have long hair and would mop up the superhighways with their tears if the police would let them. I've come to a city where the poor fattened up on sweet nothing carve their fear with switchblades into the bent backs of the passers-by under the mile-long shadows of towering Babels erected not by arrogance but by guilt.[17]

The tone of the poet's critique of America, underneath the whimsical, deadpan exterior, is serious and cutting. Its social psychology is sound, devoid of the usual cant of pseudoexplanations coming from the right, offering racist and other accounts for crime and delinquency; if anything, Vitéz's assessment is basically

Marxist. The assumption that the "towering Babels" — echoing the skyscrapers and "robot apartments" in the Moloch section of "Howl" — are built by "guilt" rather than "arrogance" refers both to America's super-power status and to the Puritan past, as well as the guilt felt by the white conquerors over the disinheriting of the indigenous population.

Like Part II in "Howl," the second section of Vitéz's "America" ends on a note of disillusionment and despondency, as when the poet characterizes his journey as "a pilgrimage robbed of any dignity," while seeing the highway with disquieting foreboding: "Its end plunges into the sea. Dolphins are going to be marching on it one fine day."[18]

In the third and final part, however, the tone changes, and a very different question is asked:

> But what if I did not lose my way? Here can bloom conscience, this Sensitive Plant, waving to shimmering stellar wonderlands. And Liberty, at home under the redwoods, lifts up in her gigantic hands all her children who want to live who ride in boats on mountain lakes, who walk behind pineapple harvesting machines, who, like this bus driver, stop for a moment to say a few human words to the traveller who thought he was lost, and to his surprise finds himself among friends.[19]

The adjective "human" to the words spoken by the driver is doubly significant: apart from the connotation of general human friendliness, it finally dispels the traveller's oppressive feeling of alienation as if he were on an other, nonhuman planet. In the belly of that monster of a bus he finds another human being as much in need of human companionship as he is. The criticism of America, of American capitalism has not been revoked, but now it stands qualified, attesting to the traveller-poet's ability to move beyond the alien *surface* of this brave new world to the *substance* of a different, yet common humanity.

Without once explicitly alluding to anything remotely connected with Ginsberg or "Howl," Vitéz's "America" works through analogous stages of poetic unfolding. In its tripartite structure it creates an initial environment of estrangement and bewilderment, giving rise to a strong yet playfully figurative indictment of America, ending on an affirmative note, on a note of renewed faith in the possibility of some form of meaningful *communitas*. The guarantee for such a renewed "contract" comes from Vitéz's unsentimental recognition of the crucial ideal of freedom, for only in its light may

the ills of society be seen for what they are: *ills* that can be remedied. In contrast to Orbán's notion of the poet as a functionary of some healing pretensions, Vitéz offers no practical solutions; he quite unceremoniously affirms the poet's role as witness, even that of a suffering witness, whose testimony may be useful to others. Likewise, he exhibits no interest in probing the mind of his new found companion; their act of communication is devoid of any ulterior motives on either side. The words exchanged are in truth an exchange of gifts, one of the most ancient and reas-suring modes of human communication. Ginsberg's own "I'm with you in Rockland" in Part III of "Howl" is just such a gift extended over physical and mental distances to his friend Carl Solomon. In both cases, the verbal gifts are life-restoring, redemptive gestures, without which no truthful poetic account can be imagined.

The two Hungarian poets' responses to "Howl," then, have mapped out widely differing areas of poetic attitudes and concerns. It would seem that Orbán, either unconsciously or as a result of deliberate choice, refuses to part with wornout notions about the poet's task; his translating and reading of "Howl," his exposure to novel poetic avenues other than those of the nineteenth century bring out in him not the rebel but the zealous "doctor." The innuendo of his "Ginsberg in Budapest" — that the Ginsbergian and other similar poetic alternative is a kind of dabbling in idle witchcraft, and is without seriousness and a sense of responsibility — is repudiated not only by the Vitéz poem chosen as an example but most resoundingly by "Howl" itself, to say nothing of Ginsberg's later poetry. One of the most memorable passages in "Howl" can be found in Part III where the poet-narrator and Carl Solomon, in the real and imaginary madhouse "hug and kiss the United States under [their] bedsheets, the United States that coughs all night and won't let [them] sleep" (8).

