

# HSR

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Special Volume:

## **1956 in Hungary and in Canada**

**Events and Consequences**

edited and introduced by  
**Nándor Dreisziger**

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# HUNGARIAN STUDIES REVIEW

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**EDITOR:** NÁNDOR DREISZIGER, *Royal Military College of Canada*

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All correspondence should be addressed to: Professor Dreisziger, 904-1000 King St. West, Kingston, Ontario, K7M 8H3 Canada. **E-mail:** [nandor@kingston.net](mailto:nandor@kingston.net)

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Special Issue:

# **1956 in Hungary and in Canada**

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**Articles by**

EMESE IVAN and DEZSŐ IVÁN  
KÁROLY NAGY  
JUDITH SZAPOR  
NÁNDOR DREISZIGER  
AUDREY WIPPER  
CHRISTOPHER ADAM  
ÉVA TÖMÖRY  
MÁRTA MIHÁLY



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## Preface

**The present volume** is a continuation of the 2007 combined (spring-fall) special issue of our journal which dealt with the background, events and aftermath of the 1956 revolution in Hungary. While this 2008 volume also deals with some of the circumstances and consequences of the 1956 developments in that country, its main focus is the Revolution's Canadian aftermath, both the immediate and the long-term. Accordingly, this volume is divided into two main parts. Part one contains articles that are a continuation of the subject of our 2007 special volume, while part two has studies dealing with the Canadian aspects of the Revolution and the coming of the refugees, as well as their post-1956 experiences in this country.

Part I of this volume presents two essays, one by Professors Ivan and Iván and the other by Professor Nagy, which deal with the subject of the denial and/or misrepresentation of the 1956 events during the so-called Kádár era (1956-1989) in Hungary. The third paper, a review article by Professor Szapor discussing the life of Júlia Rajk, deals with the subject of one woman's efforts to keep the memory of the pre-1956 repression in Hungary alive and to alleviate for as many individuals as possible the post-1956 persecution of the Revolution's victims.

The papers in Part II deal with diverse aspects of the impact on Canada of the Revolution — and of the coming of the refugees. The first paper, by myself, sets the scene and elaborates at length on the historical background to the reactions in this country to the Revolution in Hungary and the subsequent refugee crisis in Austria (and, to a lesser extent, in Yugoslavia). The next paper is a partly eye-witness account of an aspect of the Hungarian-Canadian community's response to the Revolution, while the two following articles discuss the fate and activities of the refugees in the decades after 1956. The last paper in this section contains the reminiscences of one '56-er, a member of the Sopron School of Forestry that in 1956 was admitted to Canada, students and faculty as a whole, so that the former could complete their studies, in Hungarian, at the University of British Columbia.

This Part II of our present volume is the bulkiest, both in terms of the number of articles it contains and in terms of volume. Taking this into consideration, this collection of essays can be called the "Canadian volume" in our two-part series. But this anthology of papers can be called "Canadian" for

another reason as well: a great majority of its authors are Canadian citizens or, at least, they have had training at Canadian universities.

A third part of this 2008 volume contains review articles or extended book reviews, some of which are not closely or not at all related to the theme of the 1956 Revolution. Our journal may not have a regular issue until the end of the decade and for that reason we thought that there should be a section in this volume in which the book reviews that had accumulated in recent years are included, rather than delaying their publication for a few more years.

Nándor Dreisziger



## PART I

# Denying the Revolution in Post-1956 Hungary: An Introduction

Nándor Dreisziger

The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 was crushed in November of 1956 by Soviet troops. Over the next few months the regime of János Kádár consolidated its power. The regime lasted till the collapse of the Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe in 1989. Throughout this period, and especially during its early phases, the memory of the Revolution was wiped from the Hungarian nation's collective recollection. Its events and ideas could not be discussed, or were distorted by the regime's propaganda machine. An aspect of this treatment of the events of 1956 had been discussed in a study that appeared in the 2007 volume of our journal: in Professor Beverly James' essay "Early Cinematic Representations of Hungary's 1956 Revolution."

In part I of this volume we return to this theme. In a study entitled "The 1956 Revolution and the Melbourne Olympics: The Changing Perceptions of a Dramatic Story," Professor Emese Ivan, in collaboration with her sports-historian father Dezső Iván, outline how during the Kádár regime the events of the Revolution, in particular as far as the Hungarian participation in the Olympics of 1956 were concerned, were first suppressed and then presented in a falsified way. Only with the passing of communism in Hungary could the country's public get to know the real story.

This paper is followed by Professor Károly Nagy's survey, entitled "Teaching a Fraudulent History of the Revolution During the Kádár Dictatorship," of the perversion of the Revolution's history that was presented in the school textbooks published in Hungary from the 1950s to the 1980s.

The last section in this part of our volume is a lengthy book-review of a biography of Júlia Rajk who was the widow of László Rajk, one of the most notorious victims of the Stalin era purges in Hungary. Rajk's connection to the Revolution was a post-humus one. It was his exoneration and public re-

burial in early October that, according to some historians, unleashed the chain of events that lead to the outbreak of the Revolution a little over two weeks later. The injustices committed by Hungary's regime against Rajk, and later against his persecuted widow, are ironic in-so-far as both were devoted — and in the case of László, also ruthless — communists. Though loyal to the ideology to the end, in the Kádár era Júlia Rajk struggled against the regime's policy of falsifying history, especially as far as her husband's historical role was concerned — and also in the case of many other victims of the regime or, in many instances, their surviving relatives.

The Kádarian brainwashing of Hungary's people ended in 1989. Ever since then, the country's historians have been trying to “undo the damage” but it is a big task. Between 1956 and 1989 a generation had grown up on denials and lies. Some aspects of the events of 1956 and their treatment in the history books subsequently are coming to light only now. We hope that in a modest way our volume will contribute to this process.

# **The 1956 Revolution and the Melbourne Olympics: The Changing Perceptions of a Dramatic Story**

**Emese Ivan with Dezső Iván<sup>†</sup>**

**The Olympic Games** can be seen as one of the few cultural events that bond, to a degree at least, the world's people together. They can be viewed as 'the' global event where, through the pursuit of sport, lasting friendships are forged,<sup>1</sup> or they can be interpreted as a modern version of 'bread and circuses' where athletes and spectators are duped by political and commercial interests.<sup>2</sup> Although many sports fans consider 'politics' an unwelcome intruder in the Olympic Games, politics are in fact an integral part of this sporting event. The political dimensions of the Games are diverse and complicated. There is interplay and intrigue between the numerous international sport federations, there is also governmental interest to exploit the Games for national ends, and there is the International Olympic Committee (IOC) itself putting sometimes pressure on the national governments.

Historically, with the Soviet Union's entry into the Olympic family in 1951, the IOC became a Cold War arena in which the superpowers competed directly. In 1956, the international scene lurched from crisis to crisis that became mirrored in the life of the Olympic Movement itself. Despite the international turmoil in Eastern Europe and in the Middle East, IOC President, Avery Brundage, insisted that the Melbourne Olympic Games must go on.<sup>3</sup>

Much has been written about the modern Olympic Games and even about the Melbourne Olympiad. These works are diverse: they range from compilations of records and statistics, to biographies of Olympic heroes, to scholarly histories — as well as sensationalistic exposes. No doubt, in 1956 among the athletes who were arriving in Melbourne, the Hungarians initially drew the most attention. Some of the controversies surrounding their team's

travelling to and arrival in Melbourne, the ongoing anti-Soviet demonstrations during the Games, and the water-polo match between the Soviet and the Hungarian teams, became legendary and were well-publicized by the media as well as by the academic literature.<sup>4</sup>

The aim of this paper is to follow a different path. Namely, this study would like to answer the question how Hungarian sport historians interpreted the facts and described the events surrounding the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games — and the Hungarian team's experience — during the past 50 years.

### **Politics and Sport: The 1956 Melbourne Olympics**

In the 1890s, an idealistic French nobleman, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, sought to adapt the concept of the ancient Olympic Games, a system of sport competition in ancient Greek and Roman times were staged every four years over a period of 1,000 years, to modern conditions. The modern Olympic Games began as a forum for the youth of the world to unite in peaceful competition through sport. The Games were to benefit the athletes, to expose them to people from other parts of the world, to broaden their horizons, and instill in youth through sport competition the "virtue" of fair play — those virtues that were rapidly declining in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the eyes of Baron de Coubertin.

The modern Olympic Games were not meant to be competitions between the countries, rather, they were to provide a setting where athletes of various nationalities could meet peacefully and where national sporting programs could be tested for enhancing national spirit and values.<sup>5</sup> After World War I, however, all this began to change. Particularly in Europe, there was an extraordinary upsurge in the sports phenomenon and, more specially, a constant rise in the number of international tournaments. The universalization of sports — creating and accepting worldwide recognizable rules of the games, organizing regular international competitions in different sporting disciplines, and obeying a systematic formation of record keeping among the most important characteristics — is the remarkable feature of the post-1918 world. After World War II, sport took an increasingly political quality with the Cold War rivalry between capitalist and communist states, and the idea promoted by both sides, that sporting victories were evidence of a socio-political system's superiority. Within the world political structure numerous forces competed for the attention and resources of the world. The Olympic system was but one of those.

In years prior to the Melbourne Olympics, East-West relations were manifested primarily in the German and Chinese issues. The East-Germans requested recognition for Olympic participation in 1953. After long negotiations, finally in 1955 the East Germans fulfilled all of the IOC's requirements and they also agreed to the concept of participation in one, joint German team at the 1956 Olympics. In 1955, IOC President Avery Brundage stated: "We have obtained in the field of sport what politicians have failed to achieve so far."<sup>6</sup> The debates surrounding the East-German problem became even more complex in the shadow of the existing "Chinese question." In the Chinese case the IOC, in recognizing both Committees: the Formosan (Nationalist) and Mainland (Peoples' Republic of China or PRC) Committees, took a very different stance. Many IOC members asked the question why should these two committees exist as separate IOC members when there is no possibility for the two East and West German committees to co-exist? Finally, in 1954 in a close vote, 23 to 21, the IOC chose to recognize both committees.

On the eve of the Melbourne Olympics of 1956 Soviet military units stationed in Hungary were called upon by Hungary's communist leaders to help put down a revolution that had broken out in Budapest. Soon thereafter the Israelis invaded Egypt and headed toward the Suez Canal. Using this as an excuse, British and French expeditionary forces landed in the canal zone "to assure the safety" of this important international waterway. These actions precipitated worldwide outcries and flooded the Melbourne Games with political agitation and tension. Avery Brundage, presiding over his first Olympic Games, made the following statement: "Every civilized person recoils in horror at the savage slaughter in Hungary but that is no reason for destroying the nucleus of international cooperation.... The Olympic Games are contests between individuals and not between nations."<sup>7</sup>

When the Soviets intervened in Hungary, they provoked cries of outrage from the Western world. Immediately, the Netherlands and Spain withdrew from the Games. In the case of Spanish, their real reason was thought to be financial and the Hungarian affair simply provided them a good excuse. In the case of Netherlands the president of its National Olympic Committee criticized the IOC for saying that the Olympic ideal should prevail. "How can sports prevail over what has happened in Hungary?" he asked.<sup>8</sup> When the chancellor of IOC, Otto Mayer, learned the reports that some Hungarian athletes had been fighting in the streets during the crisis, and that most could not get out of the country for the Games, he persuaded the Swiss government to intercede with Hungarian authorities in the name of the IOC to provide safe passage to Prague, where the Czechoslovakian government would provide transportation to Melbourne. This was arranged, and for Mayer

it was a great personal triumph. Politically, after this incident the Swiss Olympic Committee joined Spain and the Netherlands in voicing their outrage and withdrawing from the Games. This was a severe blow to the IOC, for their headquarters were in Switzerland.<sup>9</sup> And the Suez incident, coming close on the heels of the Hungarian crisis, produced similar withdrawals and protests, this time in the Arab world.

At the Games themselves, numerous demonstrations by Hungarian ex-patriots and others were staged, protesting the Soviet action; and in the athletic contest, incidents occurred which reflected that atmosphere. The water polo match between Hungary and the Soviet Union was a brutal one. A rough sport to begin with, the game was marred by much violence and fighting. The Hungarians, who had long ruled the sport, soundly trounced the Soviets 4 to 0.

The Melbourne Olympics were surrounded by economic and other problems as well — not making the IOC's position easier. First of all, the Australian government decided to provide financial support to the Olympics only in 1954, and began the building of the Olympic Village and other sporting facilities only thereafter.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, some of the international sport federations did not want to participate in the Melbourne Olympic Games because of the extremely high transportation costs to Australia. For example, the Equestrian Sport Federation found itself in a very strange situation: it faced serious difficulties regarding the Australian regulations on horse import. Since the issue could not be resolved, the Equestrian events took place in Stockholm during the same time while other Olympians competed at the Melbourne Olympics. The International Soccer Federation (FIFA) simply wanted to see the competition on the "old" instead of the "fifth continent."

Despite all the above mentioned problems and difficulties, the 1956 Melbourne Olympics became a success in the history of the Olympic Games. We also have to admit that recalling the Games' closing ceremony one can see a real indicator of the general reduction in political and national tensions that characterized so prominently the Games. Namely, the IOC living up to its values and ideals, changed the traditional closing ceremony, in which each national contingent had marched behind its own standard, to one in which a token 500 athletes out of the 4000 that participated in the Games marched as a single cavalcade, with no regard to order or country, mingling in the spirit of international friendship.

Unfortunately, the tension could not be alleviated for the Hungarian athletes. As sport historians Endre Kaklich, László Gy. Papp, and Zoltán Suher pointed out: "At the closing ceremony of the Melbourne Olympics the Hungarian athletes and officials stood at the crossroad. Some of them,

deceived by the horrible stories about the red terror in Budapest or acting under the force of the Western propaganda, did not return to Hungary.”<sup>11</sup>

### **The Melbourne Olympics from a Hungarian Perspective**

Taking 1895 as the beginning, at the World War II in 1945, Hungary had exactly half-a-century of experience in organized sport. In those fifty years sport had become a familiar part of the pattern of Hungarian life. Hungary had important victories and successes, which earned admiration all around the world. In 1896, Baron de Coubertin told the Hungarian member of the IOC, Ferenc Kemény: “Your country’s physical culture and love of sport would merit the honor of organizing the first Olympic Games.”<sup>12</sup> In 1979, when Lord Killanin, one of the most distinguished Presidents of the IOC, visited Hungary he declared: “I had to come to this country, admired by the whole world as a source of outstanding sporting achievements, where over many decades so many champions have been raised, and where the great love of sport is an example to all.”<sup>13</sup>

Following the establishment of a Communist regime in Hungary in the wake of World War II, sport in the country became organized on a strictly centralized basis. From this time on sport relations formed an important part of Hungarian international affairs. Sport also played a very prominent role in the ideological and cultural life of the newly-established socialist state. During the late 1940s the various Ministries and state-owned companies put their hands on Hungary’s private sport clubs. The clubs started to receive about 40% of their revenue from the state’s budget. In 1948, the National Office of Physical Education and Sport (NOPES) was established, as the highest governmental sport organization. The President of this office was at the same time the President of the Hungarian Olympic Committee (HOC). The Office proceeded to work on the fundamental reorganization of Hungarian sport life. It issued a sport development plan and aided the process by which the old club system was replaced by a state-controlled structure. The Office also introduced a competition calendar, and a unified qualification and registration system for the athletes to compete in international events.

Participation in the Olympic Games played an extremely important role in the new, “socialist” Hungary. As the state-owned periodical *Nemzeti Sport* (national sport), explained on July 16, 1948:

Although Hungary does not want to compete with fascists (sic!) it does not want to interrupt the tradition of its participation in Olympic Games either. Especially does not at the moment, when

Western countries make all their efforts to deepening the gulf between the two camps of nations. We would like to demonstrate the likelihood, effectiveness, and strength of our political and economic structure even at the Olympic Games.<sup>14</sup>

About the 1952 Helsinki Olympics the *Nemzeti Sport* wrote:

We can conclude on the development of a nation from its performance at an Olympic Game. That's why it is important that the team of the communist Soviet Union is leading the official table of medal winners at the Olympics and the team of the People Republic of Hungary recently is the third.<sup>15</sup>

The outstanding results of the new socialist sporting system became evident at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics. Hungary won 16 gold medals at the Games and the Hungarian soccer team, the "Golden Team," or "Magical Magyars" won the Olympic Championship and went undefeated for 46 matches between 1951 and 1955 — except in the finals of the 1954 World Cup in Switzerland.

Unfortunately this success gave rise to complacency and overconfidence that gradually pushed the Hungarian Olympic movement in a wrong direction. A resolution of the Communist Party in 1954 sought to help prevent the slide, but it was only partly successful in bringing the movement back on the right rails. In this context, although the Hungarian athletes worked hard to fulfil the requirements of the official competition calendar, meet the established qualification levels and "lived and worked by socialist principles," there was an ongoing debate among officials about participation in and goal settings for the Melbourne Olympics.<sup>16</sup>

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of October, six days after the outbreak of the Revolution, all the athletes were placed in the Sport Hotel on Margitsziget (an island in the Danube and thus a somewhat isolated location) in Budapest. Everybody could leave the camp and had a "day off" to visit their relatives and friends, taking into consideration the turmoil of the time and the insecurity of the future. Since governmental organizations and Ministries were not functioning, the athletes did not have their papers — they had to break into one of the Ministry offices to get their documentation. There was no transportation available for them because of the ongoing general strikes. With the help of enthusiastic volunteer track drivers, the athletes managed to get to the Czechoslovak border where the neighbour country's sport officials and sportsmen helped the Hungarians with training facilities, outfits, and equipment. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November, Air France, the airline company with which the Hungarian



Olympic Committee arranged the teams' transportation, announced its decision: it would not transport the Hungarian team. Air France officials claimed that there was anarchy in the country that could lead to the non-payment for the company's services. Once again the Czechoslovaks helped out the Hungarian athletes with a guaranty of payment. Thus, the team was able to leave Prague for Melbourne on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November. But some of the Hungarian athletes had set sail with Soviet athletes to Melbourne before the Soviet intervention had happened. News of this sparked much speculation as to the relations between the two groups during the voyage. Upon their arrival in Melbourne the athletes said, perhaps unaware of the recent events in Hungary, that the relationship had been devoid of any incident.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the fact that the Hungarian team finished fourth in the unofficial medal winners' competition among the nations, the Melbourne Olympics cannot be seen as an unqualified success in Hungarian sport history. One of the reasons for this "unsuccessful image" one can find, of course, in the political context of the Games, namely the effect of the Revolution that completely overshadowed the 1956 Olympics; and also in the fact that many of the Hungarian athletes, several of them medal winners, did not return to Hungary after the Games.

### **The Melbourne Olympics in Hungarian Historiography**

But what has been written about these Olympic Games by Hungarian sport scientists and sport historians? In order to analyze the written accounts in a systematic, empirical fashion, it is necessary to survey the historical and political context of the period. Historians approach the topic of their interest by gathering the available documentation, i.e. the evidence concerning the subject. Without sufficient primary and contemporary secondary sources, historians are unable to explain what happened and why it happened that way. At the same time, history is not a isolated discipline. The historian's agenda is set by a combination of past and present. The events and issues that mattered at the time being studied confront the attitudes, ideologies and hindsight of the historian's own day.<sup>18</sup>

After the general overview of the Melbourne Olympics and the political and economic circumstances surrounding this event, it is interesting to analyze how these facts became interpreted in subsequent Hungarian sport historiography.

In the period between 1956-1963 “silence” was the most appropriate approach of historians, statisticians, researchers, journalists and even politicians towards the dramatic events of the fall of 1956.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, stories on athletes, events, sport competitions, and even sport statistics completely ignored the 1956 Olympic Games and their results. Usually data was gathered and analyzed on the outcome of Olympic Games between 1948-1952, and those after 1956. In their narratives sport historians generally provided one or two negative sentences regarding the “counter-revolutionary events” of 1956 and their “destructive effect” on Hungarian sports. Then they jumped immediately to the history of the following sporting success, event, or the next Olympic Games. All this cannot be blamed on the sport historians of the times — they just followed the “party-line” prevailing in those days. Their works were in line with the general discourse of the time: what was not told, did not exist — which was an unwritten rule of both sports reporting and sports scholarship in those years.

