

France and the Fate of Hungary

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The Tragic Fate of Hungary: A Country Carved-Up Alive at Trianon. By Yves de Daruvar. Translated from the French by Victor Stankovich. Munich: Nemzetőr, 1974. (Co-publisher: American Hungarian Literary Guild, Astor Park, FL 32002.) Pp. 235, appendix, maps, illustr., \$8.00 paper.

For the last fifty years Hungarians have been painfully aware of the tragic fate which befell their country in June 1920, when the Peace Treaty ending World War I was forced on them at Trianon near Paris. The great majority of Frenchmen, however, were utterly unaware of what was happening to that small but valiant country which had served as Western Europe's outpost for centuries, a first line of defence against the onslaught of invaders from the East. It was the ignorance of Frenchmen about the process of treaty-making, and the silence surrounding the event once it happened, which prompted Daruvar to publish his book in France on the fiftieth anniversary of the Paris Peace Treaties.

The son of a Hungarian army officer and a French mother, transplanted to and educated in France, Daruvar fought for his adopted country in World War II, receiving high military honors and some bad wounds. "A knight in shining armour of our days," according to the words of the preface to the French edition, "he is going to war once more . . . carrying no arms; it is this book with which he proposes to fight for the honor of "mutilated" Hungary."

He does so by resorting to military tactics learned from General Leclerc: attack. Daruvar attacks the treaty-makers, and he pulls no punches in the process. Feeling morally and emotionally qualified, he makes a clean breast of the "ugly act committed by the victors of the first world war." It is this moral and emotional commitment which lends his work an eloquence and persuasiveness rarely found. No wonder a Frenchman finds his book "deeply disturbing" and hard to put down.

While not a professional historian, and using almost exclusively secondary sources, Daruvar documents his book carefully, indeed with an overabundance of quotations, for which he begs the reader's indulgence in the Foreword. In translation his style is good, his words flow freely and easily, the quotations are well integrated into the text and do not interrupt the narration. Once the reader ploughs through the first chapter, containing historical and geographic information on Hungary, the origins and evolution of the Great War are told concisely and with surprising frankness. This is followed by the fast-paced story of the armistice and the Peace Conference itself.

Defending Hungary against accusations of "war guilt" Daruvar points out the historically well-known, but often distorted or simply not mentioned, fact of the Hungarian Prime Minister's opposition to war in the Austro-Hungarian Joint Ministerial Council in July 1914, and quotes the former Italian Prime Minister Nitti: "In all honesty no one can be singled out as being responsible for it." This does not, however, prevent Daruvar from emphasizing the guilt shared by France and Russia, the latter in particular, by adding that "the real aggressor is at all events he who is bent on changing an existing situation by means of war," a reference to Russia's order of mobilization issued with French knowledge. Not even a political scientist could wish for a better definition of aggression.

Drawing mostly on Allied, chiefly French, sources, the book documents the fateful turn of events which led to the corruption of the original war aims, the distortion of the idealistic Wilsonian principle of self-determination, the abandonment of the idea of ethnographic (linguistic) boundaries in favor of military, political, and economic considerations which ultimately resulted in a patchwork of "successor states" erected on the ruins of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Instead of transforming the Habsburg Empire into what was originally intended by President Wilson: a federation based on the equality of nationalities and a potential stronghold against both German and Russian expansionism in Central Europe, the area was "Balkanized".

One can imagine how shocking it must be for the French reader to learn that "for over half a century France has kept telling herself lies, not having the courage to face reality," and then be confronted immediately with that painful reality. For this Daruvar dug up all the available self-criticism French statesmen and politicians produced belatedly, often unknown to their countrymen, and then "lays it on thick"—to use a colloquialism. Thus, the incited leaders of Austria-Hungary's Slav and Rumanian minorities who persuaded France "to

endorse and legalize the occupations by conquest, achieved after the cessation of hostilities by the armed forces of the so-called successor states, in stark violation of the armistice agreements," become in Clemenceau's own words "the jackals of our victory." One also learns the opinion of Gabriel Gobron (misspelled as Goron on p. 112), according to whom "within 10 years [after the Peace Treaty] the successor states have sinned against their minorities more often than did the Hungarians in a thousand years." Edouard Benes is "fated to become twice during his long career the grave-digger of his own country as well as of Europe," and so on.