It is perhaps redundant to point out that this image has "nothing in common" with Orbán's image of the poet as diligent diagnostician, with its lingering sense of self-importance and self-privileging. In a magical moment of reconciliation (of which the ending of Vitéz's poem, as suggested, is a poignant counterpart) the metaphysical entity of the United States is metamorphosed into a sick child, whom the two outcasts in the asylum "hug and kiss." The tenderness and delicate pathos of the scene has none of the clumsiness of "what's on the mind" of the benighted citizen. But that Ginsberg's image evinces a true sense of responsibility and the most mature way poets can respond to an unhealthy social or spiritual climate — that is, by showing tenderness and solicitude — is, I feel, beyond dispute.

After all, the illness of this "child" may not be fatal; for underneath the immediately worrisome exterior the loving poet — a sibling rather than an authoritarian parent — may glimpse its true and healthy soul: Liberty. And despite switchblades stuck in innocent bystanders, despite all the mindless and oppressive evidence of various manifestations of Moloch and other ills, the "Sensitive Plant" of conscience can flourish only under its protection.

The ideal of freedom and genuine human contact, then, are the crucial *loci* where, if "superimposed" over one another, Vitéz's text may be seen to merge with Ginsberg's. Instead of indebtedness or influence, it is perhaps more appropriate to speak of a free meeting of minds; but then *influentia* is just such a meeting, a flowing-together, fruitful and *responsible*. There is little doubt that its transmission from Ginsberg via Vitéz (and other poetic intermediaries) to younger poets in Hungary and elsewhere, is assured.

Notes

1. Allen Ginsberg, *Howl*, ed. Barry Miles: Harper & Row, 1986. All references in this paper are to this edition.
2. Professor Ball is the editor of two important collections of Ginsbergiana: *Allen Verbatim: Lectures on Poetry, Politics, Consciousness* (1974) and *Journals Early Fifties Early Sixties* (1977). The members of the MLA Panel on "Howl" included Ann Charters, Barry Miles, Marjorie Perloff, and the present writer.
3. See Daniel Hoffmann "Poetry: School of Dissidents," in *Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing*, ed. Hoffmann (Cambridge, 1979), 517–521. Also George Bowering, "How I Hear 'Howl'" in *On the Poetry of Allen Ginsberg*, ed. Lewis Hyde (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984) pp. 370–378. See also in the same collection by the present writer,"Ellipsis: The Ideograms of Ginsberg," pp. 272–287.
4. The term "transtextual" is Gérard Genette's, referring to all types and modes of one text's relationship to another; see his *Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré* (Paris: Seuil, 1983), p. 9.
5. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 7.
6. I would like to set the record straight, however, by stating that György Vitéz, and not Ottó Orbán, is the first Hungarian translator of the poem, a fact missing from the bibliography section in the annotated edition as provided by Bill Morgan. Vitéz's translation was published in Montreal, on 28 May 1960, in 100 copies, with notes.
7. The poem appears in the volume *A visszacsavart láng* [The Flame Turned Low] (Budapest, 1979), p. 84. It should be noted that in a later poem written about Ginsberg and himself ("Vendégelőadók" [Guest Lecturers], *Élet és Irodalom* XXX, 35 [29 August 1986], 1), Orbán appears in a more generous mood. Yet he is still bent on making distinctions between the two of them, unabashedly in his own favour, as when he describes Ginsberg on a Budapest street demonstrating the healing powers of a Chinese dance, while he himself continues to have faith in the wild horse under the reins of "logic" (i.e., poetry). Translations in the paper are my own.
8. In *Planet News* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1968), p. 89.
9. The Hungarian original is as follows: Viszlát Allen viszlát zavaros üdvösségünk fiatalságunk nagyhangú versétől búcsúzom a 60-as évek illúzióitól amikor az

értelmiségit reformkori páncéljában pompázó lovagnak láttuk semmi közünk egymáshoz de jó tudni hogy lényegünk közös

10. See for example "Miért nem élnék Amerikában?" [Why I would not live in America], in the volume *The Flame Turned Low*, p. 77.