The only contemporary source of detailed information on the dilemmas and problems Hungary's athletes and sport officials faced during and after the Melbourne Olympic Games are the issues of the above-mentioned periodical, the *Nemzeti Sport*, published between 9 and 17 December, 1956. These issues tried to describe the Hungarian athletes' physical and mental conditions — as well as their deliberations during their long journey back from Australia whether to return home or stay abroad. This is what we read in a reporter's account published in the December 9 issue of this periodical:

To my knowledge 82 Hungarian athletes and officials left the Olympic Village yesterday and began their flight... back home... According to Australian newspapers many Australian-Hungarians bade farewell to the Hungarian athletes. The Olympians who remained in Melbourne would help with closing the Hungarian house in Melbourne and would fly back only after....<sup>20</sup>

In the December 11 issue we read the following:

Hungarian athletes had a successful Olympics at Melbourne. They won 9 gold, 10 silver, and 7 bronze medals. Many foreign radio stations did not report this success. They speculated that part of the Hungarian Olympic Team is not going to return home. Unfortunately the athletes heard about the events that interrupted the normal life of their country. And being far away from home, to hear the news was terrifying. According to the foreign news agencies there were several athletes who did not book tickets for

the return flight. In these days, one has to understand the context for decisions made. We have to respect the sportsmen's decision taking into consideration that they cannot rely on the up-to-date information and, perhaps, they did not make the decision with a calm mind. I am sure... that after a while they would come to understanding the mistake they made and they would return.<sup>21</sup>

And, in the same periodical's December 16 issue, the reporter continued:

Unfortunately we do not return home with the same team of people as we had come to Melbourne. As a result of the political events in Hungary our sportsmen became the focal point of all the news and political interest here in Melbourne. Forty-five sportsmen decided to remain in Melbourne and there is huge question mark as to whether they would like to return home at all....<sup>22</sup>

In 1963 Hungary's regime proclaimed an official amnesty and brought to an end the period of reprisals that had followed the Revolution. The tragic events of 1956, including the participants' actions, started to be looked upon in a little less sinister light. The government began to take the view that not all the people who left the country in 1956 had committed crime. In the years following Hungary, from a country that previously had been seen by Western media as one of "anarchy and terror," turned into "the happiest barrack of the Socialist camp" in the eyes of the World. These changes in time led to a change in the Hungarian regime's official discourse regarding the 1956 events — including the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. Books published on Hungarian and Olympic sport history started to mention the Melbourne Olympic Games. The language remained strident but the event, at least, was no longer ignored. Writing in 1964, sport historian Sándor Barcs pointed out:

Today we... judge the fact that some of the sportsmen left the country with much more tolerance than we did in 1957. [In regard to] the events in Melbourne we have to argue that the decision to participate in the Olympics was a good one. The idea, however, to participate with a lot of athletes with no real chance to win, was not good. That part of the Hungarian team did not have any chance to win or get good results, just worked against the discipline and the Olympic spirit of the others. And judging the athletes' decision is unfair from another perspective as well. It is a well-known fact that in Melbourne there were many Australian-Hungarians around

the team. They simply wanted to hear and speak Hungarian and enjoy the companionship of the Hungarian athletes. But there were a lot of Hungarian emigrants from other countries, the so called "hawks", who came to Melbourne with the sole purpose of luring Hungarian athletes to remain [abroad]....<sup>23</sup>

During the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s Hungary's state-owned publishing companies started to understand the growing relevance of sport as part of entertainment. The increasing number of international competitions, combined with the widespread use of TV broadcasting of those events, brought sport into each family's living room. Publishers discovered a niche market by producing nicely illustrated books on such topics as "The History of Hungarian Olympic Gold Medals," "The History of Hungarian Olympians," "The History of Olympic Games" etc. We may ask what was written about the Melbourne Olympic Games in these books? These publications no longer ignored the event per se. They included congenial photographs of the Hungarian athletes — only those who returned to Hungary of course — as well as pleasant stories and anecdotes about the athletes' successes. This gave the producers of these books an opportunity to share their pride and success with the audience, while quietly ignoring many of the real events of the games — as well as the political turmoil that was associated with them.

The 1980s witnessed new attention paid in Hungary to the revolutionary events of 1956 and, as a result, a further change in the official attitude towards the Melbourne Olympics. After 1985 some athletes — and, most importantly, the famous members of the "Golden" soccer team — came to Hungary for visits. Hungarians knew very well that some of these athletes — Ferenc Puskás, Sándor Kocsis, and Nándor Hidegkuti among others — had had brilliant careers abroad, in Spain, Portugal, and South-America. Hungarians — both the fans and the media — welcomed them warmly. They immediately became celebrities again. The media was excited about interviewing them on TV and radio, and even politicians competed for being seen with them in public. They were really and honestly welcomed by everyone: they were the real Hungarian "sports heroes."

In 1989 Puskás was invited to the conference "New Directions in Teaching Physical Education in Hungary," which was held at the University of Physical Education in Budapest in October of that year. At this conference Csaba Istvánffy, the Rector of the University, presented a paper on "Olympism and Its Role in Curriculum Development at Hungarian Universities." In this paper he argued the following:

[This] subject is covered [at our institution] during the first and the second semester in 84 lessons. At the end of this the students have to sit for an oral examination. In our opinion, however, the present number of lessons... is inadequate. The memory of the Hungarian Olympic champions, the Olympic events and the Hungarian Olympic Movement in general, have to get back their real and honest place among the subjects covered. At last, we have to separate ideology from the subject of the Olympics.<sup>24</sup>

At the same conference Puskás argued that he did not leave the country in 1956 because of any political reason, rather because he wanted to play soccer and “live the good life that I used to live between 1951-1956.” He claimed that in 1956 he could not see the possibility of doing that any more in Hungary, and he decided to defect.<sup>25</sup> Being international stars at the time, it was not hard for him and his team-mates to get contracts immediately anywhere in the world. This explanation was understandable and easy to digest for Hungarians living in the harsh realities of the 1980s when the country faced deadlines from international credit agencies (such as the World Bank and IMF) to pay back the loans it had received in previous years. It was the time when the age of “Goulash-communism” had just ended and the people's attention had switched from politics to economics.

## **Conclusions**

This paper surveyed the primary and secondary sources dealing with the subject of Hungary and the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. It tried to show how Hungarian sport historians interpreted the events surrounding these games. Interestingly enough during the half-century since, Hungarian historiography never deal with the subject thoroughly and in detail. Although it is a fact that in 1956 there *was* an Olympiad hosted by Melbourne *where* Hungary became the *fourth most successful* country in winning medals, during the years that followed, these facts were totally ignored by Hungarian sport historians — in line with the political discourse prevalent in Communist Hungary at the time.

In political discourse analysis a researcher examines the circumstances under which ideas, as articulated in the policy discourse, can serve as contributing factors to policy change, even in the absence of changes in institutions and interests. Political scientists distinguish between argumentative discourses — being rhetorical and instrumental — that serve to reinforce an existing policy framework and transformative discourses — challenging and truth seeking — that seek to persuade various audiences of the

need for significant policy change. In order to examine policy discourses in a systematic, empirical fashion, political scientists analyze the content of the policy frame for the issue in question: Who is constructing the discourse? What is the apparent purpose or action-imperative of the discourse? What are the specific elements at stake in the discourse?<sup>26</sup> Based upon the answers to these questions political scientists Vandna Bhatia and William D. Coleman classify policy discourses into four types.<sup>27</sup>

*Rhetorical discourse* is used to reinforce a dominant policy frame. The language accompanying this discourse is authoritative in-so-far as it validates the established beliefs and strengthens the authority structure. Theoretically speaking, this is what happened to 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games and the Hungarian athletes' participation in them between 1956 and 1963. That is, the sport historians' discourse served to reinforce and institutionalize the dominant policy frame. The rhetorical discourse of the time ignored what could not be useful for its own goals — even such historical facts as the athletes' achievements.

*Instrumental discourse* is employed to address small policy failures or inconsistencies within a dominant policy frame. The main purpose of this discourse is to justify and solidify the dominant frame by adjusting the rules to encourage further rule-guided behaviour. The Melbourne Olympics started to be mentioned by sport historians from the mid-1960s to the 1970s. Later, the event itself and the Hungarian team's performance began to be discussed and even analyzed as one of the "ordinary" Olympic Games. But even then detailed analyses or descriptive writings of the events surrounding the Games remained absent. Although there were a lot of debates in the 1960s and 1970s about the so-called problems and administrative failures connected with the Games, such as for example the circumstance that the Hungarian team left for Melbourne too early and that they would have been better off waiting until the turmoil in Budapest subsided — and so on. But on these "inconvenient topics" there was no systematic data presented, nor any analysis offered. Sport commentators and historians writing in communist Hungary also failed to say anything on the lives of the athletes who had defected following the Olympic Games.

*Challenging discourse* is directed outward, seeking to persuade diverse audiences both to think very differently about policy and to switch allegiances to those proposing new ideas. Challenging discourse may rely on appeals to fear, anxiety or insecurity to elicit desired responses, or they can be reasoned, where the main objective is persuasion-using facts. Whether invoking fear or reason, facts are relied upon to make the argument compelling. After the rehabilitation process in Hungary had started in the

1980s, a lot of sportsmen returned to the country. Some members of the “Golden Team” became heroes for the second time. On the contrary, the Melbourne Olympics and Olympians did not get much attention from sport historians. We cannot find a growing number of contemporary academic works trying to answer the questions that authors in previous periods had so frequently asked about alleged administrative, coaching, and organizational mistakes; and there were no initiatives to collect the reminiscences of athletes and officials of the Melbourne Olympics so that the coming generations could understand better the past.

*Truth seeking discourses* challenge the moral appropriateness and authority of society's underlying norms and beliefs, and seek to develop consensus around a new set of broad, normative parameters for policy making. Here actors try to convince each other to change their casual or principled beliefs in order to reach a reasoned consensus about the validity claims. Since 1989 the Olympic Movement and the history of the Hungarian Olympic Movement have become cornerstones in sport studies departments all around the country. We can only hope that, with the growing international influence and importance of the IOC and the growing media coverage of the Olympic Games, more and more attention will be paid to the true history of earlier Games and the sport heroes of our past. Hopefully, this will lead to an effort to fill the missing knowledge in Hungarian sport history about the 1956 Melbourne Olympics and the Hungarian athletes' participation in it.

This paper tried to survey the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, the surrounding economic and political issues, from a Hungarian perspective. It also strove to focus some attention on how the historical circumstances of one particular event, namely the 1956 Olympic Games, had been interpreted through different political periods by Hungarian sport experts and sport historians. In describing the events of these Games, the commentators of the Kádár era in Hungary followed thoroughly the official political discourses — even if that meant ignoring much of the Games' story.

We should also realize the fact that even today the 1956 Melbourne Olympics are not receiving as much attention by researchers, academics and analysts, as do other Olympic Games. This is a painful circumstance especially in view of the tragic but heroic events that enveloped Hungary's athletes and officials before and during the Games — as well as afterward. Nevertheless we must keep hoping that this painful episode of Hungarian sport history will someday get an honourable place in the collective memory of the Hungarian nation.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> John Bale and Mette Krogh Christensen, "Introduction: Post-Olympism?" in *Questioning Sport in the Twenty First Century*, ed. John Bale and M. K. Christensen (New York, NY: Berg, 2004), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Marie Brohm, *Sport: A Prison of Measured Time* (London, England: Ink Links, 1978), 38.

<sup>3</sup> Allen Guttman, *The Games Must Go On: Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1984), 152-163.

<sup>4</sup> See for more information Richard Espy, *The Politics of the Olympic Games* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1979), Guttman, *The Games Must Go On*, and Alfred Erich Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Pierre de Coubertin, "Why I Revived the Olympic Games," in *Olympism: Selected Writings*, ed. and comp. Pierre de Coubertin (Lousanne, Switzerland: IOC, 1908), 78-79.

<sup>6</sup> Espy, *The Politics of the Olympic Games*, p. 51.

<sup>7</sup> Guttman, *The Games Must Go On*, p. 162.

<sup>8</sup> *The New York Times*, 7 November 1956.

<sup>9</sup> Espy, *The Politics of the Olympic Games*, p. 55.

<sup>10</sup> The Australian Government supported the idea of hosting the Olympic Games politically providing the organizers and, of course, the IOC with all necessary letters of support but the practical financial and budgetary support opened up just later on.

<sup>11</sup> Endre Kaklich, László Gy. Papp, Zoltán Suher, *Olimpiai Játékok, 1896-1976* [Olympic Games 1896-1976] (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 1979), 156.

<sup>12</sup> That was said at the time when Coubertin confronted the possible withdrawal of Greece as the host country of the first modern Games.

<sup>13</sup> Jenő Boskovics, *The History of Hungarian Sport* (Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 1983) p. 1. Also available in Gemran: *Die Geschichte des ungarischen Sports*.

<sup>14</sup> *Nemzeti Sport*, 16 July 1948.

<sup>15</sup> *Nemzeti Sport*, 8 August 1952.

<sup>16</sup> Földesiné Gyöngyi Szabó, *A magyar versenysport helyzetéről* [On the Status of Elite Sports in Hungary] (Budapest: Sportpropaganda Kiadó, 1983), 77.

<sup>17</sup> Kaklich, Papp, and Suher, *Olimpiai Játékok*, p. 150.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Polley, "History and Sport," in *Sport and Society*, ed. Barrie Houlihan (London, England: Sage Publication, 2003), 56.

<sup>19</sup> The authors would like to thank Ms. Zsuzsa Nyáry, Senior Librarian of the Semmelweis University, Department of Sport Studies – former College of Physical Education – and Mr. József Gergelics, Correspondent of the Hungarian News Agency for their dedicated help and support in helping to find the available archive material, primary, and secondary sources accessible to public in the Hungarian News Agency's and the Semmelweis University's Archives and Libraries.



<sup>20</sup> *Nemzeti Sport*, 9 December 1956.

<sup>21</sup> *Nemzeti Sport*, 11 December 1956.

<sup>22</sup> *Nemzeti Sport*, 16 December 1956. The reporter identified Árpád Csanádi, the Chief of the Hungarian Olympic Mission, as his source of information.

<sup>23</sup> Sándor Barcs, *A Modern Olimpiák Regénye* [The Romance of Modern Olympics] (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 1964), 157.

<sup>24</sup> Csaba Istvánffy, *Az Olimpizmus Jelentősége és Jövője az Egyetemek Testnevelés és Sporttan Tanterveiben* [Olympism and its Role in the Curriculum Development at Hungarian Universities] (Budapest: Testnevelési Főiskola Konferencia Anyagok, 1989), 63.

<sup>25</sup> See also in Antal Végvári, *Az Aranycsapat* [The Golden Team] (Budapest: Bagolyvár Kiadó, 1989), 211.

<sup>26</sup> Vandna Bhatia and William D. Coleman, "Ideas and Discourse: Reform and Resistance in the Canadian and German Health Systems," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 36, 4 (2003): 717-728.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 720-721.



# Teaching a Fraudulent History of the Revolution During the Kádár Dictatorship

Károly Nagy

Errors of omission and distortion mar American history textbooks.... Why should children believe what they learn in American history, if their textbooks are full of distortions and lies?....

James W. Loewen. *Lies My Teacher Told Me, Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* (New York: The New Press, 1995).

**One of the** most dramatic moments of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution was a short statement broadcast on October 30, 2:06 PM by the Budapest Radio Kossuth, by that Radio's new Revolutionary Committee, parts of which said the following:

Dear listeners, we are beginning a new chapter in the history of the Hungarian Radio. For many years the radio has been an instrument of lies: it merely carried out orders. It lied day and night; it lied on all wavelengths. Not even at the hour of our country's rebirth did it cease its campaign of lies. But the struggle which... brought national freedom also freed our Radio.

Those who spoke those lies are no longer among the staff of the Hungarian Radio, which can henceforth rightfully bear the name of Kossuth and Petőfi. We who are now at the microphone are new men.

We shall tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.<sup>1</sup>

Truth was an effect, just as the elemental need of truth was a cause of the Revolution. As an eighteen-year-old Hungarian revolutionary student told the United Nation's Special Committee in 1957:

We wanted freedom and not a good comfortable life... Even though we might lack bread and other necessities of life, we wanted freedom. We, the young people were particularly hampered because we were brought up amidst lies. We contin-

ually had to lie. We could not have a healthy idea, because everything was choked in us. We wanted freedom of thought.

The Committee's Report noted: "This young student's words expressed as concisely as any the ideal which made possible a great uprising".<sup>2</sup>

After completing its fact-finding hearings and investigations, the U.N. Special Committee concluded, among other things the following, regarding what they called "the essential facts" about the 1956 Hungarian Revolution:

What took place in Hungary [in October and November, 1956] was a spontaneous national uprising, caused by long-standing grievances... Soviet pressure was resented... The government was maintained by the weapon of terror, wielded by the ÁVH or political police....

The demonstrations on 23 October were at first entirely peaceable. None of the demonstrators carried arms. The demonstration turned into armed uprising when the ÁVH opened fire on the people outside the radio building. Within a few hours, Soviet tanks were in action against the Hungarians. This... had the effect of still further uniting the people....

From start to finish, the uprising was led by students, workers, soldiers and intellectuals.... The majority of political demands put forward during the revolution included a stipulation that democratic socialism should be the basis of the Hungarian political structure....

The few days of freedom enjoyed by the Hungarian people provided abundant evidence of the popular nature of the uprising. A free press and radio came to life all over Hungary, and the disbanding of the ÁVH was the signal for general rejoicing, which revealed the degree of unity achieved by the people once the burden of fear had been lifted from them....

Hungarian resistance to the second Soviet military intervention was a heroic demonstration of the will of the Hungarian people to fight for their national independence....<sup>3</sup>

Adam Michnik of Poland's *Solidarność* said at the June 16, 1989 solemn public reburial ceremony of Imre Nagy and other martyrs executed by the Kádár regime: "Today the spirit of liberty moves into Budapest."

The previous occupant of Budapest and of the country for thirty-three years was the spirit of suppression, lies and communist dictatorship after the Soviet army crushed the 1956 Revolution. The last Soviet soldier left Hungary on June 19, 1991.

The thirty-three years too-long Kádár regime was conceived and born by and amidst treason and lies in 1956.

During the dawn hours of the November 4, Sunday Soviet all-out military attack against Hungary, János Kádár and Ferenc Münnich read a statement in a radio broadcast from Szolnok, containing, among other things the following:

We the undersigned, Antal Apró, János Kádár, István Kossa and Ferenc Münnich, former Ministers in the Imre Nagy government, announce that on November 1, 1956, we broke off our relations with this government, left this government and took the initiative of forming the Hungarian Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Government.

We were prompted to take this responsible step by the realization that, within the Nagy government, which became impotent under the pressure of the reaction, we could do nothing against the counterrevolutionary danger menacing our People's Republic, the rule of the workers and peasants, and our Socialist achievements.

We must put an end to the excesses of the counterrevolutionary elements. The hour of action is here. We are going to defend the power of the workers and peasants and the achievements of the people's democracy.

The Hungarian Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Government, acting in the interest of our people, our working class, and our country, requested the Soviet Army Command to help our nation in smashing the dark reactionary forces and restoring order and calm in the country.<sup>4</sup>

After the brutally violent restoration of communist dictatorship, the Kádár regime began an all-out brainwashing campaign of Orwellian 1984 dimensions to drill in the lies that the Revolution was a counterrevolution, that the revolutionaries were murderous reactionary fascists, that the Soviet Army's mass destruction and mass murder was selfless brotherly help and that the restored one-party communist dictatorship and police state was a legitimate government representing the will of the people's democracy.

Immense number of pamphlets, books and articles were published detailing this grotesque propaganda for decades, while complete censorship enforced an absolute prohibition of any — even the faintest, mildest or poetic — public reference to any true or factual alternative interpretation, definition, question or idea about the Revolution.

The enforcement of this taboo was all too real and concrete. The Communist Kádár regime executed 349 and arrested, jailed, deported and imprisoned more than 22,000 people between 1957 and 1963.

The barrage of fraudulent propaganda material about 1956 seemed endless. The tenth, twentieth, twenty-fifth and thirtieth anniversaries of the Revolution were targeted by the regime as especially important dates to inundate the bookstores and libraries, the pages of academic and other periodicals and the newsstands with printed matter hammering the official "party line".<sup>5</sup>

Books and other publications documenting the actual facts about 1956 which were published in western countries were available during these decades only in a few major libraries of Hungary behind the doors of closed sections, accessible only by special temporary research permission issued to a select few. Mailed or smuggled publications were the only other alternative, if they were not intercepted by the political police, the ÁVÓ, or by the border guards, thus risking reprisals.

The most heinous brainwashing campaign was waged against Hungary's youth. Counting on the effectively enforced complete absence of any alternative information and the terrorized silence of the population, even within the private sphere of families, the regime had every schoolbook, textbook and history book, lesson book re-written to contain the blatantly fraudulent, perjurious messages about 1956 on all levels of education.

Orwell wrote in his *1984*: "They say that who controls the past controls the future, and who controls the present controls the past."<sup>6</sup> The most effective way to achieve this control is to exclude the truth from and incorporate the lies into all the mandatory school textbooks of all the required classes teaching virtually the entire population.

The history textbook for the thirteen to fourteen year-old, 8th grade students contained the following passages reprinted in various versions year after year in a chapter titled "The 1956 Counterrevolutionary Insurgence":

The building of Socialism was temporarily interrupted by the 1956 counterrevolutionary insurgence. Western imperialist circles and emigrant fascist counterrevolutionary elements were continually inciting against our people, our regime. They prepared the counterrevolution with the aid of secret local centres. Armed counterrevolutionary forces were pouring into our country from the West. They were striving to overthrow the people's democracy. They were murdering the communists and the progressive people; they were jailing thousands of patriots... Our government requested the help of the Soviet army and liquidated the counterrevolution.<sup>7</sup>

For high school seniors, their history textbook's chapter about Hungary's 1956 was titled: "The 1956 Counterrevolution", or in other editions:

"The 1956 Armed Counterrevolutionary Attack and Its Defeat." The chapter in most editions usually contained the following text:

On October 23, during the evening hours armed counterrevolutionary groups attacked the Hungarian Radio building as well as the Party's central newspaper, the *Szabad Nép* (Free People) building, the Telephone Centre, the Lakihegy radio transmission Centre and in order to obtain weapons, many armories, army barracks, police stations and other objectives....

