

Editor's Introduction

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The original purpose of this volume was to publish the papers read at the 'Kádár-Kekkonen Symposium' of the 5th International Congress of Hungarian Studies held in August 2001 in Jyväskylä, Finland. Thus it could be read as a companion volume to Professor Pritz Pál's symposium papers on Hungarian foreign policy in the twentieth century.¹ However, the present collection grew thicker than planned because it was decided to also include the contributions to the meeting of the Hungarian and Finnish historians in Budapest, August 2000, and the papers of the Tampere seminar of September 2002 dealing with roughly the same subject matter.

The above-mentioned joint events carried on the tradition of co-operation well-established by Professor Olli Vehviläinen a couple of decades ago, and the aim here has been to promote dialogue and update our research: it was anticipated that different, problematic interpretations of the Cold War era in Hungarian and Finnish history would arise. Now that the late President Kekkonen's diaries are published and the re-evaluation of Secretary-General János Kádár's life is under way, an opportunity to evaluate their careers and achievements in similar historical contexts has presented itself. It could, however, be assumed that in reconsidering the political history of the Cold War era, and how Hungary and Finland managed to get out of it, Hungarian and Finnish historians carry with them quite different tool-kits. Let us call to witness those Hungarian

historians and political scientists who compare the *Sonderweg* of the two countries since 1956, and who use the term 'finlandization' (*finlandizálás*) in a quite positive, Hungarian manner, a manner which may be found disturbing to their Finnish colleagues.² Finnish historians, for their part, have found the Finnish political élite of the times deeply 'finlandized' (*suomettunut*, as for example, in the extreme case when CPSU financed Kekkonen's election campaign via KGB) and accustomed to deplorable self-censorship in Soviet matters.³ Bearing this contradiction in mind, and seen from the perspective of Soviet security interests, it may not have been amiss to study Kádár's and Kekkonen's regimes side by side, and assess how their *Realpolitik* was realized. Others have already tried to answer such tricky questions as how 'indispensable' their leadership in troubled times was (but how can we definitively ascertain that someone else could not have achieved anything as great as they did?). It has remained for the contributors of this volume to concentrate on less sapient issues.

The book falls into three rather distinct parts: the first four articles (Borhi's, Rentola's and Vares') deal with foreign politics and the question of statesmen's 'images', the next two, Oikari's and Nyysönen's, analyze the politics of power in culture and the politics of history, and the rest (Horváth's, Varga's and Pihkala's) turn attention to social and economic aspects. The foreign policy section is the most coherent one and its articles can be read as complementary texts to each other. One basic difference, however, remains: the Hungarian contributors studied mainly Hungarian affairs, whereas the Finns attempted comparative studies with the aim of disentangling the Hungarian and Finnish power-political constellation and explaining their situations in a wider international context.

In the part devoted to internal 'politics of power' the reader may feel uncertain: what does György Aczél's 'politics of culture' under Kádárism have to do with the 'politics of history' after the change of the political system in Hungary? The connecting link lies in the nature of the policy itself. The holders of power in Hungary could by an 'unholy compromise' with the writers

and intellectuals in general define what could be said or written during the Kádár regime. After its collapse, what could be counted as a new and acceptable, official interpretation of the past – in Hungary it was encapsulated in the resurgence and reappraisal of the 1956 Revolution – was now to be written down by the opponents of the 'old power'. They moulded the image of history to suit their own imperatives of the 'politics of power'. Kádár's heritage haunted them more than Kekkonen's has haunted the Finns, since Kekkonen's march was not tainted with blood and outright repression ('consolidation'). For Finland, these kinds of analyses will be completed by the 'Kekkonen-Kádár' project of the Academy of Finland (2001-2003) in the near future, and its results will be published in a separate volume.

Social-economic realities and planning in Hungary and Finland are studied in the last section of the book. It is a pity that Dr Horváth's article could not yet be matched by one from a Finnish counterpart at this stage of the co-operation. Possible comparatively compatible 'urban development' plans based on idealized visions of community life can also be found in industrialized Finland of the 1950s and the 1960s. As the two articles on economic planning show, there was fertile common ground in overall economic planning in spite of the fundamental ideological cleavage between the two countries in question. And if we look more closely at the ideological background of, for instance, the social policies of Hungary and Finland in the late 1960s and through the 1970s, we may be surprised to discover how Marxist Finnish sociology and social policy had become – a trend noted with pleasure by the Hungarian observers in Finland.⁴

What becomes clear from Dr Borhi's article is that Kádár could, by means of pragmatic foreign policy, wring advantages and concessions from both superpowers, the USA and the USSR. The process was cumbersome but accomplished successfully. At the same time when Kádár remained faithful to Moscow, he could by piecemeal methods gain international room for manoeuvre from the Americans in the 1960s by making