11. The translations of Canadian poems have appeared in the anthology *Gótika a vadonban* [Wilderness Gothic] (Budapest: Európa, 1984). 12. Younger Hungarian writers unburdened by the literary past include Tibor Zalán, Imre Péntek, Ernő Endrődi Szabó, Judit Kemenczky, Endre Kukorelly, János Géczi, János Sziveri, Endre Szkárosi, to mention only some of the most important. One recent anthology of young poets: *Lélegzet* [Breath/Inspiration] begins with a translation of Ginsberg's essay/manifesto on poetic breath and oral expression. It also includes a text by a new poet, János Kurdi Fehér, which begins "Allen Ginsberg, újra kell futózni a koponyát" [Allen Ginsberg, we'll have to retread the skull].

13 See George Bisztray, *Hungarian-Canadian Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 49.

14. The poem has appeared in Vitéz's first (belated) volume of poetry, *Amerikai történet [American story]*, Paris 1975.

15. The Hungarian original is: Micsoda éjszaka ez, egymásraomló kockáival játszik a sötétség milyen utakon robogunk, — milyen országba tévedtem, miért üres a busz mely hetedhéthatárra visz? Miért olvadt el New Hampshire dombjain a márciusi hó? (A holdbeli táj — Vermont — sziklái megfuttatják a szivet miért, miért szorong az ember, — nedves tenyerét nadrágjába törli mikor egy kisváros ajtaján belódul a törpeorrú fényeshasú gépezet.)

16. The Hungarian original is: Érezni lehet a békét savanyukáposztás álomra szenderült házak fölött még a televizió (ejtő)ernyős kisértetei sem tudják elhessegetni Itt parókás katonák (történelemkönyv) meg rézbőrűek (Utolsó Mohikán) lövöldöztek egymásra nyíllal, miegymással.

17. The Hungarian original is: Olyan világba botlottam hol a gazdagok gyermekei hosszú hajat növesztenek és könnyeikkel mosogatnák föl a nemzet szuper– országútjait ha a rendőrség megengedné nekik. olyan városba kerültem hol olcsó hús híg levével fölhízlalt szegények bicskával vésik félelmüket a járókelők meggörnyedt hátába nem gőg, de bűntudat emelte bábel–tornyok mérföldes árnyékában

18. The Hungarian original is: méltóságától megfosztott zarándokút, and, Egyenesen a tengerbe lóg a vége. / Egy szép napon delfinek fognak vonulni rajta

19. The Hungarian original is: De hátha nem tévedtem el? Itt kivirágzik a lelkiismeret, ez az Érzékeny Palánta, villódzó csillag-szépségek felé integet. És fölemeli nagy tenyerébe a vörösfenyök alá költözött Szabadság élni kívánó gyermekeit kik a tengerszemeken csónakáznak, kik az ananászszedő gépek mögött ballagnak kik, mint ez a buszsofőr, egy pillanatra megállnak, hogy emberi szót szóljanak az utazóhoz aki azt hiszi eltévedt és meglepődik, hogy hirtelen társakra akadt.

Hungarian Studies Review Vol. XIV, No. 1 (Spring 1987)

Book Reviews

Count István Bethlen, *Hungarian Politics During World War II. Treatise and Indictment.* Countess Ilona Bolza (editor). Munich: Rudolf Trofenik, 1985.