At the end of October they restored the multiparty system... many extreme rightist, even fascist parties started to organize.... The danger of capitalist restoration was real....

Imre Nagy opened the door widely to the flood of capitalist, nationalist, fascist elements; bloody white terror ruled the streets....

On November 3, János Kádár and others formed a new government in Szolnok. In the name of the Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government he announced on November 4 that they requested the help of the Soviet Union's Red Army to suppress the counterrevolution.<sup>8</sup>

Higher education textbooks were not exempt either. In 1986, a new law prescribed a new course to be required in every college and university in Hungary, titled "Magyarország története 1918-1975" (The History of Hungary 1918-1975). The mandatory history textbook for this required course was *Magyarország a 20. Században* (Hungary in the 20th Century). This book had this to teach about the 1956 Revolution:

The goal of the Hungarian counterrevolution was the restoration of the capitalist-landowner regime....

The counterrevolutionary insurgents attacked the Hungarian Radio building....

To incite mass hysteria, they demolished the Stalin statue on György Dózsa Street.

They succeeded drawing into their armed groups many hundreds of students and adults.

Imre Nagy and his group encouraged the reactionary forces.

International imperialism was helping the counterrevolution in Hungary to succeed, with the goal to establish a new war base.<sup>9</sup>

How many young Hungarians were subjected to this fraudulent historiography about their nations' internationally appreciated, esteemed and acclaimed revolution?

According to currently available statistics, 98% of Hungary's relevant aged population attends 8th-grade education, 60.9% attends high schools,

20% studies in vocational schools and 17.4% attends colleges and universities.

Between 1957, the year after the suppression of the Revolution and 1988, the year before the regime change from Soviet-occupied communist dictatorship to independent democracy, 4,892,842 students graduated from the 8th grade of the public school system and 2,046,163 students graduated from high schools.<sup>10</sup>

What these numbers reveal is that within those three decades approximately 6,939,000 people — about 67% of the country's population — were taught blatant lies about the 1956 Hungarian Revolution in primary and in secondary schools, more than two million of them at least twice, once in the 8th grade and once again in the 12th grade. (Further research would surely reveal additional material and numbers about the vocational schools.)

We must add to these those college and university students — annually approximately 17.4% of the relevant aged population — who received this fraudulent message at least three times during their school years, as an official, required and enforced lesson.

These people today are in their 30's 40's 50's. Many of them are in leadership positions in Hungary. How honestly open and motivated are they to re-examine, to re-establish the true facts of history, so as to be able to learn from their real heritage of the brightest star of modern Hungarian history, the 1956 Hungarian Revolution? Or, was their historical consciousness, their national identity seriously damaged by this prolonged and thorough brainwashing campaign? As Marcell Jankovics — film director and historian — observed in the 2006. 1. issue of the cultural periodical; *Új Horizont* (New Horizon):

Thanks to the decades of Communist rule, a not insignificant part of our country's population became indifferent, insensitive about our nations' basic concerns. They are not patriots, they became merely inhabitant residents.... They came to feel that it is not good to be Hungarian with such a bad history... They were convinced that 1848 and 1956 was futile and senseless.

They came to believe that our wonderful history is foul, a reproachable burden to be gotten rid of... They came to believe that they would ease their souls and conscience if they renounce their national identity.<sup>11</sup>

Hungarian youngsters growing up since the 1990 regime changes in Hungary and the neighbouring countries in the Carpathian Basin are studying from a wide variety of textbooks in all classes of their primary, secondary and higher education, and the closed sections of the libraries have also opened up.



Their new textbooks and other research resources, even entire scientific institutes, like the *Institute for the History of 1956*, and museums, like the *House of Terror Museum*, both in Budapest, provide them with adequate, valid, reliable facts about 1956. Thus, being no longer forcefully barred from access to the truths of their past, today's free and responsible citizens have excellent opportunities to negotiate Santayana's classic warning: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."<sup>12</sup>

## NOTES

Earlier versions of this paper were read at the May, 2006, annual conference of the American Hungarian Educators' Association, held at the University of Indiana, in Bloomington Indiana, and at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences' Special General Assembly commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the 1956 Revolution, on October 30, 2006, in Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> *The Revolt in Hungary, A Documentary Chronology of Events, October 23, 1956 November 4, 1956* (New York: Free Europe Committee, [1957]), 43-44.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, *Report of the Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary*, General Assembly, Official Records: Eleventh Session, Supplement no. 18 A/3592 (New York, 1957), 68.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 137, 138.

<sup>4</sup> *The Revolt in Hungary*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>5</sup> A few examples: Tibor Klaniczay, J. Szauder, M. Szabolcsi, *History of Hungarian Literature* (Budapest: Corvina, 1964); János Molnár, *Ellenforradalom Magyarországon 1956-ban* [Counterrevolution in Hungary in 1956] (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1967); Ervin Hollós, *Kik voltak, mit akartak?* [Who Were They, What Did They Want?] (Budapest: Kossuth, 1967); János Berecz, "1956 – negyedszázad távlatából" [1956 – From a Distance of a Quarter of a Century], in *Társadalmi Szemle* (Societal Review), XXXVI. 8-9 (Aug.-Sept. 1981); István Pintér, Péter Rényi, *et al.*, *Ez történt, a Népszabadság cikksorozata 1956-ról* [This is What Happened – Articles Series about 1956 in the Daily Népszabadság] (Budapest: Népszabadság – Kossuth, 1981); Ervin Hollós, Vera Lajtai, *Hidegháború Magyarország ellen/1956* [Cold War Against Hungary/1956] (Budapest: Kossuth, 1982); Ferenc Glatz, ed., *Historia* [History, a bi-monthly periodical of the Hungarian Historical Society], various articles about 1956 in various issues in 1982 and 1983; János Berecz, *et al.*, *A néphatalom védelmében* [In Defense of the People's Power] (Budapest: Zrínyi, 1984); Sándor Geréb and Pál Hajdu, *Az ellenforradalom utóvédharca, 1956. november – 1957. március* [Rearguard Fights of the Counterrevolution, November 1956 – March 1957] (Budapest: Kossuth, 1986); Bálint Szabó, *Az ötvenes évek* [The 1950's] (Budapest: Kossuth, 1986); László Benczédi, Péter Gunst, Zsuzsa L. Nagy, *et al.*, *Magyar történelmi kronológia* [Chronology of Hungarian History] (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó [Textbook Publisher], 1987).

<sup>6</sup> George Orwell, *1984* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949), p. 35.

<sup>7</sup> For providing me with the 8th grade and 12th grade textbook chapters, I am very grateful to Pirooska Nagy, teacher of the American International School of Budapest. See also, Béla Csiszér and Gusztáv Sári, *Történelem az általános iskolák 8. osztálya számára* [History for the 8th Grade of the Public Schools] (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1966), pp. 191-193, 205. Subsequent editions were published in 1968, in 1973 (see pp. 28-30, 37), and in 1983 (see pp. 131-133).

<sup>8</sup> György Ránki, *Történelem az általános gimnáziumok IV. osztálya számára* [History for the General High Schools' IV th. {12 th} Grade] (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1960), p. 265. Subsequent editions by various authors were published in 1961 (see pp. 77-279, 285), in 1965 (see pp. 344-46, 358), in 1968 (see pp. 300-302, 317), in 1976 (see pp. 317-321, 333), and in 1983 (see pp. 87-90, 223).

<sup>9</sup> S. Balogh, J. Gergely, L. Izsák S. Jakab, P. Printz, I. Romsics, *Magyarország a 20 században* [Hungary in the 20th Century] (Budapest: Kossuth, 1985), 402-420.

<sup>10</sup> For making available Central Statistical Office and Ministry of Education statistical data to me, I am very grateful to Erzsébet Vizvári of the Ministry of Education, Budapest, Hungary.

<sup>11</sup> Marcell Jankovics, "Jó magyarnak lenni" [It is Good to be Hungarian], *Új Horizont* (New Horizon), Veszprém, 34, 1 (2006): 4.

<sup>12</sup> George Santayana, *The Life of Reason*, Vol. 1., 1905.

**Review Article:**

**A Modern-Day Antigone:  
The Life and Times of Júlia Rajk**

**Judith Szapor**

Andrea Pető, *Rajk Júlia* (Budapest: Balassi 2001). 275 pages. ISBN 963506-423-3, ISSN 1586-3344.<sup>1</sup>

**In one of the** ironic twists with which Hungarian history is so abundantly endowed, the history of the Hungarian 1956 would be forever linked with László Rajk whose reburial on October 6, 1956 marked the unofficial beginning of the revolution. Ironic for, had he lived and not been executed seven years earlier in the eponymous show trial, it is unlikely Rajk himself would have become a member of the reform Communist group formed around Imre Nagy and played a part in the revolution. Rajk had emerged in 1945 as the first among the non-Muscovites (those who lived through the war in Hungary or abroad as opposed to those in Soviet exile) of Hungarian Communists, with a stellar record of arrests, torture, and jail by both Horthy's police and the Arrow Cross, participation in the Spanish Civil War and the Hungarian resistance. He went on to serve in a series of high offices: as secretary of the Budapest party committee, deputy of Rákosi, the party secretary, minister of the Interior from March 1946 and minister of Foreign Affairs from August 1948. As minister of the Communist-controlled Ministry of Interior he was directly responsible for the annihilation of democratic and religious organizations and, ominously, the first show trials, against leaders of the opposition parties; he was also involved in the widespread electoral abuses (the so-called "blue slips" affair) during the August 1947 elections. Despite all this, he was by far the most popular Communist leader, a popularity earned as much by his charismatic good looks and oratorical gifts as by his openly uncompromising stance reinforced by genuine credibility.

If Rajk's trial and fate came to symbolize the worst excesses of Rákosi's regime, his 1955 "rehabilitation" (agreed to by Rákosi only under Soviet pressure), the official admission that the charges and confessions had been false, contributed to a collective crisis of conscience. The reburial of Rajk and his three co-accused, attended by a quarter of a million people, let

free flow to a massive outpouring of solidarity, guilt, and anger, and served as the prelude of the revolution, to erupt in little more than two weeks. The irony, however, was not lost on contemporaries; it was eloquently expressed by an old comrade, himself recently freed from Rákosi's prison who wryly remarked: "Poor Laci, were he alive today, he would surely have the troops fire at us."

One could argue that Rajk's posthumous reputation and his likely position vis-à-vis the 1956 revolution are not only hypothetical but also irrelevant in this context, given that the subject of Andrea Pető's biography is not Rajk himself but his widow, Júlia. Conversely, the argument could be made that Júlia Rajk (1914-1981) is a legitimate subject of a biography and historians' interest only in-so-far as her association with László Rajk (1909-1949) went, the five years during which she was his partner in the underground Communist movement and prison, from September 1944, and his wife from July 1945. (Counting the years of occasional contact in the underground movement, their acquaintance lasted a slightly longer eight years, still only a fraction of her life.) These arguments are very much at the heart of the book, equally rich in biographical detail and theoretical insight, and the author devotes considerable attention to addressing them. Andrea Pető, professor at the Gender Studies Department of Budapest's Central European University, is exceptionally well equipped to do so as she is not only among the pioneers of women's and gender history in Hungary but is also amply published in several areas that cut across Júlia Rajk's life. In previous articles and a monograph, she covered the history of the women's associations after 1945 and their takeover by the Communist MNDSZ (the Democratic Organization of Hungarian Women in which Mrs. Rajk served as secretary and president),<sup>2</sup> and wrote on gender and spousal relations in the Communist party.<sup>3</sup> In these as in more recent works, she has displayed a passionate interest in the ways, often mitigated by gender, in which historians and the public shape historical memory.

In the introduction, Pető elaborates on the methodological pitfalls of writing woman's biography in general and the specific challenges she faced as the biographer of Júlia Rajk who seemed to fit the conservative template prescribing a supporting role for women in politics: after all, she gained a public profile and political office as Rajk's wife and was arrested and jailed as his wife. And, from the moment of her release in 1954 until the end, Júlia devoted her life to the fight to clear Rajk's name and restore his legacy. Pető also describes the difficulties in finding documentary sources (destroyed, still not accessible, or of dubious value) and dealing with memoirs and interviews of contemporaries (distorted by personal and political considerations), commonly experienced by scholars of such recent period. Not even Júlia's own interviews and written testimonies would be spared scrutiny as, shaped by her self-assumed role as an incorruptible witness, set to correct the lies,

falsifications and manipulations of official history, they were still not immune to the human impulse of determining one's own legacy.

The biography is built around the seeming paradox that informed Júlia Rajk's life: the conscious decision on the one hand to fulfil the traditional role of the "nation's widow" and, on the other, her consistent efforts to acquire a name and public role "of her own." Pető highlights the significant connection between names and public roles for women by structuring her chapters around Júlia's names, from her maiden name, Júlia Földi to Mrs. Rajk, to the only half-ironic "the nation's widow" to the final Júlia Rajk or, simply, "the Júlia," who became an institution. (She also describes the authorities' effort to erase her husband's memory by taking away his and her name and assigning her a different name, during and even after her incarceration.) Júlia's greatest success in her role as the "nation's widow" was to achieve a public funeral for her husband and his co-accused, executed and buried in secret seven years earlier.<sup>4</sup> Pető extensively documents this achievement, describing the traits — the relentless energy, the unusual frankness, the refusal to lie and make nice with the party officials she considered her husband's murderers — that became Júlia's hallmark, mastered in later decades. To the high-level party functionaries, accustomed to the lizard-like servility of the Rákosi years, she represented a force of nature they were unable to handle; and the picture of Júlia Rajk, standing at the grave of her husband, holding the hand of their young son, taken from her as an infant, was reproduced in the Western press, to become one of the iconic images of 1956.

Júlia Rajk chose to remain a widow for life: in that sense, her personal life as a woman came to an end. But other aspects of her personal life, most importantly as a mother, did not end and neither does the biography; and it makes an emphatic point of erasing the lines between the personal and the public in a life that would be spent maintaining communities and building informal institutions, delicately balanced between the officially tolerated and repressed. Regardless of what her husband would have done, Júlia Rajk went on to join the group of reform Communists around Imre Nagy. Following the Soviet invasion in November 1956, she shared their Romanian exile, acting as the group's unofficial leader after the removal of the men and, on her return, she became a bastion of solidarity and the go-to person during the worst years of repression. The political and diplomatic history of these events has finally come to light, due mostly to the efforts of the Institute of the History of 1956 in the last nearly two decades.<sup>5</sup> Some of the main figures of the group, among them Losonczy and Nagy, received a full-length biographical treatment.<sup>6</sup> Pető contributes to this scholarship in unexpected ways, by examining the everyday challenges, family and group dynamics, and the personal, political, and cultural roots of the values that affected the individuals and the group during the post-1956 terror and the following years.

She leaves no doubt that Júlia Rajk had always remained a Communist but one who lived by her own interpretation of Communist principles: loyalty, integrity, and solidarity with the underdog. This makes the last chapter, describing the last two decades of Júlia Rajk's life particularly rewarding: it was in these years, coinciding with the milder period of Kádár's "enlightened dictatorship," that Júlia came out of the shadow of her husband, all the while keeping up the fight to honour his name and legacy. Despite the political differences with her son, prominent in the democratic opposition, she took a stand for the rights of dissidents. In the famous 1978 episode of the "three widows," Júlia attended the trial of the dissident writer Miklós Haraszti, lending him support by demonstratively sitting in the first row with Ilona Duczynska (Karl Polányi's widow) and Katinka Andrassy (the widow of Mihály Károlyi); all, remarks Pető, women with a name "of their own." Her other achievements included the first Western-type shelter in Hungary for abandoned dogs, another joint project with Katinka Andrassy and her informal travel organization for friends, "Júlia Tours;" perhaps less obviously significant but nevertheless important informal institutions that contributed to the building of a sorely missing civil society.

Particularly enlightening is Pető's description of the *modus operandi* of Júlia in the last chapter, titled "The two souls of Julia" (an expression borrowed from György Litván), especially for readers interested in the subtle ways the Kádár-regime co-opted the majority of Hungarian society, an even co-existed with members of the political opposition. Júlia had no qualms about accepting the privileges — the best available medical care, travels to the West, multiple yearly holidays — granted to the party elite and extended to "victims of Stalinist persecution." She realized early on — a fact that does not diminish her personal courage — that, as Rajk's widow, she was untouchable. Nobody would dare to arrest her or, for that matter, her son, whose downtown apartment served as the "*samizdat* boutique" of the opposition from the 1970s. She also exploited the unspoken but widely whispered personal responsibility of Kádár in her husband's fate and used her personal connections to old comrades, still in power, to claim her husband a place in the official party history, on a street sign, in the pantheon of the Communist martyrs, in the name of a school and a university residence. Annoying officials to no end, she took up the cases of the persecuted, friends or not, to help them get a job, a passport, an apartment, a university placement unjustly denied.

The personal arch, reminiscent of Greek tragedies, from Rajk to Kádár and from Kádár to Nagy came full circle in June 1989 at yet another reburial, of Imre Nagy, betrayed, kidnapped, tried and executed under Kádár's leadership. The ceremony, witnessed by hundreds of thousands in person and broadcast around the world from Budapest's Heroes' Square, became the unofficial beginning of yet another revolutionary change, Hungary's return to democratic government. The honour guard, led by Nagy's daughter and surviving members of Nagy's circle stood under the columns of the venerable

Műcsarnok (Palace of Art), draped in stark black and transformed into a stage of historical proportions by a young set designer, László Rajk.

Júlia Rajk died of cancer in 1981, long before the June 1989 ceremony on Heroes' Square, an event she no doubt would have welcomed wholeheartedly. Two more years later, in 1991, her husband's name was removed from the street named after him and reversed to Pannónia Street, an event that most likely would have devastated her. And so the endless battle for history and historical legacy continues, providing instant lessons in the ways in which we shape our collective memory. As the recent 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the Hungarian 1956 so clearly demonstrated, this process is far from complete and the biography of this remarkable woman represents an important step in the process of interpreting these still highly contested events of Hungarian history. The book is not without flaws: while it is bursting at the seams with details of political and personal history, astute observation, wit, and theoretical and methodological insight, a firmer editorial hand could have helped to mould these strands together more seamlessly. Signs of careful editing include useful biographical notes and a chronology although a few names and events could have benefited from a short introduction or context, even for readers familiar with the recent history of Hungary.

All in all, the book is an important contribution to our understanding of the role of individuals and communities in the fight for the right to remember, to retake and own their collective memory. Finally, it demonstrates the ways in which we create myths, demolish false idols, and uphold universal human values against the forces of tyranny and political expediency, just like the heroine of Sophocles's play, Antigone, and her unlikely modern-day follower, Júlia Rajk did.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The volume was published in the Feminism and History series. A German edition was recently published, under the title *Geschlecht, Politik und Stalinismus in Ungarn. Eine Biographie von Júlia Rajk*. Studien zur Geschichte Ungarns, Bd. 12. Gabriele Schäfer Verlag, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Her research is summarized in Pető Andrea, *Nőhistóriák. A politizáló nők történetéből, 1945-1951* (Budapest: Seneca, 1998); the work was also published in English: *Women in Hungarian Politics, 1945-1951* (Boulder, Co.: East European Monographs, distributed by Columbia University Press, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, chapters 8 and 9.

<sup>4</sup> The best source on the circumstances leading to Rajk's funeral remains, to this day, the memoir of Béla Szász, published in English as *Volunteers For the Gallows: Anatomy of a Show-Trial* (translated by Kathleen Szász, London: Chatto and Windus 1971.) Szász was a co-accused in the Rajk trial, and the only one who refused to sign a confession or testify against Rajk. At Júlia's request, he gave a short

speech at the funeral. Szász also describes in detail Júlia's fight for the funeral, characterizing her determination as one that "put men to shame."

<sup>5</sup> A full list of the publications of the Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution can be found on the Institute's web site: [www.rev.hu](http://www.rev.hu).

<sup>6</sup> György Kövér, *Losonczy Géza 1917-1957* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1998) and János M. Rainer, *Nagy Imre. Politikai életrajz, vol. 1: 1896-1953, vol. 2: 1953-1958* (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1996 and 1999).



## **PART II**

# **The Revolution, the Refugees and Canada — in 1956 and After: An Introduction**

**Nándor Dreisziger**

Perhaps it is appropriate for a journal edited in Canada to devote a large part of one of its issues to the Canadian circumstances and consequences of the events of 1956 in Hungary. We wish to accomplish this in Part II of our present volume, which contains some half-dozen studies.