Marshalling the protestations of the French negotiators and Parliamentarians ("if they were not guilty, what sense would make the protestations of some of them?"), Daruvar reaches the height of indignation by exclaiming: "Trianon was a criminal act; there is no other term to describe adequately the most wicked of all wartime treaties, imposed amid the vapours of blood, the haze of gunpowder, the exaltation of victory and the 'Schadenfreude' derived from torturing the vanquished. There was the generosity of France for you! Torch-bearer of civilization indeed!" (p. 164)

Commenting finally on more recent developments in Europe, such as the Soviet-caused tragedies of Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968), the author states once again that the origins of the present unfortunate situation in East-Central Europe go back to the disastrous treaties concluded in the wake of the First World War, and shortsightedly reaffirmed after the Second.

Nevertheless, the book ends on an optimistic note with the hope that eventually there will be peace in the area, based on a territorial solution freely agreed upon, bringing together all nationalities on a basis of sovereign equality in a Danubian Federation, itself part of a federated, supra-national, united Europe.

From a purely Hungarian point of view the shock value of Daruvar's book for Frenchmen is tremendous. France, after all, is a major power to be reckoned with in any future rearrangement of Europe. Whether the same is true for the English translation is a moot question. The translation itself is, on the whole, good. But, aside from certain technical shortcomings (such as typographical errors in the text, even in the Translator's Note; the employing of Anglicisms strange for the American reader; the French method of presenting notes and bibliography; the hiding of the Table of Contents in an obscure place), one may wonder whether all the French sources, and

the frequent lengthy quotations from the same, turn the English-language reader "on" or "off"? Likewise, whether the attack against the "guilty ones" will induce the enemies of Hungary to repent their sins, or merely to launch a counter-attack? The old wound Daruvar touched is not healed yet; and no matter how admirable were his intentions, his deed at first sight does not appear to have facilitated that healing. But, who can really know for sure?

Somehow, this reviewer feels, the whole affair should have remained strictly one between Daruvar and his French readers. For the latter, this book will no doubt be "brave, profoundly human, and deeply disturbing." As General Ingold, former Grand Chancellor of the French Order of Liberation, confesses in the Preface, the book "makes us think."

This, of course, may be sufficient to excuse Daruvar. To make Frenchmen think about the fate of Hungary may not be a bad thing after all.

János Kádár: the Myths and the Realities

Barnabas A. Racz

Crime and Compromise: Janos Kadar and the Politics of Hungary since the Revolution. By William Shawcross. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1974. Pp. 311.

The communist system in Hungary went through various phases of change since the 1956 Revolution. From the Soviet armed intervention to the New Economic Mechanism (NEM) and the accompanying liberalization János Kádár stood at the helm of the Party and played a major role in the execution of Imre Nagy as well as in laying the foundations for a more relaxed political atmosphere since 1968. The subject of Mr. Shawcross' book is the analysis of this era and Kadar's personality as they are interrelated. Most students of the Hungarian scene agree that the political and economic system is beset with ambiguities and as Shawcross sees it, so is Kádár's personality. Because of these contradictions, the author's coherent and lucid analysis which sheds light upon the deeper aspects of the system is to be regarded as unusually incisive writing.

Kádár's political profile is tied to his personality development and this is an enlightening approach in the absence of other available evidence. He was born as an illegitimate child, a fatherless and deprived peasant boy, an unskilled laborer who came in contact with Marxism in the factory districts of Budapest, and this early experience with communism and the Party grew into his first permanent identification to which he—above all—remained attached to the present day. However, unlike other communist leaders, he was home-bred and remained forever alien to the Moscow trained party-functionaries. As leader of the underground party with Rajk during the Second World War he appeared to maintain a feeling of community with the worker-class. Kádár is a dedicated communist, not trained in the Soviet Union and this paradox may explain some of the contradictions in his political life.