For the historian of interwar Hungary, the discovery of a previously unknown manuscript of Count István Bethlen creates a sense of anticipation and curiosity. Hungary's Prime Minister for a decade beginning in 1921 and a leading political figure in the 1920s and during World War II, Bethlen left behind no memoirs or first-hand accounts of the key events in which he participated. Unfortunately, this 27 page treatise, written in July, 1944 by Bethlen while in hiding during the German occupation, contributes very little to our knowledge of specific events of interwar Hungarian history. It does, however, offer insights into Bethlen's political philosophy and his state of mind at a time when Hungary was plunging headlong toward disaster.

Bethlen's treatise, which was entrusted in 1944 to a family friend, Countess Ilona Bolza, is a thorough indictment of the policies of those Hungarian leaders who had advocated that Hungary join with Nazi Germany in the war against Soviet Russia. In 1944 Count Bethlen could feel fully justified in producing such an indictment. Ever since 1939 he had argued privately that Germany could not win the war and that Hungary could best protect its national interests by a policy of armed neutrality. In 1940 he had opposed Hungary's signing of the Tripartite Pact and in 1941 he had urged that Hungary refrain from joining the campaign against the "Bolsheviks." In his 1944 treatise Bethlen argued that these decisions in 1940–41 were the "fatal blunders" that pushed Hungary down the

"slippery slope" that transformed the country into nothing more than a German "Gau" or protectorate.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Bethlen's treatise are the thumbnail sketches he offered of the leading political figures of interwar Hungary. Although Bethlen's assessments seem generally to be balanced and insightful, he did not hesitate to point out the shortcomings of his colleagues. Count Gyula Károlyi had "very little imagination." István Csáky was too naive and László Bárdossy was "too weak." Béla Imrédy lacked a "balanced judgment or balanced character." Even Pál Teleki, whom Bethlen in general praises, is described as "no great judge of men." The reader is left to draw the inference that Hungary would have been in much more capable hands if Bethlen had been prime minister during the critical years before and after 1941.

Bethlen's sketch of Gyula Gömbös merits special mention, for the two men were often bitter political rivals who represented the two dominant wings of right-wing politics. Yet Bethlen wrote a remarkably balanced appraisal of Gömbös, who is depicted as a man of "lively imagination" and a "great deal of political appeal." His anti-Semitism is described as comparable to that of "any decent Hungarian" who reacted with disgust to the events of 1918–1919. Looking back from the perspective of 1944, Bethlen found little fault even with Gömbös's foreign policy. Collaboration with the Axis powers, Bethlen argued, was the correct policy at the time, since Hungary's aspirations for territorial revision could not be fulfilled in any other way. No one could have predicted the unfortunate policies Germany and Italy would follow in later years. Of course, Bethlen found much to fault in Gömbös's political style. Gömbös, he wrote, was the personification of a condottiere, reveling in conspiracies and secret societies and undermining parliamentary government. This kind of activity poisoned Hungarian political life and made possible the kinds of irresponsible acts that were committed in later years.

Bethlen's treatise reflects the thinking of perhaps the most capable and perceptive of all interwar Hungarian statesmen. His condemnation of the "barbaric persecution of the Jews" and his spirited defense of freedom of the press and parliamentary government reveal a commitment to humanitarian and liberal principles. Yet the reader will be struck by the degree to which even Bethlen remained in the grip of a highly emotional nationalism and certain right-wing ideas. In the summer of 1944, when the very independence of Hungary was in jeopardy, Bethlen was still searching for a way to preserve Hungary's territorial gains from the period 1938–1941. He seemed to believe that the Vienna Awards and the

Hungarian occupation of parts of Yugoslavia had been carried out "in accordance with international law," and that the victorious great powers should be able to understand this. That as late as July, 1944 even István Bethlen should suffer such an illusion is a striking demonstration of the way in which hatred of the Trianon Treaty and belief in the justice of Hungary's cause had pervaded the thinking of Hungarians in the interwar period.