Setting the scene is my own paper dealing with the Canadian decision, made in late-November 1956, to admit a large number of the Hungarian refugees to the country. The main question the paper tries to answer is why the Canadian government of the times, after hesitations and delays, reacted with such unprecedented generosity to the issue of the admission of refugees. It suggests that a number of factors were involved: the robust health of the Canadian economy, the greatly improved image of Hungarians in the country, the wide-spread public sympathy generated towards Hungarians by television coverage of the events in Hungary and at the Austrian border, and — above all — the fact that Canada's politicians were preparing for a federal election in 1957. The paper also explains how Canada's Suez crisis contributed to a decision by the government in Ottawa to open Canada's doors wide to the refugees. An appendix to this paper contains the report of the Honourable John Yaremko about his tour of Austria — and its camps for Hungarian refugees — in the late fall and early winter of 1956.

The next paper in this section of the volume is also a document, an eye-witness account dating from the time. This is Professor Audrey Wipper's report on the efforts of Toronto's Hungarian community to help first the people of Hungary and eventually the refugees with a fund-raising drive. The drive was started by the members of the community who had neither the time nor the expertise to conduct it properly. The result was frenzied activity — and a great deal of chaos. Eventually professional fund-raisers took over and completed the task.

The next three papers deal with some of the long-term consequences of the coming of the refugees. In the first one of these University of Ottawa doctoral candidate Christopher Adam examines the way the Kádár regime in

Hungary looked upon the refugees in Canada in particular, and the whole expatriate Hungarian community in the country in general. Having decided that such communities constituted a danger to its interests, the regime set out to spy on their activities and leaders. In a unique paper based on research in contemporary Hungarian intelligence files, the author outlines this sordid story which few Hungarian Canadians — or as a matter of fact, Canadians — have any knowledge of.

The next paper deals with the life-time achievements of those among the refugees who became entrepreneurs. Mrs. Éva Tömöry, a doctoral candidate in business administration at the University of Pécs in Hungary, examines their story and tries to explain why among the Hungarian refugees there was greater propensity to undertake business ventures than has been the case among some other refugees to Canada, or in fact among Hungarian immigrants who came to the country at other times. In seeking answers to her questions she finds certain parallels with refugees who had fled Fidel Castro's communist Cuba.

In this section's last paper Márta Mihály, a 1956 refugee herself, reminisces about coming to Canada, being a student at the Sopron School of Forestry of the University of British Columbia, and about the legacy of the Soproners and their more nature-friendly attitudes to silviculture.

## **The Biggest Welcome Ever: the Toronto Tories, the Ottawa Liberals, and the Admission of Hungarian Refugees to Canada in 1956**

**Nándor Dreisziger**

**The coming of the refugees** of the Hungarian Revolution to Canada in 1956-57 has been called an “unprecedented” event in the annals of Canadian immigration history.<sup>1</sup> It was unrivalled above all because at no time in the country's past did so many refugees come in such a short time. The uniqueness of this event was the result of vigorous steps taken by Canadian Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent's Liberal government at the end of November, 1956, to hasten the movement of Hungarian refugees to Canada. These measures were unparalleled in the history of Canadian immigration policies. They placed no limit on the number of people who could be accepted. They involved a dramatic relaxation of immigration regulations in order to facilitate the speedy admission of thousands of applicants. And they provided free transport for everyone who came. The extraordinary generosity of these measures justifies the calling of the welcome extended to the Hungarian 56-ers the “biggest ever” given to any large group of newcomers to Canada.

Ever since 1956 historians have been asking what conditions made possible such a “big welcome” for the Hungarian refugees? The answers given to this question have varied. Most authors point to the outpouring of sympathy for Hungary and Hungarians during and immediately after the Revolution in Hungary. According to Professor Gerald Dirks of Brock University for example, this sympathy translated into enough political pressure to bring Ottawa around to a policy of vigorous refugee admission.<sup>2</sup> This view is shared by Valerie Knowles, the author of a survey of Canadian immigration and immigration policies from the mid-16th to the late 20th century.<sup>3</sup> “Humanitarianism” has also been identified as being one of the driving forces behind Canada's 1956 “Hungarian refugee policy” by Howard Adelman, a one-time Director of York University's Centre for Refugee Studies. Adelman, however, listed other factors that in his opinion also contributed to the Canadian decision favouring a generous admission policy: the yearning to reinforce the nation's “self-identity as European” and the desire

to further Canada's interests "both in terms of helping our friends and embarrassing our enemies."<sup>4</sup>

While not disputing the importance of such factors as a sympathetic Canadian public in Ottawa's decision to bring a great number of refugees to Canada, some historians stress the role that individual politicians played in the matter. Greg Donaghy and Michael Stevenson, students of post-World War II Canadian foreign policies, point to Lester ["Mike"] B. Pearson, the Secretary for External Affairs in 1956, as being the man behind Canada's decision to implement a policy of generous refugee admission.<sup>5</sup> Still others, especially Hungarian Canadians, identify Pearson's colleague in the Cabinet, Minister of Immigration and Citizenship Jack W. Pickersgill, as the principal author of the vigorous steps the Ottawa government had taken to bring Hungarian refugees to Canada.<sup>6</sup>

It is not the aim of this study to dispute any of the above interpretations. This paper hopes to take a fresh look at the evidence and offer a more nuanced explanation of the actions of the country's political elite in the fall of 1956 in regard to the issue of refugee admittance. It will suggest that, in addition to the humanitarian inclinations of the Canadian population and certain Canadian public figures, the most important consideration in this matter was political expediency — and it had to do with the fact that 1957 was to be an election year in Canada.

Besides the political situation in Canada in the fall of 1956 there were of course larger, mainly long-term developments that favoured the adoption of a policy of generous refugee admittance by the Ottawa government. These included the economic prosperity Canada had enjoyed since the end of World War II, the long-standing Canadian tradition to welcome immigrants from other lands, an auspicious change in the image that Hungarians had in the country, as well as several fortuitous political events that had taken place in the years or months before the fall of 1956.

## **Post-War Canada**

By the end of World War II the United States had become the predominant economic power in the world. Japan, Germany, France and Italy lay in ruins and Russia's industrial heartland had been devastated. Britain was exhausted economically, while "the American mainland," as British historian Arthur Marwick pointed out, suffered "no bomb attacks." In fact, as Marwick put it, "far from fighting a battle for survival [as did the British], the Americans found themselves between 1940 and 1945 enjoying a higher standard of living than ever before."<sup>7</sup> The health of the American economy in general and this high standard of living in particular had a positive impact on the post-war economic situation in Canada. It manifested itself above all in massive

American investment in the country as US companies ploughed large funds into Canadian ventures especially in resource industries.<sup>8</sup>

Post-war prosperity in Canada also had home-grown roots. Canadians had deferred "big ticket" purchases throughout the war, in fact in many cases from the darkest days of the Great Depression. With the Depression and the war over, and industry returning to civilian production, elevated levels of consumer spending propelled the Canadian economy to function in high gear. The seeds of prosperity had been planted during the war. The high unemployment that had characterized the Depression years had disappeared by 1942 and soon gave way to labour shortages especially in the country's war industries. Most workers could put in overtime to their hearts' content. Personal savings had increased and were often not touched till the war's end. During the war Canada's manufacturing sector had re-tooled for war production with the latest in machinery and technology. At war's end, much of this potential was put in the service of manufacturing for the civilian market.

But there was still another reason why World War II was not followed by an economic recession. This was the fact that during the war the Canadian government made extensive plans for assuring the continuation of wartime prosperity. Planning for the post-war economy was so extensive that one historian of the times, Donald Creighton, entitled a chapter in his book dealing with the subject "The Coming of the Planners."<sup>9</sup> Another historian, David Slater, added that these undertakings by the government in Ottawa represented "the first real Canadian adaptations of Keynesian economic stabilization strategies..."<sup>10</sup> To a large extent then, post-war prosperity in Canada had been planned, but it took place in a favourable internal and external (i.e. North American) economic environment.

The First World War had been followed by a prolonged recession but no such event came after the Second. The economic down-turn of the autumn of 1955 was short-lived and its quick passing further demonstrated that post-war prosperity was here to stay. Not surprisingly under the circumstances, consumer confidence in the country remained high and living standards continued to increase, as did employment. The expanded labour market created a trend toward the increased growth of Canada's manufacturing centres, a trend that had been already evident throughout much of the war. The labour shortages boosted the demand for more vigorous immigration policies while the arrival of newcomers served to further intensify consumer spending. But before we discuss immigration, we must note still another post-1945 Canadian phenomenon that was both a sign of a healthy economy and a promoter of economic activity: the advent of the famous post-war "baby boom."

It all started in 1945. The marriages and births that Canadians had postponed during the war, in fact already during the Great Depression, began happening. In 1946 for example there were 33,000 more weddings than there had been two years earlier. Canada's birth rate that had hit a low point in the

mid-1930s now started a swift ascent. In 1947 it reached a remarkable rate of 28.9 births per thousand, and this extraordinary birth rate was not a flash-in-the-pan as it continued at a high level for years. It was higher than that of any industrialized nation on the planet.<sup>11</sup> More important from the point of view of our inquiry was the fact that immigration also grew in the post-war period. By the early 1950s the number of immigrants had reached new highs. In 1951 for example, 194,391 newcomers came to the country.<sup>12</sup>

### **Canada as a Land of Immigrants**

Most readers need not be reminded that Canada was a nation of immigrants and that it had almost always been more of a receiver of population than a source of migrants going to other places. The volume of immigration to this land, however, always had its ebb and flow. This had been the situation even during the French regime. The late 1660s and early 1670s, the time when Canada was being converted from a commercial outpost of France to one of its important royal colonies, witnessed great efforts at boosting the colony's population. This situation did not last long and these efforts soon came to a virtual end when the French government's, more precisely Louis XIV's attention was diverted to European wars. Another time of great influx of newcomers came two short decades after the British conquest of Canada when the land saw the coming of the Loyalists, the refugees of the War of American Independence. This immigration gave rise to a bi-racial Canada, one that in time would become increasingly English everywhere except in the regions of original French settlement. Still another influx came, again mainly of English-speakers, after the Napoleonic Wars. And then in the late 1840s came the victims of the famine in Ireland, adding economic refugees to the mainly political ones who had arrived in the wake of the above-mentioned wars.

Immigration continued during the 1850s. In the following decade began — one might say accelerated — the process of Canada becoming a self-governing colony of Great Britain. Soon thereafter started the expansion of a newly-established Dominion of Canada across the continent. The acquisition of the vast lands of much of the Canadian West, formerly administered by the Hudson's Bay Company, did not immediately result in a large influx of settlers. It wasn't till the last years of the century — after the prolonged economic recession of the 1870s, 1880s, and the early 1890s, and the filling-up of the American prairies south of the border — that settlers began to pour into the Canadian West, a process that was halted only by the outbreak of the First World War.

The war had more than a temporary impact on Canadian immigration. Before the war the idea had taken root that Canada needed only agricultural newcomers. With the war came the belief that those newcomers should come only from friendly countries, above all Great Britain. Furthermore, the conflict

was followed by an economic downturn which meant that for a few years no immigrants were seen as needed, no matter where they wanted to come from. Nevertheless, with the advent of better times in 1924, the need for labour especially in the Canadian West became so great that immigrants were once again encouraged to come, even from the former enemy lands of Central and Eastern Europe.

The Great Depression saw Canada's gates shut once more. The gates remained closed during the Second World War, even though there were thousands of people who were desperate to leave a Europe increasingly dominated by Nazi Germany and threatened by renewed conflict. With war's end many in Canada expected immigration not to resume soon, as had been the case after the First World War. But, as we have seen, the situation in Canada after 1945 was greatly different from what it had been after 1918, and immigration resumed almost immediately. Most of the immigrants coming to Canada after the war's end came from the British Isles. Britain had been economically exhausted by the war and her living standards were low. Britons were anxious to exchange the poverty in their country for the relative affluence of Canada. There were also Central Europeans coming, people displaced by the war. Of these, Canada initially took only a rather small number, some 123,000, mainly manual labourers who were perceived to be in demand by Canada's resource industries and manufacturers.<sup>13</sup>

Admitting Displaced Persons from Western European refugee camps was one matter, but welcoming refugees from Communist rule in Eastern Europe was another.<sup>14</sup> Canada's security establishment, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the officials in the Immigration Department charged with protecting national security, had suspicions about people who were escaping communist rule that had been imposed by the Soviets in the territories they had occupied at the end of the Second World War. Could these people be sympathizers of the new socialist order? Or, worse still, could they be agents of the Soviets? These suspicions were deep-seeded and were fed by such phenomena as the McCarthy witch-hunts in the United States — that saw the questioning the loyalty of such people as the writer Graham Greene and actor Charlie Chaplin.

Throughout the early Cold War years Canadian security personnel continued to have reservations about admitting refugees from Communist countries. Reflecting these concerns about "national security" were the strict guidelines regarding the processing of would-be newcomers that resulted in the Canadian admission process of the times being heavy on red-tape and short on speedy decisions.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, the revolution in Hungary in 1956 and the coming of the Hungarian refugees served to diminish the reservations about refugees from Communist countries.

Conditions in post-war Canada then — economic prosperity, high employment, population growth, the resumption of immigration — favoured the generous admission of refugees in 1956. The fear of communist

sympathizers and agents coming, somewhat blunted these prospects. But what might have reduced them even more in the case of the refugees from Hungary was negative Canadian public opinion about Hungarians.

### The Image of Hungarians in Canada

For much of the first half of the twentieth century the image of Hungarians in Canada had been an unfavourable one. East European immigrants in general had a negative image in the country. They were often referred to as “men in sheepskin coats” and were considered uncouth and poorly educated. Added to this perception was the fact that Hungarians were deemed enemy aliens in both World War I and World War II. There had been a time in North America when Hungary and the Magyars had a positive image. This was after the 1848-49 War of Independence against Austria when the Hungarians, and especially their leader Lajos Kossuth, were seen as people who had fought for freedom against the despotic monarchical rule of the Habsburg prince Francis-Joseph aided by the even more despotic Tsar Nicholas I of Russia. The refugees of that war who had made it to North America were men of soldierly bearing — often with a good knowledge of English and even some aristocratic charisma. Alas, for Hungarians, this image barely survived the nineteenth century. By the turn of the new century, the Hungarian image in the United States, and soon afterwards also in Canada, had become one of simple peasants who had come to the New World to take jobs from North Americans, often in the capacity of strike-breakers. Instead of dashing gentlemen-officers, the new immigrants became seen as backward labourers, “bohunks” as they were often called especially south of the border.<sup>16</sup>

Anti-immigrant sentiments and xenophobia were rampant in the Canada of the times. They were openly proclaimed even by some politicians. Such attitudes got a boost in both World War I and II as a result of anti-enemy propaganda. They began abating in Canada in the late 1940s, but it was not till decades later that multiculturalism became accepted and cultural diversity became tolerated. The fact that many of the post-World War II newcomers from Hungary were educated people also helped to improve their image.

The image of Hungarians was also linked to the image that Hungary enjoyed abroad. This image was quite favourable throughout the second half of the nineteenth century but began declining early during the twentieth. Rather than being seen as an upholder of freedoms the Hungary of the times began to be viewed as an “oppressor” of minorities. The transformation coincided with a revolution in European international relations manifested by the rise of an *entente* first between France and Russia and then between these powers and Britain.<sup>17</sup> Not surprisingly, Hungary's reputation declined further during the First World War. In the interwar years Hungary's image suffered even more. The war had been followed by revolutions in Hungary, first by



moderate leftists and then by social democrats and communists. When the "old order" was restored, some two hundred thousand people who had participated in the revolutions or sympathised with their aims left Hungary. In emigration many of these people denounced the interwar Hungarian regime in the international media, contributing to the growing negative image of Hungary.<sup>18</sup> Not surprisingly under these circumstances, Hungary's reputation reached its nadir during and immediately after World War II when the country was viewed in the West, as well as the East, as "Hitler's last ally".<sup>19</sup>

The image of Hungary and Hungarians in the West, including Canada, underwent a most dramatic transformation in the fall of 1956. By mid-November, the events in Budapest had been filling the TV screens of Canadian viewers for weeks. The revolution was the first international happening that had such extensive exposure throughout Canada as well as the entire Western world. The images of poorly armed youths fighting Soviet tanks, of buildings in ruin, and then of frightened civilians carrying their children and meagre belongings across Hungary's border with Austria created great compassion for the Revolution's victims. That they had the courage of standing up against the vast "evil empire" of the Soviets, made them objects of admiration. From former enemies, Hungarians became allies in the fight against communism. The fact that the West had not been able to help the freedom fighters in their struggle for liberty made the Western public, including Canada's, all the more eager to help the refugees. Never before — or since — had the image of Hungarians been so positive. Not surprisingly this swelling of public sympathy created an atmosphere in which the Canadian government found it easier to opt for a policy of generous admittance rather than one that denied entry to the majority of refugees.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Political Scene in Canada Prior to the Autumn of 1956**

In the foregoing discussion of post-war Canada we have established that the economic situation in the country had created a climate favourable to the admission of new groups of immigrants. The prosperity and growth Canada was experiencing made it difficult for anyone to question the capacity of the country to absorb additional people. We have also seen that the image of Hungarians in particular had improved dramatically in October and November of 1956. Next we have to examine the political situation in Canada and its potential to affect governmental decision-making on the issue of the admission of a large group of refugees in response to a refugee crisis in Europe.

In the fall of 1956 the Liberal Party of Canada was looking forward to the expected 1957 elections and to their re-election for an unprecedented sixth time in a row. Four years earlier the Liberals did not have a particularly difficult time retaining power. In 1953 the Ontario Tory Party did not support

the federal Conservatives led by former Premier of Ontario George Drew. In November of 1956 however, there was no evidence that this situation would repeat itself. The amicable relationship that Prime Minister St. Laurent had with Ontario Premier Leslie M. Frost during the negotiations of the US-Canada St. Lawrence Seaway Project was fading from memory. The Trans Canada Pipeline project, and especially, the debate about it in the House of Commons in the spring of 1956, instead of gaining popularity for the Liberals, strengthened the position of the opposition parties. Furthermore, there had been a clash between Premier Frost and Jack Pickersgill, St. Laurent's right-hand man in the cabinet, over the planned introduction of hospitalization insurance in Canada. The Toronto Conservative newspaper *Globe and Mail* had even accused Pickersgill of calling for a "regime change" in Toronto, a serious allegation that Pickersgill denied;<sup>21</sup> nevertheless, the affair embittered relations between the two men — they would clash again in November of 1956 over the question of the admission of Hungarian refugees.

It was under these circumstances that the crises of the fall of 1956, the revolt against Soviet rule in Hungary and soon afterwards the Anglo-French-Israeli attack on Egypt, confronted Canada. The news of the Hungarian Revolution caused few ripples in Ottawa. As Donaghy tells us, some Canadian diplomats worried that any Canadian condemnation of Soviet actions would endanger carefully-built good relations between Canada and third world countries, especially the India of Jawaharlal Nehru.<sup>22</sup> The Suez Crisis had a far worse impact on the governing Liberals. In siding with the United States (and, coincidentally, the USSR) on this issue, the Canadian government offended the pro-British sentiments of a large section of Canada's Anglophone population (and probably also the country's never too numerous pro-French Francophone residents). The Tories tried to make much mileage of this "perfidy". Ottawa's actions probably surprised no foreign policy expert, but they seemed to have driven still another nail into the coffin of the Liberals' re-election expectations. No wonder they were very keen on finding a solution to the crisis.

Less than two weeks later, when the Suez Crisis seemed almost under control (but not forgotten by many Anglo-Canadians), another crisis began surfacing in Ottawa. It was the question of what to do with the masses of Hungarian refugees who started to pour into Austria after their uprising had been crushed by the Soviets. The government could not afford to be on the wrong side of public opinion on still another policy issue.

The Liberal Government in Ottawa was slow to react to this latest crisis. On the 6th of November, Minister of Immigration Pickersgill announced that any Hungarian refugees wanting to immigrate to Canada would be given priority, but would have to meet all the requirements of the Immigration Act. This meant little, since large numbers of them could not be processed in a short time unless the government relaxed the complex rules governing admission to Canada. One Cabinet colleague of Pickersgill who

realized this problem was Secretary of State for External Affairs Pearson. He told the Minister of Immigration in a letter that Canada should adopt "a more liberal policy". "[I]f we stick rigidly" he continued, "to the usual health and job training requirements, Canada's offer to give priority will seem a rather meagre one..." Pearson concluded his letter by saying "I need not emphasize the domestic and international political desirability of making it clear that Canada is taking an unselfish interest in the plight of the Hungarian refugees..."<sup>23</sup> In Ottawa, however, nothing was done in response to Pearson's plea. Five days after Pearson's letter, Pickersgill was still telling his Cabinet colleagues that Canada should be admitting only those refugees "who could take employment or who could be looked after by others,"<sup>24</sup> and ten days later an External Affairs official, Jules Léger (a future Governor-General of Canada), could complain that Pickersgill had still not replied to Pearson's letter.<sup>25</sup> Within the next fortnight, however, events would take place in the country, in particular in Ontario, that would force the hand of the Liberal government to take decisive action.