'consolidation' (1956-1963) look like 'liberation' in the end. Kekkonen's policy was, in principle the same, although in a more peripheral context: in exchange for the trust (*luottamus*) he managed to retain in Moscow, he was able to co-operate with the Nordic countries, and approach the EFTA and the EEC and, from that basis, start soundings for détente and the Helsinki process with Kádár who backed him. Both benefited from this rapprochement strategy, which meant a gradual opening of the international arenas for them. Both established relations with the Third World and criticized heavily the USA during the Vietnam war, and honestly – not only liturgically as sometimes incorrectly stated – pursued the policy of 'peaceful co-existence' of the socialist and capitalist systems. In the end of the 1960s Kádár and his foreign ministers were ready to acknowledge that although the ideological battle – Finland was regarded as a highly valuable forum for scientific and cultural propaganda⁵ – had to be accelerated, Finland was in the category of those capitalist countries with which extensive bilateral agreements could be made. As Kádár himself, already in the midst of deepest isolation in 1957, made the distinction, there were imperialist and capitalist countries. If Sweden was not an imperialist country⁶, Finland was even less so. From the end of the 1960s onwards, it was highly important for Hungary to send experts to learn Western scientific and technological innovation from such capitalist countries as Finland which promoted a 'good neighbourly policy' and already established intensive relations with the USSR. In these connections, finlandization became something very positive for Hungarian policy, since it was – paradoxically – Finland, not Hungary, which could gain favours (Porkkala, the lease of the Saimaa Canal) and favourable trade agreements with the USSR.

Borhi's conclusions concerning Kádár's and Kekkonen's tight-rope walking are corroborated by Dr Rentola's findings from Kekkonen's papers, which also demonstrate that the two were closer to each other than formerly believed. Kádár certainly had less space for manoeuvre than Kekkonen: no wonder that he welcomed Kekkonen's directness and gestures of

'friendship' while hosting him in 1963. In 1969, when they met again, the atmosphere was somewhat spoiled by the repercussions of the Czechoslovakian crisis, but in spite of that they could take credit for their long-lasting 'mutual understanding' and sense of political realities. The rhetoric of kinship provided 'bridge-building' its conceptual framework, as Phil. Lic. Mari Vares attempts to show in her paper. In the sixties it was not only a handy camouflage behind which political considerations could be hidden, but it also meant genuine caution in avoiding any provocations that might tease the Eastern bear. Rentola illustrates this with an example of the Hungarians avoiding paying their respects to Mannerheim's grave during state visits. This attitude was reflected also in the Hungarian text-book on Finnish history in which the Finnish war-hero was made the greatest villain.⁷ Thus the negative side of finlandization was not quite uncommon in Hungary either. Both in Hungary and in Finland it was rather Lenin than domestic heroes that were celebrated, but surely it was Finland where this should have, at least for an outsider, seemed quite strange.

Professor Vesa Vares argues that although the circumstances of the Cold War made it very difficult for both Kádár and Kekkonen to find true recognition, they were finally recognised (especially in Helsinki in 1975 they sat side by side) and appreciated for their peacemaking efforts. The Americans and the British had changed their original low-key tune and the image of the two 'foes' was transformed into the image of 'manageable parties' in international diplomacy. This was one of their lasting successes. Kekkonen's successor, President Koivisto, used this common 'political capital' to his own advantage, but in Hungary, it seems, it did not, at least for a while, pay any tangible results.

Dr Nyysönen's article, even though it does not directly discuss Kádárism, throws light on the ways in which some delicate moment in history, in this case the very essence of Kádárism, the revolution of the year 1956, was politicized in the new system. Typically for Hungarian political debate, political parties wanted to 'own' 1956 and pose themselves as the real heroes in

it. The darker side of this historical-political method has been that politicization boiled over and produced historical (megalo)-mania. However, it was only a natural reaction to the Kádárist policy of the erasing of history from Hungarian minds. Had it not been Kádár himself who boasted to Kekkonen during his visit to Finland in 1973 that in Hungary 1956 was no longer “hardly remembered”.⁸ These were the times of deepest finlandization when also Kekkonen occasionally intervened in historical debates by trying to teach the nation that it should realize how significant a role the Soviet Russia had played in the formation of Finnish independence.