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Egon F. Kunz. *The Hungarians in Australia* Melbourne: Australian Educa Press, 1985. Australian Ethnic Heritage Series. 148 + viii pages.

In the 1970s the Government of Australia, much like its Canadian counterpart, intensified its efforts to emphasize the multicultural nature of the country's society. One of the products of these efforts was, like in Canada, the start of publication of histories of the country's ethnic groups. The volume on Australia's Hungarians appeared in 1985, three years after the Canadian equivalent was published by the writer of these lines (in collaboration with M.L. Kovacs, Paul Bődy and Bennett Kovrig).

In selecting E.F. Kunz to write the volume in question, the editors of the Australian series had made a wise choice. Kunz is a long-time student of ethnic and immigration history, and is an experienced researcher. One of his fields of expertise is nineteenth century Hungarian migration to Australia, the story of which he had told before, in *Blood and Gold: Hungarians in Australia* (Cheshire, 1969). This story is summerized and updated in the present volume, offering fascinating reading on the careers, fortunes and misfortunes of the refugees of the 1848–49 revolutionary war (and even a few of their predecessors) in a distant and developing land. The chapters dealing with such early migration are followed by those covering the last decades of the nineteenth century, and the first decades of the twentieth. In this period only a few hundred Hungarians made it to the south seas continent. They ranged from poor peasants (attracted by offers of free land), to highly educated or trained individuals. Many of them were refugees from the territories that had been detached from historic Hungary by the post-World War I peace settlement.

The book's second half is devoted to a study of the waves of

Hungarians that went to Australia during and after the Second World War, and after the 1956 uprising in Hungary against Soviet rule. One chapter deals with the migrations, another with community life and institutions, and a third with the contributions of the newcomers to Australian life. In taking the story up to the 1980s in fair amount of detail, this book is more useful and more complete than the volume on the Hungarians in the Canadian series, yet it devotes considerably less space to the economic and social aspects of migration and immigrant life.

The Hungarians in Australia is a well-written and well-crafted book. It offers a good balance between descriptions of events in the country of origin and the country of adoption. Though it has been written mainly for the general public, it offers much to academics as well. The omission of footnotes — evidently publisher's policy — is regrettable, but it is not a disaster in the case of this work as researchers can consult Kunz's other works on the subject. And, even in the absence of these, it is evident that the book is based on a wide variety of sources. For curiosity's sake it might be mentioned that these include a description of an encounter between a Hungarian immigrant to Australia and a young Austro-Hungarian naval officer visiting the country in 1893. The latter was none other than Nicholas Horthy, the Regent of Hungary in the interwar years.

Kunz's work is very much "traditional" history. It stresses political developments and biographies. In making judgements on controversial issues in Hungarian (and Hungarian-Australian) politics, Kunz is reasonable and judicious. His book makes fascinating reading for anyone who is interested in the history of Australia, and/or the story of the Hungarian diaspora.

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In forthcoming issues:

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Special issue: Twentieth Century Hungarian Avantgarde. Edited by Oliver Botar.

Esther Levinger. "Kassák's Reading of Art History."
Diane Kirkpatrick. "Time and Place in the Work of László Moholy-Nagy.
Sylvia Bakos. "Nature and Intellect: The Ideas of the Emergent Hungarian Avantgarde."
Oliver Botar. "Kassák and the American Avantgarde."
Alain Findeli. "De la photographie à la peinture: la leçon de László Moholy-Nagy."
Gyula Marosán (documents).
Moholy-Nagy (documents).

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Special issue: Hungarian Minorities in East Central Europe. Edited by Andras Ludanyi and N.F. Dreisziger.

Walker Connor. "Leninist Nationality Policy: Solution to the National Question?"
Károly Nagy. "Hungarian Minority Education Problems in Czechoslovakia."
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