### **Hungary and Hungarians in the Ontario Media**

During the middle of November the crisis in Austria continued to grow. In the meantime it continued to attract attention in Canada where tens of thousands of people were watching daily images of frightened and exhausted refugees, often with small children and minimum belongings, arriving at Austrian border stations. The situation also caught the attention of the Canadian media, in particular the influential Toronto conservative paper *The Globe and Mail* [hereafter the *Globe*].

The coverage of the subject of Hungary and Hungarians in 1956 by this paper started innocuously enough. In its October 25 issue, the *Globe's* editors reported on the events in Warsaw and Budapest and made a few comments. They observed that the USSR, the "self-proclaimed anti-colonist", had "no aversion to sending in tanks... when one of her numerous colonies [made] a bid for self-determination." They added that it was obvious that "the Soviet Empire has weak spots all around its periphery..."<sup>26</sup>

Two days later the paper's editors returned to the subject. They lamented the fact that the bid for self-determination by the Poles and Hungarians had not brought "an instant and passionate response from the capital of every free nation." They admitted that statements of sympathy had been issued by the American administration, but regretted that no such pronouncements have been issued in London and Paris. "Britain and France may feel..." they speculated "that their own colonial problems preclude them from denouncing Russia's bloody colonialism." Then they went on to criticize the silence they perceived in Ottawa: "Our Government is understood to have firm views on the subject of colonialism; was not this a time to express them?"

They also criticised the government of India, that “rarely misses an opportunity to attack the colonial policies [of the western powers],” yet have been “unmoved” by Soviet intervention in Hungary. And, the same went for the UN. Does it have to “wait for somebody to lodge an official protest? Can it not... speak on its own?” “There may be no way, without bringing on global war,” giving Poland and Hungary “physical support,” the editorial concluded, but “they surely deserve far greater moral support than they have been getting....”<sup>27</sup>

In the next two *Globe* editorials, entitled “Spam” and “The Yawn,” the paper returned to the subject on the 29th of October and the 3rd of November respectively. In the first of these the editors outlined that, according to American statements, Hungarians could not expect any direct help from the United States in their fight for liberty “the thing the West has consistently encouraged them to fight for...” but, the editorial went on quoting a speech US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had made in Texas, the US will give economic aid to Hungary once it manages to break with Russia. They won’t get help with their quest for freedom, the editorial concluded, but “under certain condition [Hungary] might have a tin of spam.” Five days later the paper’s editors turned to the subject of the Hungarian question and the United Nations. They noted that while the United States was not reluctant to denounce Anglo-French “imperialism” in the Middle East, it agreed to a postponement of the debate on Hungary. This approach, the editors concluded, allowed the Soviets “to steel a march — a march with armoured tanks into the suburbs of the Hungarian capital.”<sup>28</sup>

As the *Globe* had predicted, the Soviets stole a march and undertook to crush the Hungarian Revolution in the early hours of November 4th. During the next five days the paper’s editors returned to the subject twice. In their editorial of the 7th they discussed what possible steps the West should take in view of the Soviet refusal to consider a cease-fire in Hungary or even to allow a UN inspection team “to enter the brave land.” They felt that the extreme measure of expelling the Soviet Union warranted discussion under the circumstances.<sup>29</sup> Two days later in an editorial entitled “What About Hungary?” the paper’s editors found it ironic that the UN was “energetic” and “united” in confronting the issue of British and French intervention in Egypt, but not so in dealing with the Soviet Union in regards to Hungary. They also regretted that, unlike in the case of the crisis in the Middle East, there was no police force established “for the Hungarians.” The editors next went on to report on the opinions of the paper’s readers:

This newspaper has reason to think, from the many letters and telephone calls it has received, that the majority of its readers support the action of Britain and France. It is Russia’s action that angers and horrifies them. It is Russia’s action they want the UN to deal with. And the UN’s utter failure to deal with it is making them bitterly hostile to that wordy organization.

The paper next listed what had been done by ordinary citizens throughout the world against the Soviets: the attacks on communist party headquarters (Paris), on Russian embassies (Luxembourg, Denmark), the burning of Soviet flags and anti-Soviet demonstrations everywhere in the West.<sup>30</sup> Four days later the subject of the *Globe* editorials changed. From dealing with the question of Hungary, the paper turned its attention to the matter of Hungarian refugees streaming across the Hungarian-Austrian border. It deplored the decision of the federal government to take only 2,500 of the some 11,000 refugees who had crossed into Austria during the first half of November. It also regretted that the "Immigration Department" in Ottawa insisted that the refugees will have to meet all the regulations in order to qualify for admittance. The paper's editors predicted that Canadians "will be disgusted by Ottawa's cold, calculating attitude..." The Liberal Government should have "shown liberality" and admit all "young or old, sick or well, skilled or unskilled..." and should have met the "full cost of bringing them here..." The government should have made a "generous gesture" the *Globe* editorial concluded. "In failing to make it, the Liberal Government showed once again... that it is totally out of touch with the Canadian people."<sup>31</sup>

### **A Time for Decision: From "Codfish" to Generous Host**

During the course of the next ten days, the *Globe's* editorials dealt with the international situation. In the meantime the Government in Ottawa seemed to be doing nothing. By the second week of November the perceived inaction of the government had started receiving criticism especially from members of the opposition Conservative Party and more importantly, from the Tory establishment in Ontario. There the man of the hour was Premier Leslie Frost, the most powerful Tory politician in the country.<sup>32</sup>

Another prominent Tory in Toronto was John Yaremko. The son of poor Ukrainian immigrants, he had been a brilliant law student. He was enticed to enter politics to prove that the Tory party's elite was not composed entirely of WASP individuals.<sup>33</sup> Yaremko was a friend of Hungarians (he even tried to learn Magyar) and now he began urging Frost that the refugees be flown over in the manner former Ontario Premier George Drew had brought immigrants over from Britain in 1947.<sup>34</sup>

At about the same time the *Globe* returned to the subject of the Hungarian refugees and began its campaign for large-scale admission — combined with ever more vigorous denunciations of the Liberals' non-action in the matter. The paper's opening salvo in this renewed campaign came on the 24th, a Saturday. The editorial was entitled "Open Ontario's Doors". It began by denouncing the free world's reluctance to take the refugees fleeing Hungary as "inhuman" and said that Canada had "gone along with that

inhumanity." Canada's continued insistence that the refugees meet existing immigration requirements and provide assurances that they will not be a "charge on the public purse" the papers' editors called "shame." The "Government of Canada," they went on, "has displayed the ... generosity of a codfish;" and they continued:

We believe that [the people of Canada] want bold action on the refugees.... Believing that, we propose the Ontario Government rescue Ottawa from its hypocrisy.... We propose that Ontario charter all the aircraft and shipping necessary — and bring here, at its own expense, every Hungarian refugee who... wishes to come.... Let Ontario feed and house them initially,... Then let them filter into the lifestream of this wealthy and expanding Province.... Let the Ontario Government tear away every artificial barrier as the Hungarians tore at Russian tanks. Let it fling the door wide, wide open.<sup>35</sup>

Two days later the paper praised the government at Queen's Park for accepting the proposals to bring to Ontario, "at its own expense, every Hungarian refugee who... is willing to come." The *Globe* also announced that Premier Frost had instructed Major (retired) J. S. P. Armstrong, Ontario's Agent-General in London, England, to fly to Vienna to make arrangements. Next the paper's editors assured the readers that from the flood of letters they had received it was evident that the people of Ontario are anxious to receive the refugees and to give them "...the biggest welcome we ever gave anybody."<sup>36</sup>

The Tory establishment in Toronto had thrown down the gauntlet. From London, they dispatched their official agent, and from Toronto they were about to send to Austria Yaremko to lend prestige and credibility to their plans. The Liberals in Ottawa saw through the Queen's Park Tories' scheme and they were not about to be shamed into doing, at the bidding of their political opponents, what the Canadian public was expecting their politicians to do. As one Liberal official remarked about Ottawa's response to Premier Frost's challenge: "Jack [Pickersgill] pulled the carpet out from under [Frost]..."<sup>37</sup> and made sure that the initiative in admitting the Hungarians remained with his government. Indeed, when William M. Nickle, Ontario's Minister of Planning and Development, phoned Pickersgill informing him about the Ontario Government's plans for an air-lift, Pickersgill could tell him that the federal government had already "chartered all available aircraft".<sup>39</sup>

A few weeks earlier St. Laurent had tasked Pearson to tackle Canada's Suez crisis, now he assigned his friend and confidant Pickersgill to solve Canada's Hungarian refugee predicament. Accordingly, Pickersgill swung into action. On the 26th, the day the *Globe* reported the measures taken by Queen's Park, he announced before the re-convened House of Commons that Canada will admit every Hungarian refugee who wanted to come to Canada. The next

day a large meeting convened in Ottawa to discuss matters. It was attended by representatives of various government departments and agencies, provincial delegates, NGOs as well as leaders of the Hungarian community. At this meeting Pickersgill emphasized not so much what his government had done to accelerate the admission of refugees, but the tasks that would remain after they arrived, tasks with which the government needed all kinds of help, especially from the provinces and non-governmental agencies.<sup>40</sup> Then Pickersgill left the meeting to attend a session of the House of Commons.

The job of informing those in attendance about the steps the government had taken fell to Laval Fortier, the Deputy Minister of Immigration and Citizenship, and the meeting's chairman. "...the Department," Fortier began, "has endeavoured to simplify immigration procedures and eliminate all but the most necessary paper work..." In addition, "[s]taff had been added to the Immigration office in Vienna..." and measures had been taken to find "additional office space;" further, aircraft have been chartered and much space had been booked on passenger ships leaving Europe for Canada. Last but not least Fortier added, the Department had dispatched one of its high-ranking officials to the Austrian capital to expedite "high level decisions immediately."<sup>41</sup> Soon the government announced that it would go even further: Pickersgill himself would fly to Vienna to oversee the prompt processing of refugees.<sup>42</sup> Of course, another unstated purpose of the trip was to counteract the impression that only Queen's Park sent high-level delegations there. And, one more development came on that fateful day, Tuesday the 27th. Near the end of the meeting described above, it was reported that Pickersgill had made a public announcement that the "government will pay the cost of [the refugees'] transportation [to Canada]."<sup>43</sup> The news came late in the day and couldn't make the *Globe's* headlines the next morning. It did on the following day: "Free Passage for Refugees; Pickersgill Flying to Vienna" proclaimed the paper's front page in large print.<sup>44</sup>

In the closing days of November, 1956, Pickersgill had "thrown away the books" — the Canadian Immigration Act of 1952 allowed him to do so. He did so after weeks of seeming procrastination and governmental half-measures in the matter of the admission of Hungarian refugees. By taking dramatic action at this time, however, he and his government had pulled the rug from under the Toronto Tories' scheme to embarrass the Liberal administration in Ottawa. The rest, as they say, is history. Thousands of refugees were "processed" in December and many thousands followed in the next several months.

## **The Aftermath**

The business of admitting and settling the Hungarian refugees was not all smooth sailing from late November 1956 on. The war of words between the

two antagonists, instead of abating in early December, only escalated. Now it was the Liberals' turn to make the accusations. First came a salvo of charges by Pickersgill against the Toronto Tories, in particular against the delegations they had sent to Vienna. The minister's words were relayed to Canadians on the pages of the other Toronto mass-circulation paper, the *Toronto Daily Star* [hereafter: *The Star*], by Douglas Blanchard the paper's staff correspondent accompanying Pickersgill on his visit to Austria.

First, the minister accused the Toronto Conservatives of playing partisan politics. "There is no room for politics here" he asserted. "The situation is much too serious [and the] urgency is much too pressing." He was especially bitter about Ontario Agent-General Armstrong who had been to Vienna before Pickersgill arrived there. The *Star* reporter described the minister's criticisms of this "once-over-lightly visitor" whose "arrival in Vienna was announced by Premier Frost before he [Armstrong] had even left England." Pickersgill grumbled about Austrian officials becoming "bewildered" about just which visitor from Canada was speaking for her government: "To Austrians all Canadians are Canadians and they still can't grasp of the fact that various parts of Canada have various axes to grind."

Next the Minister of Immigration rebutted the accusations Armstrong had made after his "hasty tour" against the federal government's handling of the refugee crisis. Pickersgill went on:

The Ontario government has made a series of announcements about its intention of speeding the entry of Hungarian refugees. So far, however, the nearest thing to action that has been seen over here is Major Armstrong's visit. It was announced today that he is coming back to Vienna, this time bringing with him John Yaremko....

The *Star's* correspondent then concluded his report by saying that Pickersgill would leave Austria as soon as his job was accomplished because, in the minister's words, "outside visitors merely hamper the work of the... overworked staff....". Concerning the minister's accomplishments, the reporter had a glowing assessment. According to him, Pickersgill left "Austrian officials... breathless. The refugee situation has been transformed over one week-end."<sup>45</sup> The next day the *Star's* editors also commented on the subject:

This is no time for politics. Charges by the Ontario government's agent in England about the handling of the refugees have a partizan ring to them, considering his very short visit to the scene. It would be better for the provincial government to devote its energies to the task at hand....<sup>46</sup>

William Nickle, Ontario's minister of Planning and Development, sent a clipping of the *Star* article of the 4th to Premier Frost with the comment that



"Jack Pickersgill is rather critical of Mr. Armstrong." The minister added that he had instructed his officials not to give statements to the press regarding the Hungarian refugee situation before he drafted a statement, that he planned to show to Frost, "...so there will be no controversy develop between the Federal authorities and the Government of Ontario." No doubt, the debate was becoming embarrassing for the Tories and they now switched to "damage control".<sup>47</sup>

Damage control or not, by the second week of the month a more serious, new dispute had begun emerging between Ottawa and Queen's Park. It had to do with the defrayal of some of the costs involved in refugee resettlement. Interestingly, the Ontario provincial government that had been ready to "fly over" thousands of refugees at its own expense found the prospect of paying for some basic expenses incurred by the newcomers burdensome. The dispute was not resolved for months.<sup>48</sup>

Misunderstandings and squabbles between different levels of government were not the only source of problems after November, 1956. There were difficulties associated with the settlement and integration of the refugees. Perhaps the most serious among these had to do with the culture-shock many of them experienced after arrival in Canada. Hardships were often encountered especially by middle-aged and older persons, including the parents of the writer of these lines. Some refugees could repeat the complaint of a Hungarian immigrant of the 1920s who said in this connection that Canada gave newcomers from Hungary "material things" but little in the way of "spiritual solace".<sup>49</sup>

Many of those who experienced culture-shock found it especially difficult to accept the fact that in Canada of the 'fifties there existed no cradle-to-grave social safety net. There was no public health insurance, the state offered no help with finding employment, university students had to pay tuition fees, and so on. Some refugees came to regret their departure from Hungary. This is not surprising since many of them had no time to learn anything about Canada or even to mull over their decision to leave Hungary as they made this often in a day or less, or started toward the Austrian border simply because their friends had decided to do so. In this respect more problems were encountered with the refugees than with the members of any other wave of previous Hungarian arrivals.<sup>50</sup> In time, however, most of these difficulties were resolved.

## **Conclusions**

In November of 1956 the massive influx of Hungarian refugees into Austria developed first into an Austrian and then into an international crisis that affected all the countries of the Free World. The development soon began to have serious repercussions in Canada. The country's Liberal administration

was slow to react to this crisis. It tried to deflect public criticism of its seeming lack of concern with half measures. As late as the beginning of the Cabinet meeting of the 28th of November, Minister of Immigration Jack Pickersgill could tell his colleagues that "Canada was the only country which had not offered free passage to Hungarian refugees" who wanted to come to the country.<sup>51</sup>

Actually, Prime Minister St. Laurent's government had been staggering, one might say meandering toward a policy liberal refugee admission for some time before the last days of November. Manifestations of this trend were numerous. Certain members of the Liberal establishment were keen on such a policy. As has been mentioned, among the members of the Cabinet there was Pearson. Among the high-profile bureaucrats there was Jules Léger of the Department of External Affairs.<sup>52</sup> Certain plans and actions of the Liberals also pointed in this direction. The proposal to send Pickersgill to Austria emerged as early as the middle of the month. On the 22nd the Cabinet agreed to ask Parliament to increase the funds allotted for Hungarian relief (including the refugees) from the \$200,000 earmarked earlier to one million.<sup>53</sup> The next day the Cabinet agreed to speed up the flow of refugees by, among other things, the hiring of aircraft to bring them over from Europe.<sup>54</sup>

The crowning moves in this process, the agreement to bring here every refugee who wanted to come, and to provide free transport for them, however, were not made until the last days of the month, after it became obvious that if Ottawa did not act, Queen's Park would. But, in this jockeying for the higher moral ground, the Liberals were not to be outdone, hence the measures announced by Pickersgill and the government in the evening of the 27th and the following two days.<sup>55</sup> These measures resulted in Canada admitting more Hungarian 56-ers relative to its population than any other country in the Americas or Western Europe. They also assured that these Hungarian fugitives received the "biggest welcome" ever accorded to refugees by Canada. Lastly and more importantly, the measures taken at the time by the federal government assured that credit for all this would go not to the Toronto Tories but to the ruling Liberal administration in Ottawa.

At this point it might be worth asking what can be considered as the real historical catalyst of the "biggest welcome" that had been extended to the Hungarian refugees in the fall of 1956? If we had to answer this question in fifty words or less we could say that it was a political row between the Tory Party's Ontario branch and the leadership of the Liberal Party in Ottawa. It was more than the latter being spooked by the actions of the former. There was a meanness underlying the actions of both sides. First it was the Tories of Queen's Park who wanted to embarrass their federal counterparts. Then it was the latter who wanted to inflict political damage on their adversaries. If we want to reduce the conflict to personalities we might say that the catalyst of the events of late November was the by-product of enmity between Leslie Frost, the most powerful Tory politician in the country, and Jack Pickersgill,

arguably the second most powerful Liberal politician in Ottawa. Their clash produced, almost as an incidental side-effect, a chain of events that we can truly call the "biggest welcome" ever accorded to refugees in Canada's history.

In the way of further conclusions to this story of "the biggest welcome ever" we might ask who were its foremost beneficiaries? There can be little doubt that they were not the politicians involved. They were the some 38,000 fugitives of the events in Hungary in the fall of 1956 who ended up as newcomers to Canada.<sup>56</sup> They came to a country where they, or at least most of them, found political freedom and opportunities for economic advancement — as well as for personal fulfilment.

Another obvious beneficiary of the arrival of a great number of 1956 refugees was Hungarian-Canadian society. Despite the stresses the influx of thousands of Hungarians with their different attitudes and value systems had caused, the Hungarian-Canadian society that had pre-dated 1956 — many of whose communities were on the verge of complete cultural assimilation — was reinvigorated by the coming of the 56-ers.<sup>57</sup>

The greatest beneficiary, however, was Canada. First of all, the country gained experience in how to handle the admission and re-settlement of large masses of newcomers at the time of a serious refugee crisis in the world. This experience would be used time and again, as for example during the crisis of the Vietnamese boat people. But Canada also benefited from the admission of many, often well-trained young Hungarians, especially the students whom Pickersgill was fond of admitting. Most of them made valuable contributions to Canada, and the contributions of some were remarkable.<sup>58</sup> And, as a group, the 56-ers helped to make Canada what it became in the second half of the 20th century: a truly pluralistic, multicultural society where not only the native-born but also immigrants could fulfil their dreams.

It must be added to this analysis that, indirectly and in the long term, Hungary also benefited from the settlement of the 1956 refugees in Canada. The story of the demise of communism in Hungary some thirty-three years later is a complex one. There can be little doubt however, that the refugees who had come to Canada in 1956 and 1957 made a contribution to the weakening of communist rule in that country. They were instrumental above all for undermining the isolation that Hungary's rulers wished to impose on their people. Through their contacts with their relatives and friends in Hungary, through their frequent visits to the country and, especially, through their habit of bringing their loved ones for visits to Canada, the refugees spread a knowledge of life in Western democracies, as well as of western ideas, among the population of Hungary. All this no doubt helped to weaken the hold of communist ideology on her people and helped to undermine communist rule there.<sup>59</sup> The end of communism in Hungary came in 1989, a little more than three decades after the Revolution of 1956 and the flight of the refugees.

As a final observation on the subject of the Hungarian Revolution and the coming of its refugees to Canada a few words might be said about the Suez Crisis. Few people realize that there is an ironic connection between this crisis and the admission of the Hungarian refugees to Canada. Most students of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 agree that the Suez Crisis contributed to the Soviets' decision to crush the revolt in Hungary.<sup>60</sup> At the same time, the Suez Crisis also contributed to the Canadian government's decision to admit a large number of Hungarian refugees. The fact was that during that crisis substantial elements of the Canadian public sympathized with Great Britain and France and approved of their intervention in Egypt. The government in Ottawa, however, found it both reprehensible and impolitic to back the British and the French. Canada's leaders, and especially Prime Minister St. Laurent, felt that the intervention in Egypt smacked of colonial adventurism, while they also felt obliged to side with Washington on this issue and oppose London and Paris' stand.

The Ottawa government's position on the Suez Crisis stood to undermine the Liberal Party's prospects in the forthcoming federal election. When the debate about admitting the refugees of the Hungarian Revolution emerged into national limelight, the Liberals had to make sure that on this issue they would not be going against the grain of Canadian public opinion as they had with their initial policies concerning the Suez crisis. In other words, the Liberal government's stand on Suez made the adoption of a generous refugee policy in November of 1956 more necessary for a political party concerned about potential popular support in the forthcoming election.