In the political culture of the 1970s and the 1980s it was quite customary that Power regulated the content of the messages from the past as well as from the present. In this spirit it controlled the intellectual life in general, and as Dr Oikari puts it in a Foucaultian language, Hungarian socialism had its own ‘policy of truth’, the lessons of which the people had to learn. According to György Aczél’s system of three Ts (*tiltott* = prohibited, *türt* = tolerated, and *támogatott* = supported), it was, but only in principle, possible to convince the authorities that “socks with holes and a typewriter” should be exhibited at public expense as a work of art.⁹ In times of serious economic problems, cultural policy became alarmist, ringing the bell of looming disaster in the ears of artists and writers who had not quite fulfilled the requirements and ideals of socialist realism.¹⁰ Oikari’s doctoral thesis dealt with the same problematic in the context of Hungarian-Finnish literary and cultural relations, and she found that the ‘policy of translation’ was tied up with the same power structures.¹¹ It may well be that here lies also the reason why the work of the Nobel laureate, Imre Kertész, was relatively unknown to the Hungarian reading public. His work was tolerated, though awarded, not supported, even discouraged. It was obviously too ‘subjectivist’ for the ‘collective consciousness’ which was yet to be built in Hungary.

Dr Horváth’s contribution to this volume proves that the building of a socialist model town on socialist ideals of man did not quite result in its planned objectives. Not everybody was

ready to live up to the ideals, and some started to form their own sub-cultures, so irritating to the authorities. The people forced to move into monstrous environment also tended to escape back to the countryside. But, as both Dr Varga's and Professor Pihkala's papers illuminate, the conditions in the countryside were changing for the worse. Periods of reform (1963–, 1968–), during which the leash of the state was slackened and the agricultural co-operatives fared relatively well, were followed by 'conservative' reaction (1972–1973), which halted the individual incentive in agriculture and caused serious damage in the national economy. In Finland, the founding of large state-owned enterprises lasted until the 1970s. The ideology of planning was borrowed from socialism and favoured by the political Left (1966–). While the flight from the countryside in Finland was in full swing, the planning officers were busy in industrial site and town planning, outlined a new, more democratic social policy and culture of science. For both Hungary and Finland the 1970s and 1980s were the great age of professionalization. For Finland, in particular, it was an era of increased state intervention in the economy and culture by extensive bureaucracy, which was already a burden in Hungary. In hindsight, this growth brought forth the generation of scholars and scientists which opened Hungarian-Finnish contacts in ever expanding fields, now rather through various projects in the natural and applied sciences than through the traditional humanities. Hungarians were eager to import various technical innovations from Finland to Hungary, ranging from traffic safety systems to monitoring heart diseases and alcoholism. It remains for future studies to reveal the extent and significance of these relations brought about under the umbrella of the agreement of the two national Academies. It is only to be hoped that the present volume will encourage future research to take up themes left unexplored here.

NOTES

- ¹ Magyarország helye a. 20. századi Európában. Szerkesztette – Sipos Balázs és Zeidler Miklós közreműködésével – Pritz Pál. Magyar Történelmi Társulat. Budapest 2002.
- ² For controversial popular expressions of the same see e.g. in Kopátsy, Sándor, Kádár és kora. C.E.T. Belvárosi Kiadó, Budapest 2002; Büky, Barna, Visszapillantás a hidegháborúra. Balassi Kiadó, Budapest 2001, esp. 43, 53.
- ³ Entäs kun tulee se yhdestoista? Suomettumisen uusi historia. Ed. Johan Bäckman. WSOY, Juva 2001; Vihavainen, Timo, Kansakunta räähmälään: suomettumisen lyhyt historia. Otava, Helsinki 1991.
- ⁴ Halmesvirta, Anssi, 'Scientific Co-operation between Hungary and Finland, 1965-1980'. A paper read at the Tampere seminar, 3rd September, 2002 (unpublished ms. University of Jyväskylä, Dept. of History).
- ⁵ Cf. Előterjesztés a kulturális és tudományos propagandáról (KKI). MOL, M-KS-288-22.cs-1971-34.ö.e; Feljegyzés (Dr. Szatmári I.) Helsinki, 1971 július 23. MOL, KÜM-XIX-J-1-j-Finn-142-002422/1-1971. 43.d.
- ⁶ Földes, György, "Kádár János külpolitikai nézetei (1956–1967)". In Pritz 2002, 139.
- ⁷ Dolmányos, István, Finnország története. Gondolat, Budapest 1972, 6.
- ⁸ Kádár on the 3rd of October. MOL, M-KS-288.f.5./621.ö.e.
- ⁹ Aczél, György, "Aspects of Cultural Policy". *The New Hungarian Quarterly*, vol. xxvi, no. 97 (Spring, 1985), 28.
- ¹⁰ For the socialist ideals, see Szabó, Márton, Diszkurzív térben. Tanulmányok a politika nyelvéről és a politikai tudásról. Scientia Humana, Budapest 1998, esp. 51-58.
- ¹¹ Oikari, Raija, Vallankäytöstä Suomen ja Unkarin kirjallisissa ja kulttuurisuhteissa (Unpublished thesis, University of Jyväskylä, Dept. of Literature 2001).