Despite their being on the side of the angels on the issue of the admission of Hungarian refugees in the fall of 1956, the Liberals lost the election in 1957. That they did so probably had little to do with what they had or hadn't done for the Hungarian refugees. Other issues were no doubt more important. Above all, after five consecutive terms of Liberal rule, the Canadian public was ready to hand power to the Conservatives. Under the new Tory government of John G. Diefenbaker, a generous admission policy concerning Hungarians did not survive. Soon after the election, unemployment levels went up in Canada and politicians in Ottawa were worried about a further influx of newcomers who would swell the number of people on public relief.

This situation caused grief to the last of the Hungarian refugees who, after the Austro-Hungarian border had been sealed by Soviet and communist Hungarian security forces, had to make their way to socialist but not Soviet-dominated Yugoslavia. There such "anti-communists" were certainly not welcome, but they were not returned to Hungary because the Yugoslav regime did not want to offend Western public opinion. Never-the-less, these fugitives had to move on from Yugoslavia as soon as there were countries willing to take them. By this time, however, the entry of further groups of Hungarians into Canada was no longer a potential election issue and those among the

refugees who wanted to come to this country had to wait, in most cases for a long time.<sup>61</sup>

## NOTES

An earlier, much shorter version of this paper was commented on by three anonymous readers, while the final draft was read by Mr. Jason Kovacs of the University of Waterloo. I am thankful for their remarks. I am also indebted to the Hon. John Yaremko for the information he gave me in an interview in 2006. Many years ago I had also interviewed Jack Pickersgill but at the time I was interested in Canadian wartime politics and personalities and I did not ask him about the events of November 1956 and his relations with Premier Frost of Ontario. I now deeply regret that I had not. I also knew the late Joseph Bottlik, the man who accompanied Yaremko to Austria. With him I used to discuss wartime politics in Hungary and never asked him about his days in Austria in 1956. I seem to have lived a life of missed opportunities.

<sup>1</sup> Gerald E. Dirks, "Canada and Immigration: International and Domestic Considerations in the Decade Preceding the 1956 Hungarian Exodus," in *Breaking Ground: The 1956 Hungarian Refugee Movement to Canada*, ed. Robert H. Keyserlingk (Toronto: York Lane Press, 1993), 3-11 (p. 3).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10. See also the same author's earlier work that also discusses the subject: Gerald E. Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy: Indifference or Opportunism?* (Montreal: McGill Queen's Press, 1977), chapter 9 (pp. 190-213).

<sup>3</sup> Valerie Knowles, *Strangers at Our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540-1997* (Toronto and Oxford: Dundurn Press, 1997), 139f.

<sup>4</sup> Howard Adelman, "An Immigration Dream: Hungarian Refugees Come to Canada – An Analysis," in *Breaking Ground: The 1956 Hungarian Refugee Movement to Canada*, ed. Robert H. Keyserlingk (Toronto: York Lane Press, 1993), 25-44 (41).

<sup>5</sup> Greg Donaghy and Michael Stevenson, in their introduction to the volume of documents: *Canadian Diplomacy and the Hungarian Revolution, 1956-1957: a documentary perspective*, ed. & comp. Greg Donaghy and Michael Stevenson (Ottawa: Historical Section, Foreign Affairs Canada, 2004), p. vii.; also, Greg Donaghy, "'Unselfish Interest'? Canada and the Hungarian Revolution, 1954-57," a paper read at the conference on "1956: Year of Crises: Hungary & Suez," Munk Centre, University of Toronto, 30 Sept. 2006 (p. 16). Pearson's biographer John English is silent on the subject: John English, *The Worldly Years: The Life of Lester Pearson*, vol. 2, 1949-1972 (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992). The events in Hungary are mentioned on pp. 138-40. Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent's attitudes and role are outlined, rather briefly, by his biographer Dale C. Thomson. See his *Louis St. Laurent: Canadian* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1967), 483-86 *in passim*. The documents in the booklet *Canadian Diplomacy and the Hungarian Revolution* had been extracted from volumes 23 and 25 of the series *Documents on Canadian External Relations* published by Canada's Department of External Affairs, later known as Foreign Affairs Canada. See especially Vol. 23 (1956-1957 Part II),

chapter III "Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union," section I entitled "Hungarian Revolution". The suggestion that Pearson, more than Pickersgill, is responsible for Canada's generous refugee admission policy can be best based on Pearson's letter to Pickersgill of 9 Nov. 1956 in which the External Affairs Minister urges his colleague to "waive" for the Hungarian refugees the usual requirements that immigrants to Canada face. *Canadian Diplomacy and the Hungarian Revolution*, pp. 23-24 (doc. no. 15). This little collection of documents is based on the volume of the *Canadian Documents on External Relations* dealing with 1956 that Greg Donaghy and Michael Stevenson edited. See vol. 23 in this series (1956-57 Part II), in particular Chapter III - Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The internet reference is: <http://international.gc.ca/departement/history/dcer/1957/menu-en.asp> .

<sup>6</sup> See for example the paper of Charles Tarnoczai, "The University of Sopron in Canada," in *Breaking Ground: The 1956 Hungarian Refugee Movement...*, 87-97 (96). Historian Peter I. Hidas, however, suggests that Pickersgill's role has been over-rated. See his "The Hungarian Refugee Student Movement of 1956-57 and Canada," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 30, 1 (spring 1998): 19-49; an earlier version of this paper was published in Hungarian: "Menekült magyar egyetemisták Kanadában, 1956-1957" [Hungarian refugee university students in Canada, 1956-1957] *Évkönyv* [Yearbook] III, (Budapest: Az 1956-os Magyar Forradalom Történetének Dokumentációs és Kutatóintézete, 1994), 125-35. On the other hand, political scientist Reg Whitaker of York University thinks very highly of Pickersgill, of his intelligence, and of his liberal approach to matters of immigration. He was often opposed on matters relating to the admission of refugees from Eastern Europe by Canada's security establishment, but as Whitaker explains, "had the courage to stand up to the RCMP..." All this suggests that in the fall of 1956 Pickersgill would have endorsed a policy of liberal admission of Hungarian refugees earlier, but he could do it only after he overcame the opposition of Ottawa's security organisations. Reg Whitaker, *Double Standard: The Secret History of Canadian Immigration* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1987), 43 (and elsewhere).

<sup>7</sup> Arthur Marwick, "Problems and Consequences of Organizing Society for Total War," in *Mobilization for Total War: The Canadian, American and British Experience, 1914-1945*, ed. N. F. Dreisziger (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981), 1-21 (pp. 6f).

<sup>8</sup> The investment in resource-based industries (in oil, gas, potash, hydro-electric generation, aluminium refining, etc.) had started during war and continued thereafter.

<sup>9</sup> Donald Creighton, *The Forked Road: Canada 1939-1957* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), Chapter 5, "The Coming of the Planners," pp. 88-115, *in passim*.

<sup>10</sup> David Slater, "Colour the Future Bright: The *White Paper*, the Green Book and the 1945-1946 Dominion-Provincial Conference on Reconstruction," in *Uncertain Horizons: Canadians and Their World in 1945*, ed. Greg Donaghy (Ottawa: Canadian Committee for the History of the Second World War, 1996), pp. 191-208 (p. 191). On post-war reconstruction see also Steve Jobbitt, "Re-Civilizing the Land: Conservation and Post-war Reconstruction in Ontario, 1939-1961" (MA thesis, Lakehead University, 2001), Chapter 3 of which deals with the work of the Ministry of Planning and Development. In 1956-57 it would be the officials of this Ministry that would deal with the Hungarian refugee issue.

<sup>11</sup> Creighton, *The Forked Road*, p. 117.

<sup>12</sup> Steven Globerman, "Background to Immigration Policy in Canada," in *The Immigration Dilemma*, ed. Steven Globerman (Vancouver, B.C.: Fraser Institute, 1992), 21. Globerman cites Department of Finance data.

<sup>13</sup> Michael R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), Chapter 5 "The Postwar Era" (296-345) especially p. 345. Many Hungarian professionals managed to get into Canada by claiming to be menial workers.

<sup>14</sup> There was controversy over the business of admitting refugees who may have played a role in pro-Axis wartime governments and in the implementation of Nazi occupation and extermination policies. See Whitaker, *Double Standard*, especially chapter five "His Majesty's Late Enemies," and chapter six "Importing Old World Enmities: Wartime Collaborators" (pp. 102-147).

<sup>15</sup> Whitaker, *Double Standard*, chapter four "Refugees from Communism: The Greatest Threat" (pages 74-101), especially pp. 77-85.

<sup>16</sup> On attitudes to the "new" Hungarian immigrants in the United States see especially Stephen Béla Várdy, "Image and Self-Image among Hungarian-Americans since the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *East European Quarterly* 35, 3 (Sept. 2001): 309-42. For examples of the treatment of the subject in Canadian books see Ralph Connor's (Charles William Gordon) novel *The Foreigner*. In this book one Hungarian immigrant, Kalman, is portrayed favourably: he becomes a Protestant and marries a Scottish girl. But, we might ask, how many other Magyar newcomers could pay such a price for acceptance by Canadian society? Another Canadian author, Wellington Bridgman, in his book *Breaking Prairie Sod*, is even more stridently anti-"Austro-Hun". Both authors were Protestant ministers who had served as chaplains in the First World War.

<sup>17</sup> On the rise of anti-German and then anti-Austrian and, in particular, anti-Hungarian sentiments in France see Dany Deschênes, "French Intellectuals and the Image of Austria-Hungary in France: Prelude to the Break-up of Historic Hungary, 1918-20," *Hungarian Studies Review*, 34, 1-2 (2006): 93-120; and on the rise of similar sentiments in Britain, see Géza Jeszenszky, *Az elvesztett presztízs: Magyarország megítélésének megváltozása Nagy-Britanniában (1894-1918)* [The lost prestige: the Transformation of Hungary's Image in Great Britain (1894-1918)] (Budapest: Magvető, 1986), and the more specialized and more recent monograph by Tibor Frank, *Picturing Austria-Hungary: The British Perception of the Habsburg Monarchy 1865-1870* (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, Hungarian Studies Series, 2005).

<sup>18</sup> A study that traces the activities of some of these emigres in North America is Thomas L. Sakmyster, "A Communist Newspaper for Hungarian-Americans: The Strange World of the *Új Előre*," *Hungarian Studies Review*, 32, 1-2 (2005): 41-70. The Canadian equivalent of the *Új Előre*, the *Kanadai Magyar Munkás*, is examined in Patrias, *Patriots and Proletarians* (*op. cit.*). Among the non-communist progressive emigres in North America, the most prolific polemicist was Oscar Jaszi. On him see my own works, especially "A Hungarian Liberal in American Exile: The Life of Oscar Jaszi," *Hungarian Studies Review*, 32, 1-2 (2005): 127-36; "Oscar Jászi: Prophet and Danubian Federalist," *Hungarian Quarterly*, 47, 1 (Spring, 2006): 159-63 (a shorter version of the above), and the chapter on him entitled "Oscar Jaszi as a Prophet: His Early American Years, 1925-1937," in my

book *Hungarians: From Ancient Times to 1956. Biographical and Historical Essays* (Ottawa: Legas, 2007), 53-78.

<sup>19</sup> This judgement was not unanimous. In the United States, for example, John F. Montgomery, a former American minister to Budapest, exempted Hungary's regime of most of such charges. See his *Hungary, the Unwilling Satellite* (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1947; reprint edition by Vista Books, Morristown, N.J., 1993), and in the United Kingdom C. A. Macartney, writing in the post-war period, did the same. See his *October Fifteenth: A History of Modern Hungary, 1929-1944* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1957, 2nd edition, 1961, 2 vols., published in the United States as *A History of Hungary, 1929-1944*, New York: Praeger, 1957). While Montgomery can be dismissed as an inexperienced American diplomat (his background was in business administration), a similar charge can hardly be levelled against Macartney, a distinguished scholar and, at the end of his career, an Oxford academic. Hungary's association with Nazi Germany in the war can best be seen as a consequence of the harsh Treaty of Trianon of 1920. See my study "The Long Shadow of Trianon: Hungarian Alliance Policies during World War II," *Hungarian Studies* (Budapest), 17, 1 (2003): 33-55. Those who call Hungary "Hitler's last ally" often dismiss the fact that Hungary tried to defect from the Axis alliance in October 1944 but failed. Two months earlier Romania had succeeded. The main difference between the two attempts was the fact that in August of 1944 there were only a handful of German divisions in Romania but in October there were over twenty of them in Hungary. The fact that Slovakia and Croatia were also Hitler's allies is usually ignored as these states were not recognized by the Allies.

<sup>20</sup> There was some opposition to the admission of refugees, the most strident came from Hungarian-Canadian communists. Interestingly and perhaps not surprisingly, after 1957 the favourable image of Hungarian newcomers slowly began fading away. This story has not been told yet, but we know some of its components. One was the Peter Demeter trial and the negative publicity resulting from it. The trial revealed a Hungarian underworld in Canada. Another is probably such writing as Margaret Atwood's *Wilderness Tips*, one of whose heroes is a Hungarian who is depicted as a womanizer (a portrayal some Hungarians might take as a compliment). The main problem was that 90 years of anti-Hungarian propaganda could not be overcome by the favourable image generated in 1956.

<sup>21</sup> Creighton, *The Forked Road*, pp. 266-273 *in passim*. On the pipeline debate see also English, *The Worldly Years: The Life of Lester Pearson*, vol. 2, 1949-1972, pp. 156-59. On relations between Prime Minister St. Laurent and Premier Frost see Thomson, *Louis St. Laurent: Canadian*, especially p. 408. On the enmity between Frost and Pickersgill see J. W. Pickersgill, *My Years with Louis St Laurent: A Political Memoir* (Toronto: U. of Toronto Press, 1975), pp. 307-08.

<sup>22</sup> Donaghy, "Unselfish Interest"? See also, Donaghy and Stevenson, eds., *Canadian Diplomacy and the Hungarian Revolution*; as well as Greg Donaghy and Stéphane Roussel, eds., *Escott Reid: Diplomat and Scholar* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen Press, 2004).

<sup>23</sup> Confidential letter, dated at Ottawa, 9 November 1956, from Pearson to [Pickersgill], re-printed in Donaghy and Stevenson, eds. *Canadian Diplomacy and the Hungarian Revolution*, pp. 23-24 (doc. no. 15).

<sup>24</sup> Extract from Cabinet Conclusions, [Ottawa], 14 November 1956, re-printed *ibid.*, pp. 30-31 (doc. no. 21).



<sup>25</sup> Telegraph, "Hungarian Refugees," [J.] Léger to [Pearson], 19 November 1956, reprinted in Donaghy and Stevenson, *Canadian Diplomacy and the Hungarian Revolution*, pp. 35-36 (doc. no. 24). Léger suggested in this telegram that Pearson repeat to Pickersgill the plea for the adoption of a "more liberal policy" regarding Hungarian refugees. This document, incidentally, leaves little doubt that Léger, who would be Canada's Governor-General two decades later, sympathized with his superior's ideas about a more generous approach to the Hungarian refugee issue.

<sup>26</sup> *The Globe and Mail*, editorial, "Warsaw – and Budapest," 25 Oct. 1956.

<sup>27</sup> *The Globe and Mail*, editorial, "The Great Silence," 27 Oct. 1956.

<sup>28</sup> *The Globe and Mail*, editorials, 29 Oct. and 3 Nov. 1956.

<sup>29</sup> *The Globe and Mail*, editorial, "Russia and the UN," 7 Nov. 1956.

<sup>30</sup> *The Globe and Mail*, editorial, 9 Nov. 1956.

<sup>31</sup> *The Globe and Mail*, editorial entitled "The Gains", 13 Nov. 1956. The same day, in another editorial, the *Globe* sharply criticized international efforts to censure France and Britain for their invasion of Egypt and repeated its attacks on so-called anti-colonial governments who condemned the French and the British and not the U.S.S.R. The government's policy on refugees was also criticized in the *Toronto Telegram*. See the editorial "Let Hungarian Refugees In" of the same day.

<sup>32</sup> Had Frost been willing to switch to federal politics, he would have no doubt become the next leader of the federal Conservative Party which would have won the 1957 federal elections — and there would be no mention in Canadian history books of John Diefenbaker.

<sup>33</sup> Roger Graham, *Old Man Ontario: Leslie M. Frost* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), p. 394. Yaremko, along with Allan Grossman, were the provincial Tory Party's appeal to the "ethnic vote" in an increasingly multi-ethnic Toronto. See also Jonathan Manthorpe, *The Power and the Tories: Ontario Politics — 1943 to the Present* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1974).

<sup>34</sup> I discussed these and other matters with the 88-year-old Mr. Yaremko, in the weeks running up to the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Revolution, in a long telephone interview (28 July 2006).

<sup>35</sup> *The Globe and Mail*, editorial, 24 Nov. 1956.

<sup>36</sup> *The Globe and Mail*, editorial entitled "Action", 26 Nov. 1956.

<sup>38</sup> That official was Don Emerson, then private secretary to Paul Martin Sr. Emerson quoted by Martin in his memoirs, *A Very Public Life*, vol. 2 *So Many Worlds* (Toronto: Deneau, 1985), p. 287.

<sup>39</sup> Copy of telegram, Pickersgill to Nickle, 26 Nov. 1956, Records of the Ministry of Planning and Development of Ontario (RG 75-43-1-54, box 7), Archives of Ontario. Pickersgill recounted this discussion also in his letter to Premier Frost of 18 January 1957. A copy of this letter can be found in the above-cited file (RG 75-43-1-54, box 7). Pickersgill also mentions these events in his memoirs: *Seeing Canada Whole: A Memoir* (Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1994), p. 432. Donaghy suggests that the news that the Tory government in Toronto was ready to fly refugees over "spooked" Pickersgill and helped to prompt him to action. Donaghy, "An Unselfish Interest?" p. 17. Pickersgill was motivated by more than fear: he wanted revenge for an attempt by the Toronto Tories to embarrass him.

<sup>40</sup> The minutes of this meeting, dated Ottawa, 27 Nov. 1956, can be found in the records of the Ministry of Planning and Development of Ontario (RG 75-43-1-54, box 7).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Pickersgill's trip had been contemplated as early as the 19th, at least according to an External Affairs telegram sent that day from Ottawa to Pearson, then in New York City. [J.] Léger to [Pearson], 19 November 1956, *loc. cit.* (Donaghy and Stevenson, *Canadian Diplomacy and the Hungarian Revolution*, pp. 35-36 [doc. no. 24]).

<sup>43</sup> The Cabinet, however, didn't approve the free passage for the refugees until its meeting the following day. Extract from Cabinet Conclusions, [Ottawa], 28 November 1956, re-printed in Donaghy and Stevenson, *Canadian Diplomacy and the Hungarian Revolution*, pp. 42-44 (doc. no. 29). The text of the Cabinet minute goes as follows: "The Cabinet.... agreed that free passage be offered to Hungarian refugees wishing to come to Canada and to those who already arrived or were en route;..." The writer of these lines — and his parents and brother — left Vienna on a plane with the knowledge that the family would have to pay for the voyage as soon as it would be able to do so. We discovered only after arrival in Canada, much to our relief, that our airfare would be paid by the government.

<sup>44</sup> *The Globe and Mail*, 29 Nov. 1956.

<sup>45</sup> Douglas Blanchard, "Toronto Area on Spot Handling Refugees: Big Job — Pickersgill," *Toronto Daily Star*, 4 December 1956, pages 1 and 4.

<sup>46</sup> *Toronto Daily Star*, 5 December 1956.

<sup>47</sup> Letter, W. M. Nickle to Leslie M. Frost, 4 December 1956, records of the Ministry of Planning and Development, *loc. cit.*

<sup>48</sup> Correspondence regarding these disagreements can be found in the above-mentioned records of the Ministry of Planning and Development of Ontario (RG 75-43-1-54, box 7). The first indication of trouble came as early as the 10th of December, in a letter from Minister W. M. Nickle to Laval Fortier, the Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. In this brief note Nickle expressed his "shock" at the statement that had been reported to him that the Federal Government would pay "nothing to help re-clothe the Hungarian refugees who have arrived or will be arriving in this country poorly clad..." See, copy of letter, Nickle to Fortier, 10 Dec 1956, *ibid.* Later and actual case of clothing a Hungarian refugee came up. A certain new arrival by the name of Andor Tari, needed pyjamas. Who would pay for these? became an issue in Canadian dominion-provincial relations. I don't know how the dispute ended and who eventually paid the bill (it was under \$10). I also don't know who exactly this certain Andor Tari was. The Andor Tari I know came to Canada in 1956, became a child psychologist and a professor of family studies at the University of Guelph, as well as a President of the Hungarian Studies Association of Canada. The few dollars that one or another government invested in him in the winter of 1956-57 (if indeed the Andor Tari in question was he), was not a bad investment.

Copies of documents concerning the federal government's negotiations and agreement regarding the settlement of the refugees with the Province of Saskatchewan can be found in the above-mentioned records of the Ministry of Planning and Development of Ontario (RG 75-43-1-54, box 7). The attitudes and actions in this matter of the Province of New Brunswick are discussed in the study of Heather Steel, "Where's the Policy? Immigration to New Brunswick, 1945-1971," *Acadiensis*, 35, 2 (spring 2006), available at [http://www.lib.unb.ca/Texts/Acadiensis/bin/get.cgi?directory=2006/&filename+acad35\\_2...](http://www.lib.unb.ca/Texts/Acadiensis/bin/get.cgi?directory=2006/&filename+acad35_2...)

<sup>49</sup> Quoted in N. F. Dreisziger, "The Quest for Spiritual Fulfilment among Immigrants: The Rise of Organized Religious Life in Pioneer Hungarian-Canadian Communities, 1885-1939," *Magyar Egyháztörténeti Vázlatok – Essays in Church History in Hungary*, 16, 3-4 (fall-winter 2004): 95-124 (p. 95). My parents (my dad was 50 in 1956) adjusted to Canadian life very slowly and with great difficulty. Yet with hard work and perseverance they prospered and in the mid-1960s moved to an affluent neighbourhood of Toronto. One of the stately houses they used to admire in the block north of them was John Yaremko's — as I found out some four decades later.

<sup>50</sup> N. F. Dreisziger, *Struggle and Hope: The Hungarian-Canadian Experience* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 208-10. The Hungarian immigrants of the turn-of-the-century, of the 1920s, and even to some extent those that came in the late 1940s and early 1950s, had a chance to contemplate for months if not years their emigration to Canada. Some 56-ers, languishing in Austrian refugee camps, hardly had a few hours or days to do so — which compounded the fact that most of them had left their homeland on an impulse.

<sup>51</sup> Extract from Cabinet Conclusions, [Ottawa], 28 November 1956, reprinted in Donaghy and Stevenson, *Canadian Diplomacy and the Hungarian Revolution*, pp. 42-44 (doc. no. 29).

<sup>52</sup> See Léger's telegram to Pearson of 9 November 1956; *loc. cit.*

<sup>53</sup> Extract from Cabinet Conclusions, [Ottawa], 22 November 1956, reprinted in Donaghy and Stevenson, *Canadian Diplomacy and the Hungarian Revolution*, pp. 38-40 (doc. no. 26).

<sup>54</sup> Extract from Cabinet Conclusions, [Ottawa], 23 November 1956, reprinted *ibid.*, pp. 40-41 (doc. no. 27).

<sup>55</sup> It was during the week following that the Liberals launched a propaganda offensive against the Queen's Park Tories. See above, notes 44 and 45.

<sup>56</sup> Their exact number has to be a guesstimate, despite the existence of supposedly accurate immigration statistics. A few who came were Hungarian refugees who had languished in Austrian camps even before the events of 1956. Other "real" refugees came late and were admitted as regular immigrants. Still other Hungarians (originally refugees, but in 1956-57 re-migrants) arrived at about this time from third countries — to where they had gone as post-World War II displaced persons.

<sup>57</sup> This is the main theme of the last chapter of my book *Struggle and Hope*, "Toward a Golden Age".

<sup>58</sup> The theme is explored briefly in the conclusions of the above book; in Magda Zalan, *Stubborn People* (Toronto: Canadian Stage and Arts Publications, 1985); in Éva Tömöry's paper (given at a recent annual meeting of the Hungarian Studies Association of Canada, York University, May 2006 and published in this volume) about Hungarian-Canadian entrepreneurs; in Enikő Pittner's video documentary about George Vari (shown at the same HSAC meeting), and in film producer Susan Papp Aykler's most recent documentary about the 56-ers.

<sup>59</sup> I develop this theme in my study "The Hungarian Revolution of 1956: The Legacy of the Refugees," *Nationalities Papers, the journal of the Association for the Study of the Nationalities of the USSR and Eastern Europe*, 13, 2 (Fall 1985): 198-208.

<sup>60</sup> I elaborate on this in greater detail in my study "The 1956 Revolution in Hungary: The Historical and International Context," in my book of essays, *Hungarians: From Ancient Times*, cit. pp. 131-43 (139-40).

<sup>61</sup> For the story of one family who came to Canada via Yugoslavia see Julie Gedeon, "Reflection of Revolution," *The Beaver, Canada's History Magazine*, October-November 2006, pp. 40-46. In the end, an additional 1,100 refugees were allowed to come. Donaghy and Stevenson, *Canadian Diplomacy*, Introduction, p. vii.

## Appendices

### An Introduction

**The appendices** to this study consist of the texts of the *Globe and Mail* editorials of the 24th and 26th of November, 1956, and the report of the Hon. John Yaremko, B.A., Q.C., LL.B., LL.D., Dr. rer. Pol. (Hon.), of Toronto, about his visit to Austria in the late fall of the same year. The report was delivered, as a speech by Yaremko himself, to the Legislature of Ontario on February 4, 1957. See the *Legislature of Ontario Debates, Official Report – Daily Edition, Third Session of the Twenty-Fifth Legislature*, Monday, February 4, 1957 (Toronto: The Queen's Printer, 1957), 104-113.

Appendix I contains the *Globe* editorials. These constituted the most severe denunciations of the Ottawa government's half-hearted responses to the Hungarian refugee crisis in Austria. The editorial of November 24 demanded that the Ontario Government establish an air-lift to bring to Ontario, free of charge, all Hungarian refugees who wanted to come, while the editorial two days later praised the government at Queen's Park for accepting this idea and taking measures to implement it, thereby preparing the way to provide for the refugees the "biggest welcome we ever gave anybody." These developments amounted to an attempt by the Toronto Tory establishment to embarrass the ruling Liberal Party in Ottawa in anticipation of the federal election campaign of 1957.

Mr. Yaremko's mission to Austria, the subject of Appendix II, had its origins in this same plot but, by the time it took place, it did not play any role in it. That is, it had minimum impact on provincial-federal relations and the jockeying between Canada's two main political parties for popular support among the country's electorate. Nevertheless it probably had an effect on public opinion. It might have persuaded those members of the Ontario Legislature who were not quite convinced of the wisdom of bringing thousands of Hungarian refugees to the province that it was all right to do so, that the Province was capable of absorbing such an influx of newcomers and that the refugees would be capable of adjusting to Canadian life. The circumstance that the report's author was himself a child of East European immigrants was important. Yaremko was proof positive of the fact that "ethnics" can adjust to Canadian life and succeed in this country as well as any WASP individual can.

His report, however, has further significance. For us two generations later it is a storehouse of first-hand information on the conditions that refugees from Hungary faced in their attempts to escape from communist rule, and the conditions they found awaiting them in Austrian refugee camps. The report also gives some information on how Austrian officials dealt with the refugee crisis of the fall and early winter of 1956, as well as on how Canadian officials in Austria tackled the difficult situation — the masses of fugitives far in excess of what anyone was prepared for — they encountered at the time.

In discussing the coming of the 1956 refugees to Canada it should be emphasized that Hungarians were fortunate to have had a man such as Yaremko to speak on their behalf in the inner circles of power in Canada's largest city and richest province. If indeed, as Mr. Yaremko claims, the idea of establishing an air-lift was implanted in the mind of Premier Frost by him, and perhaps also indirectly in the minds of the editors of the *Globe* newspaper, he certainly played a significant role in the chain of events that led to Canada's decision to welcome the refugees with generosity unparalleled in the country's history. What exactly happened in this connection might never become completely clear. The documents dealing with the subject of Hungarian refugees in the records of the Government of Ontario are silent on this matter.

We do not have the memoirs written by Leslie Frost or his right-hand-man in this matter William M. Nickle. Federal documents relating to the subject, though they are more abundant and a lot more accessible than the provincial ones, are also silent on the subject — obviously as no one in Ottawa knew what transpired behind the scenes in Toronto. Whatever direct role Mr. Yaremko played in the events of the third week of November may never be documented precisely, but his influence thereafter can only be considered as positive from the point of view of the story of the 1956 Hungarian refugee movement to Canada.

\* \* \*

As a final comment on this story I feel compelled to make a few personal observations. In studying this subject I am in the rare position of being both an eye-witness and a historian. My role as an eye-witness was nearly insignificant as I had no access to the decision-makers in 1956, aside from the odd lowly Canadian official who interviewed us or guided us through the processes of applying for admission and travelling to Canada. I was a silent and passive — and, above all, a bewildered — observer of events that were to impact greatly my future and the future of my parents and brother.

The members of my family were among those Hungarian refugees who made a decision to leave Hungary very suddenly. The person responsible for this determination was above all my father. He had grown tired of a regime that came to regulate all aspects of life and stifled personal initiative in our country. My mother was more hesitant. What will happen to our

belongings? she was inclined to ask, while I thought only of the difficulty of learning new languages abroad — by then I had been on to my fourth foreign language in school (English), and I was not making much progress, just as I had not been very successful with the first, second, and third. But we agreed to leave together, unlike some families I know, including my wife's, that could not reach such an agreement and were torn apart in the fall of 1956.

The actual process of our escape from Hungary was interesting, even though in hindsight it was not filled with the dangers and hardships most refugees had experienced. First of all we lived in a small town called Csorna quite close to the Austrian border. Secondly, our escape was well-planned and executed. What happened was that several days after it became obvious that communist rule would be re-established in Hungary and the Austrian border was becoming more and more perilous to cross, my father's superior at work came to tell us that a truck would leave our town that night to take people to the border. After we agreed to go, the truck did appear in our yard and, under the cover of the darkness of the night, we got into its back. The truck's other occupants were members of Csorna's Jewish community, people of all ages including infants. Our inclusion in this venture must have been the result of my father's good standing with the leaders of Csorna's Jews.

The truck, accompanied by look-outs who were riding motorcycles, proceeded to the Austrian border on back roads. It arrived there in the middle of the night. When we got off to continue our flight on foot across a makeshift bridge over a small stream I noticed a few Hungarian border guards — much to my horror. But, they just urged us on in the direction of an Austrian border post on the other side. They might have been bribed, but I will never know.

We arrived at a school building in the village of Pamhagen (known as Pomogy to its many Magyar residents) from where a family of Hungarian peasants took my parents, me and my brother to their home and let us sleep a few hours in what must have been their own, and possibly only, bedroom. I would love to thank them in print now, but we had soon lost their name and address.

The next day buses took the refugees assembled the previous night in Pamhagen to Vienna. There, we and a few other families were put up in a small hotel in the city's historic section. All this was very civilized when compared to the conditions Mr. Yaremko encountered on his visit to Hungarian refugee camps, probably only a few days later.

We then made a decision to come to Canada, despite the urging of one of my father's brothers that we should emigrate to South America. We were "processed" in a short time and were on our way to Toronto, by air. I wonder now whether we ever crossed paths with any members of the Canadian delegations that were visiting Austria at the time.

Looking back, I have never doubted the wisdom of our decisions in November of 1956, both the decision to leave communist Hungary and the one to come to Canada.

After studying the political circumstances that made my family's entry into Canada in the fall of 1956 not only possible but quite smooth, I am still not entirely sure which of contemporary Canada's politicians to thank first and foremost: Jack Pickersgill, "Mike" Pearson, Leslie Frost, or Mr. John Yaremko. More importantly, I am not certain as to what circumstance I should attribute the "big welcome" we got, but I strongly suspect that this would have to be the Canadian political expediencies of the day more than any other factor.



## Appendix I

### ***Globe and Mail* editorials, 24 and 26 November 1956**

#### **Open Ontario's Doors**

Only one word can properly describe the free world's reluctance to accept the refugees fleeing from tortured Hungary. It is inhuman — and Canada has gone along with that inhumanity.

What has this great, rich, half-empty country offered the 60,000 Hungarians now crowded into little Austria? They will be given "top priority" — if they can meet the Canadian Government's immigration requirements. Additional airline flights will be provided for them — if they can show they will not become a charge on the public purse.

For shame! In its response to Hungary's tragedy, the Government of Canada has displayed the warmth and generosity of a codfish.

How about the people of Canada? We believe they want bold action on the refugees. We believe they are willing, eager, to go the whole way. Believing that, we propose the Ontario Government rescue Ottawa from its hypocrisy — as the Ontario Government did once before.

Nine years ago, Ontario chartered a fleet of United States and Canadian airplanes to fly Britons to new jobs, new homes, new hopes in this Province. We say: Re-establish that airlift!

We propose that Ontario charter all the aircraft and shipping necessary and bring here, at its own expense, every Hungarian refugee who is able to travel and wishes to come. If they need sponsorship under Ottawa's cold-hearted immigration rules, let the Ontario Government be the sponsor.

Let Ontario feed and house them initially, as Austria is doing now. Then let them filter into the lifestream of this wealthy and expanding Province. They will represent a meagre 1 per cent of its population.

Will they be good citizens? They have proved their worth as citizens in one of history's classic struggles. They have fought for freedom bare-handed against tanks.

Young or old, sick or well, skilled or unskilled — there is room in this Province, there are care and love and opportunity in this Province, for all of them. Let the Ontario Government tear away every artificial barrier as the Hungarians tore at the Russian tanks. Let it fling the door wide, wide open.

Saturday, November 24, 1956

## **Action!**

We warmly applaud the Ontario Government for the quick action it has taken to implement our proposal-made in a front-page editorial on Saturday — that this Province should accept as immigrants, and bring here at its own expense, every Hungarian refugee who is able to travel and willing to come.

At Premier Frost's instructions, the Ontario Agent-General in London, Mr. J. S. P. Armstrong, is flying to Vienna to make preliminary arrangements. There will be problems-getting aircraft appears to be difficult but we are sure they will be overcome. They have got to be overcome for-as is evident by the flood of letters this newspaper received over the weekend-the people of Ontario are most anxious the Hungarians should come here, and are willing to pay whatever it costs to bring them.

Those who can work will find plenty to do in this rapidly expanding Province. Those who cannot, will be looked after by the many organizations which exist for that purpose. Young or old, sick or well, let them come as many as possible, as soon as possible. They will get the biggest welcome we ever gave anybody.

Monday, November 26, 1956.

## **Appendix II**

### **John Yaremko's Report on his Mission to Austria**

#### ONTARIO LEGISLATURE, DEBATES

##### Report on Hungary Refugees

MR. J. YAREMKO: Mr. Speaker, The mission on which I embarked on December 3, 1956, was brought about, as the hon. Prime Minister has said, by a series of events which, I believe, will form a shining chapter in the history of the peoples of the world.

October 23, 1956, a group of students and workmen in the city of Budapest, Hungary, demonstrating against Communist oppression, were fired upon, and a rebellion flared up.

The news broke upon the world — that a small nation had not only stood up against, but was willing to “take on”, the Russian Communist juggernaut — yes, a small nation, indeed, of 10 million people, occupying only 26,000 square miles, which is about the same size as the state of Ohio. In comparison, Ontario has 260,000 square miles of land area alone....

Daily, the news of the heroic struggle came to us, until, on November 1st, it seemed that the rebelling people of Hungary were in control.

Then, on November 4th, the Kremlin ordered its siege guns to smash the rebellion. Then began that epic struggle, which the world was able to see for the first time, of hands battling against tanks, rifles against siege guns. On November 14th the rebellion was smashed.

But the people of Hungary have continued the struggle. It continues even as we meet here today, and as the history of Hungary has shown it will continue.

But although they were beaten, they had shaken the system of Communism to its core, and in one stroke they had ripped a good-sized piece from the mask of Communism so that the world could again see the evil which lay behind it.

We in the western world have been fortunate. We have lived only in the shadow of the threats of Russian Communism; but there are tens of millions of people who have suffered directly from Communist oppression — the peoples of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, East Germany, Roumania, Bulgaria, the Ukraine, Byelorussia, and others. We have heard the rumblings through the years, and in Hungary the rumblings flared up into a wide open struggle. On November 14th the rebellion was smashed, and as deportations, and the threats of deportation increased,

the mass exodus of refugees began... within the first 10 days some 60,000 had crossed into Austria.

As the hon. Prime Minister [Leslie M. Frost] has pointed out, a wave of sympathy and of responsibility swept through Canada. In Ontario, the hon. Prime Minister, the great humanitarian that he is, set up the machinery. On November 26th the hon. Minister of Planning and Development (Mr. Nickle) and his staff went into action. On November 28th the hon. Prime Minister announced that I would be Vienna-bound; on Thursday Mr. Bottlik was selected; on Friday and Saturday travel arrangements were completed; and on Monday we were at the airport on our way to Vienna.

I should like to say a word or two about Mr. Bottlik,...

Mr. Bottlik, as a very young man, came to Canada some 7 years ago. He completed his education at the University of Toronto on a scholarship, graduating in the honour course in philosophy and psychology. Prior to his arrival in Canada he had served with the International Refugee Organization in the welfare department, and at the time of his selection he was associated with the Hungarian Relief Fund. He is a man who is very fluent in languages — Hungarian, English and German. He proved of invaluable assistance to me not only as an interpreter but as a direct assistant.

From London we were joined by the Agent-General for Ontario, Mr. James P. Armstrong, who is so well-known to so many hon. members of this House, and to whom I should like to pay tribute. His knowledge and experience proved invaluable. His staff attended to the administrative details superbly. Mr. Armstrong mercilessly drove himself to make sure that we got all the facts expeditiously and thoroughly.

Prior to and during our trip, Mr. Speaker, many persons rendered a great deal of assistance. I am limited by time alone in spelling them out.

After conferring with [Norman A. Robertson] the [Canadian] High Commissioner in London we proceeded to Bonn, Germany, where we met with [Jack Pickersgill] the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, who had only the day before arrived from Vienna. He told us of the situation as he had seen it, and described to us the new arrangements that he had made.

We took leave of him and went on to Vienna. At the airport in Vienna — we arrived late that afternoon — a remarkable coincidence occurred. Waiting at the airport for the first TCA [Trans Canada Airlines] plane to take them to Toronto, Ontario, were a group of refugees, and the plane they were waiting for was the same plane one that had flown us across the Atlantic.

Mr. Speaker, as you will recall, this was the group which, because of weather conditions, landed in Windsor and were driven to Toronto for their reception.

It was very heart-warming indeed when I returned to Toronto to see in the newspapers pictures of the men, women and children to whom I had bid bon voyage at the airport.

At the airport, I learned from a TCA official that these refugees had been waiting all day very patiently without a mid-day meal. It was my pleasure at that time to arrange for a light meal to be made available for all of them; and I am sure that every hon. member of the House would have done the same.

The next morning, in Vienna proper, we visited the offices in order to gain as much background material as possible. Quite naturally we visited, first of all, the

visa section of the Canadian Embassy legation there. As we approached the building we saw outside a long queue of some 100 persons waiting to get in. We entered into discussion with them, and they showed us their eagerness to go to Canada. Some of them had envelopes with addresses of people in the province of Ontario.

We proceeded into the building and were able to see the visa officers going through the procedure of processing the refugees. The administrative procedures had been shortened quite drastically over the weekend by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and the officers were very expeditiously dealing with refugees.

It was a coincidence — and a very handy coincidence — that almost every Hungarian refugee carried, as they do in police states, an identity card which, in some respects, is quite similar to a passport, so that the examining officers were able, in very short order, to obtain the necessary details.

We saw in an adjoining office an officer of the Inter-Governmental Committee on European Migration, and he was very expeditiously arranging the allocation of visaed refugees to transport, present and future.

We also visited another office — a very large hall that had been taken over at the time — where a great many refugees were being very speedily examined and processed.

From there we proceeded to the office of the League of the Red Cross Societies, where we met Mrs. Marguerite Wilson, a Canadian who is seconded to the League from the Canadian Red Cross for liaison purposes. She described to us the facilities and the machine that had been installed — a Telex machine — whereby the name, age and sex of each immigrant — each refugee — could be very rapidly transmitted to Geneva and to Toronto.

Mrs. Wilson described to us at that time the arrangements that were being made for the League of Red Cross Societies to take over the care of many of the camps. Just before I left the continent, a great number of nations, including our Canadian Red Cross Society, had taken over camps, and they had managed to arrange for the care of half of the refugees.

From there we went to the offices of the Inter-governmental Committee on European Migration — commonly known as ICEM — which handles transportation matters for the governments which are members and which want to make use of its facilities. They handle all the bus transportation to and from camps and in Vienna. They handle the trains from Vienna and some other towns in Austria; the planes; the booking of ships and the berths on ships.

The ICEM is a very efficient organization created for the job it is doing. It is so efficient that within 3 days after Canada decided to make use of its facilities, ICEM was able to arrange transportation for 3,545 refugees, which was the full quota that Canada had set for the month of December.

It was seeing the inter-governmental committee in operation which led me to believe in the efficiency of a world organization dealing with a world problem on a world basis — in this case, transportation alone.

That afternoon we visited Mr. Herman Czedik of the Ministry of the Interior of Austria. It struck me very forcibly that he assumed quite casually the tremendous burden which Austria had assumed. To him, there was no other right thing to do except what Austria was doing. The generosity of Austria is phenomenal, when you consider that on the map it would fit in between Toronto and Windsor. It had

permitted 150,000 refugees to cross the border and was trying to cope with all of the problems of care and housing that ensued.

Mr. Czedik was very pleased at the action that Canada had taken that week end, and his face lighted up when I told him of the interest of the people of the province of Ontario.

We visited with the Deputy High Commissioner of the United Nations who was dealing with refugees. He, too, was extremely happy about the action taken by Canada that week end. He told us of the great shortage of funds.

Mr. Speaker, for the purposes of the record, I would like to state that we were scrupulously careful not to interfere in the slightest degree with the work of any office that we visited. We did it only at their convenience and not at ours.

That night we visited the Hungarian-Austrian border. We arrived there shortly after midnight, at a point called Klingen Bach, because we heard that it was one point where the refugees would be crossing in the evenings. It is about 200 yards within the Austrian border.

We found a small barrack-like hut in which there were, indeed, 13 refugees who had arrived earlier that night. We saw them as they lay there on mattresses on the floor. We had just come up to the barracks and it was cold, windy and pitch dark. I am sure the rural hon. members of this House are fully familiar with what it means to be alone in an area which is in pitch-black darkness.

A little distance away, the Austrian guards were huddled over their stove at their sentry hut.

We wondered how people could subject their bodies to travelling across a pitch-dark area of mud and swamp, through bush, across [ploughed] fields, because they certainly were not travelling along the highways.

I recall an incident we had heard the day before, which indicates the extent to which people were willing to go. A mother had crossed with a small child, and in order that the cries of the child might not arouse attention, she had given the child a sedative. It had been too strong; and it was only because she had crossed at a point where medical attention was immediately available that the child's life was saved.

There these people lay on the floor, exhausted, sound asleep. We did not disturb them. Their clothes were piled at the sides of their mattresses. Their weary bodies were at rest.

The Austrian guard within this little barracks showed us the food that was available — a very thin soup, some pieces of bread, and apples.

We tiptoed out of that barrack hut, Mr. Speaker, and I may say that the trip back to Vienna in the small hours was a very quiet one, because each of us was rapped in the thoughts of what we had seen at two o'clock in the morning on the Austrian-Hungarian border.

Let me say a word at this time about the movement of refugees within Austria. The border itself is about 168 miles long, and it is about 120 miles from Budapest to the border, and another 50 miles from the border to Vienna. About 90 per cent. of the crossings are made during the night.

As I have described, the refugees crossing the border are tired and exhausted, and they end up in these little points of refuge — in this case a barrack hut at Klingen Bach — which are along the border. Such a point may be a church, a barn, a village hall — whatever type of accommodation is possible; and when the people get across the border, they rest.

The next day they are taken inwards usually to a village where a number of them may be collected; and from there, with transportation by carts or buses, they are taken to the first line reception centre. The refugees are then able to dry their clothes, get new clothes, be medically examined to some degree, and have a little better food.

Subsequently they are taken to another camp, Camp No. 2, with slightly better quarters, where they get warmer clothing, and are probably able to wash for the first time.

These people wait to be moved to Camp No. 3 where ICEM, the inter-governmental department, takes over, and the countries that are interested send their visa officers to examine the refugees and issue the visas. Also, some from that camp might go to a holding camp such as there is in Wiener Neustadt for those who wish to emigrate to Canada; a holding camp is for people who have been visaed but who are waiting for future transportation.

This is a system which was set up of necessity because the refugees were crossing the border in a continuous stream. The procedure had to be kept up to move them further and further away from the border as the new refugees arrived.

The next day, we visited one of these first-line reception centres at a place called Eisenstadt; through which by that time some 55,000 refugees had passed. Because refugees passed through so quickly and in numbers far exceeding its capacity, conditions there were appalling.

As we entered the gates we, of course, were met by many refugees who began asking questions and asked us to assist them. The guard at the gate told us that, if we wished to proceed through the camp with any expedition at all, we should remove our arm bands in order to be able to move in and out.

There were groups of refugees everywhere. The place was jammed to the hilt, and although it was late evening we were told that no more could be taken in that night. We went into the buildings where the beds were crowded side by side so that there was scarcely any room to move. We listened to the welfare officer tell us some pathetic stories.

We saw 4 young lads with very long faces standing in a corner. Upon inquiring what was the trouble, we were told that although accommodation was available for these young boys at Salzburg, some 200 miles away, because they were students, they were unable to go because no money was available for transportation. I may say that each one of the four of us reached in our pockets and paid out 100 schillings apiece, the equivalent of \$4, in order to pay for those boys' transportation. I wish the, hon. members could have seen how the faces of those boys lighted up when they were told what had been done.

We proceeded through the halls where people were lined up for the distribution of clothing, and it was so crowded we could scarcely pass.

We walked into a room which I shall never forget — a room that was filled with tubs and basins, and with clothes for the children and babies, on tables. This was where the babies were washed. Babies, throughout the trek in their mothers' arms, had no opportunity of any cleanliness at all; yet in the frightful surroundings of these camps they were able to get the attention and care that every mother wants for her child.

We saw the staff working, and you could see they were weary almost to the point of collapse. We saw the food being handed out — very rough in form.

Everywhere, as soon as people — refugees — knew who we were, they asked questions and asked for assistance.

Gradually we passed through the refugees within the building and went out into the fresh air; and it was good to be able to breathe that fresh air, and for us, from Canada, it was difficult to understand why it is that human beings should be subjected to such conditions.

As we were leaving the camp the refugees followed us up to the gates, asking questions and requesting assistance.

Earlier that day we had visited two other camps that were in the process of being readied for occupation. The one at Trieskirchen, although not yet completed, was already overcrowded with 4,000 refugees; and the camp at Wiener Neustadt, which Canada was taking over as a holding camp, although it was in a very uncompleted stage. The first bus load of refugees was driven up while we were visiting.

Those camps are typical of those I saw in Austria — some 65. Of these, only about 6 or 8 are actually habitable.

The word "camp" may lead to a little misconception. They are not camps as we understand them. They are old public buildings, old army barracks, or old buildings left from Hitler's occupation. Some have been unused, perhaps for many years. They include buildings of almost any kind that have been unused and ignored through the years; and suddenly they have had to be made usable. A great many of them had been occupied by the Russian occupation forces in Austria, and prior to their evacuation from Austria they had ripped the "guts" out of every building they had occupied — ripped out the electricity, plumbing, water and heating systems—and all this had to be replaced in order to make the place even livable.

The accommodation in these camps is as I have described. In the first-line camps the refugees sleep on floors; the second-line camps function as I have told you; in the third-line camps there is some separation of families and a little more room to move.

The staff is made up of Austrian civil servants, Red Cross organizers, volunteer workers and members of international agencies.

The discipline in the camps we saw was very good. The refugees were participating in the work around the buildings. We were told that they cooperated and were very honest.

In Trieskirchen, although it was crowded, there was a very large room which had been set aside as a chapel for the use of all denominations. At the time we were there, a very large class was in progress.

Everywhere in the camps electricians and plumbers were doing their best to beat the winter season which was rapidly closing in. I may say that the sights in the camps made a tremendous impact on me. Seldom have I suffered such an emotional impact, and I am sure that any hon. member of this House or any citizen of Ontario would have had the same emotional impact. I am sure that the policy of the United States of America will be influenced by the fact that Vice-President Nixon has visited the camps.

Early in the course of the trip we had heard of the Hungarian University of Sopron, about 7 miles from the Austrian border. After the revolution had been quelled, a decision was reached, and the university as a whole — staff, students and



dependents — crossed the border en masse into Austria and were stationed as a unit near Salzburg.

We proceeded to Salzburg to see them; arriving there, we stayed overnight, and in the morning made our way to the building in Strohl where the students were.

As we opened the door, the most surprising thing of the whole trip happened: sitting at the entrance to this door were the 4 young lads for whom we had provided transportation back in Eisenstadt.

Again, these lads had the longest of faces. As we walked in they jumped up in amazement and besieged us with words. Gradually we were able to make out the story. They had been misdirected and should not have been in this camp at all, because it was for the university alone. Staff, students and dependents would soon be dispersed, and no provision could be made for the lads to stay on.

We assured them, as we felt some personal responsibility for their welfare — after all, we had paid their transportation to that place — that we would see what arrangements could be made for them.

We then discovered the university staff were quartered some 10 miles away. We wished to see them first, so we drove to their quarters. At that very time arrangements were being completed for the Faculty of Forestry to go to British Columbia. Many had already left for England, Switzerland and Sweden. These mining professors were, of course, wondering where they would end up.

We had long chats with them, and many questions about Canada and Ontario were asked, and then we took our leave of them — however, not before asking the senior professor to check to see where these 4 boys were supposed to have gone.

We discovered they should have been directed to a camp for high school students 20 miles on the other side of Salzburg. We had agreed to take care of the boys and make sure they arrived safely.

As we walked out of the building who should be sitting on the side of the road but the same 4 youths, with desperate looks on their faces. Somehow they had travelled this 10 miles; it was a mystery how they got there, but they had the idea we were their only single hope. We assured them that if they stayed on the spot we would pick them up and look after them.

Then we proceeded to the camp where the students were assembled, and we had lengthy conversations with them. As it was getting late we bid them good-bye and wished them the best of luck no matter where they might end up, and proceeded back to St. Wolfgang.

Stopping at St. Wolfgang, we picked up the 4 lads and drove to Salzburg. We left them at the bus station and gave them a few schillings for their fare, and watched as they cheerfully walked up the street. I have since often wondered about them, and sincerely hope they indeed did find a place of refuge.

As to the statistics on the refugees themselves, those which I have are, of course, as of December 10th, and since then have increased. In order to give you, Mr. Speaker, some conception of the problem at that time, these are the figures:

As of December 10th, some 122,000 had arrived: 48,000 had left, and 74,000 still remained in Austria. They were crossing the border at the rate, at that time, of 2,000 to 3,000 a night, and departing from Austria at the rate of about 3,000 or 4,000 a day.

The immediate problem, of course, was to move the refugees out of the small country because of the vast numbers coming in, and the neighbouring nations,

as the hon. Prime Minister has pointed out, began to admit them. I give these figures from recollection, but I believe that Switzerland immediately took 10,000, Holland 5,000, France 5,000, Italy 4,000, Germany 6,000, the United Kingdom 11,000, and the United States of America, of course, was then committed to 21,500.

The intake was fluctuating at that time depending on how tightly the Russians were patrolling the border, and as soon as they tightened at one spot, of course, the refugees moved on to another spot. It is difficult to have a guard along 108 miles.

However, at the time we were there it dropped overnight, and it was discovered the Russians had erected a false Austrian border within the Hungarian border, with signs posted up, and then the refugees would think they had crossed the border, enter into the open, and then be taken into custody. At that time most of the refugees were coming from Budapest, but they were gradually coming from further back, behind and inland.

The breakdown at that time as to type of refugees was this: about 70 per cent. were males around 30 years of age — either a little under or a little more — boys and single men. Only about 5 per cent. were young, single women; about 15 per cent. were married men with wives and children, and some 10 per cent. were married women and children. About 5 per cent. were over the age of 50, and of these only 2 per cent. were really medical cases.

The refugees were, in the main, young-looking and healthy, very poorly clothed, and most of them carried very few personal possessions. Very few spoke other than Hungarian. Many were labourers, these were of many skills and many trades. The women appeared industrious, were very quiet, and very much concerned about their children. The long period of oppression with no freedom and no economic future, and the fear of deportation, explains the type of refugees who were in Austria at that time.

Parents in Hungary were sending their children out of the country, and there were many young people between the ages of 11 and 15 who joined other refugees and crossed the border with them. It is these, generally speaking, who will present a particular problem to the nations of the world. Who is going to look after their education, and find foster families for them? There were, of course, as the hon. members know, very few children available for adoption because most of them had parents in Hungary who had sent them across the border to freedom.

These statistics were gathered by myself in a very hurried fashion and, of course, are not up to date. The total figures exceed to date, I believe, 150,000. The hon. Minister of Citizenship and Immigration the other day filed very accurate statistics on those who had been visaed for Canada, and I am sure his department has up-to-date statistics for Austria.

Mr. Speaker, upon my return to Toronto I made a statement, the gist of which was as follows:

The most vivid impression I had of the Hungarian problem was its magnitude. You can see large figures presented in the newspapers: I can use the figure 150,000, but it is only when by sight you can translate that number into 150,000 human beings that the figures have any significance at all.

The second impression I had, Mr. Speaker, at the time was the urgency of the situation. Austria was faced, of course, with grave political and economic problems, including that of getting the refugees out very quickly in order to make

room for new arrivals. It would have been a tragedy — a disaster for the western world — if Austria had been forced, because of being unable to cope with the refugees, to close her borders. Of course, the refugees there even now are living in what to us are intolerable conditions. It is difficult to know how long such refugees, living under those conditions, will be able to keep up the healthy condition most of them are in at the present time.

Because of the magnitude of this problem, in my initial statement to the hon. Prime Minister — giving him a general impression — I expressed my opinion that a special arm, a special international agency should be formed under the aegis of the United Nations. This should be done in order to correlate all the work which individual members of the United Nations were doing. If it were not feasible for the United Nations to create such an agency, then perhaps it could be handled by that other body, NATO, of which most of the interested nations — those participating in the movement — are members.

When a layman sees the very efficient way in which the inter-governmental committee on European migration operated, and, of course, its only concern was with transportation; when one sees the splendid way in which supplies were being taken in as a whole and distributed by the League of Red Cross Societies then, when it is recognized that there are special problems such as what will happen to the young people between the ages of 11 and 18; when it is borne in mind that a great many people in many countries are in temporary camps, and some future will have to be provided for them it gives him reason to suggest, as I did, that an inter-governmental committee of some kind be set up.

Such a committee could be similar to the International Refugee Organization of postwar days, because it would have to deal with the emergency at hand, the long-term overall planning, and be prepared for any sudden crisis aggravating the present situation by a further large exodus of refugees.

If one were to start at the international level and work through the national, state, provincial and municipal levels, right down to the individual, I am convinced that there would be no problem at all too difficult to be solved.

In trying to describe the Hungarian refugees it is a most difficult task to try to describe a group of people as a whole. If I were asked to describe the people of Ontario I could say that they were freedom-loving, religious, industrious, law-abiding, desirous of standing on their own feet; I could say that quite properly, and yet might there not be the exception

If we were to take a block of 150,000 residents of Ontario, and out of that 150,000 take 10,000, might we not get the exceptions at the same time as we would get a large number of those who fulfil the general description? So it is with any large group of human beings, and so it may be with the refugees.

As the hon. Prime Minister has pointed out, we in Canada have had decades of experience with newcomers. Canadians have never attempted to shut out others from what we call the "Canadian way of life"; indeed, the "Canadian way of life" is based, in part, on the admission of those who wish to be a part of that way of life. On the other side of the coin, newcomers have shown a desire to become part of that national life and, indeed, again it is the fulfilment of that desire which is another part of our "Canadian way of life."

Mr. Speaker, the only difference between what is happening now and what has been happening through the years is the circumstances that surround the

migration; circumstances created by the special situation and the urgency, as I have pointed out.

There may be difficulties, but difficulties have never before "fazed" either the people of Canada or of Ontario, and that part which we may be called upon to do is not indeed beyond the realm of our possibility.

There is needed only the understanding and co-operation of all — all levels of government and citizens as groups and individuals and, of course, the refugees.

This can be a noble undertaking that we have been called upon to do as a nation, as a province, and as citizens.

That which we have achieved in Canada — freedom and security — we have not achieved because of individual self-interest alone. It is because we have acted on the premise that our own well-being depended on the well-being of our fellow men.

That principle, applied internationally, has given Canada the stature it possesses in the world, and, domestically, that principle has provided us with what we have at home.

The whole refugee problem has posed questions for each of us as Canadian citizens:

Do we believe that a blow for freedom against Communist oppression, by anyone on his own behalf, is also struck on our behalf?

Who are our neighbours in distress? Are they the people next door, in the same city, in the same country, are they these alone, or are our neighbours also those who, although thousands of miles away, live in a world that can be spanned in less than 45 hours?

Do we believe that Canada... with its vast land area, its untapped resources, its great future, can achieve its destiny with the human resources we now have and no more?

I believe that the answer to these questions will guide each citizen's opinions in reference to the refugees.

Mr. Speaker, after my return to Toronto, I have had occasion to visit the West Lodge and the Barnardo Home reception centres. Last week I had occasion to visit the centre on Jarvis Street, and it was very heart-warming indeed to see some of the faces of the professors and students whom, only 6 weeks ago, I had met with and talked with in Strobl. There they were under the aegis of The Department of Education, huddled over their basic books, learning English as rapidly as they could.

I am hopeful — and I am sure it will be soon — of carrying on a conversation with them in the English language. There again we can look to something in the future, not only the benefit from the technical careers, but also for the leadership that they will provide in our community as a whole, and especially in that segment of the community which the people of Hungarian origin will form.

Integration is not an easy process; it is not a quick process. Adults take a little while. This particular group will, I feel sure, be integrated very rapidly, and I am hopeful that they, as young teens and women, will be the catalyst which will enable the earlier integration of all.

I visited the West Lodge, and I congratulate the hon. Minister of Planning and Development and his Deputy Minister, and all his staff, on the tremendous and magnificent job that they did in making that reception centre what it is today.... I congratulate all the departments on what they have done....

As a citizen of the province, I thank the hon. Prime Minister for the action he took....

May I close, Mr. Speaker, with the following: Not for [a] long time has there been the opportunity for all to put into practice the thought of those great words: "I was a stranger and ye took me in."



**A Document\***

**Ontario's Hungarians Respond  
to the Revolution and the Refugee Crisis:  
The Fund-Raising Drive**

**Audrey Wipper**

**The news** of the outbreak of a revolution in Hungary had an electrifying effect on Ontario's Hungarian-Canadian community. The members of this community immediately undertook a range of frenzied activities, all aimed at furthering the cause of their co-nationals in the mother country. One of the activities that they undertook was a fund-raising drive. At first they collected funds to help the people of Hungary. When the news came that Soviet forces had crushed the Revolution and that thousands of Hungarians were streaming across the Austrian border, the community's efforts were re-focused on helping the refugees.

The Hungarian community in Ontario prior to the fall of 1956 was a small ethnic group. Although individual Hungarian immigrants to Canada or small groups of them had started settling in Ontario's cities during the early part of the twentieth century, their arrival there in larger numbers did not start until the second half of the 1920s. Most of these newcomers were agricultural immigrants who had originally been directed to the Canadian prairies by immigration officials but they found conditions there not to their liking and moved to other parts of the country, including cities such as Hamilton, Brantford, Windsor, Welland, and Toronto. There they began to establish their immigrant institutions: their ethnic organizations and parishes, self-

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\* This study has been excerpted from chapter seven of the author's 1958 in part eyewitness account entitled "A Study of the Reactions of Hungarian Canadians to the Hungarian Crisis, with Special Emphasis on Activities in the Toronto Region." The report was prepared for the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Research Division, Citizenship Branch. The four introductory paragraphs to this paper were added by this volume's editor.

help organizations as well as social clubs. Their progress was hindered by the conditions inflicted on Canadian society by the Great Depression. Chronic unemployment and poverty did not begin to lift for Ontario's Hungarian communities until about the third year of the Second World War.

From the early years of the Depression to the end of the War immigration from Hungary to Canada had virtually ceased. During the late 1940s the country's doors were once again opened to Hungarian newcomers. The new immigration of Hungarians differed in many ways from the pre-1930 one. Although Canadian authorities wanted to make sure that people who were admitted were predominantly menial workers, the newcomers who came were more likely to have had better training and schooling than the interwar immigrants. Many of them were of middle-class or even upper-class background and were members of the professions, including the military. Many of them had been leaders and soon after their arrival, they tried to assume leading roles in the immigrant communities they joined. Relations between the newcomers and the old immigrants was often strained.

1956 was not the first time that Ontario's Hungarian community undertook a fund-raising drive for the benefit of their less fortunate compatriots in Europe. Such a drive had been mounted at the end of the Second World War.<sup>1</sup> One would assume that in 1956 the lessons learned from that effort would have been available to the fund-raisers of that time. But they were not, or not entirely. The reasons for this were numerous. Most important was the fact that the leadership of the community had changed over the decade that had passed. The war-time and immediate post-war campaign was undertaken by the leaders of the "old" immigration, while many if not most of the participants of the drive in 1956 were members of the post-war wave of Hungarian immigrants. In any case, the collective memories of any ethnic group doesn't tend to last long. It is not surprising under the circumstances that the campaign to raise funds to help the 1956 refugees encountered all kinds of difficulties.

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Studies of Canadian philanthropic organizations have shown that large scale philanthropy puts to benefit the social organization that a community has developed in its business life, its residential arrangements and the voluntary associations of its people. The Hungarian group, without the ramified membership of a large urban community, plunged into fund-raising. Lacking experienced personnel and adequate facilities, they were confronted with many difficulties. An examination of their activity points to the way in which an ethnic group — individuals who have a common heritage but not a complement of metropolitan institutions — may be called upon to perform tasks which normally are assigned to the leaders of highly differentiated



population aggregates of considerable size. The following materials show a boy doing a man's work: a few individuals who had at their disposal the facilities of a few ethnic associations and who tackled a task for which the institutional forces of a large urban community are usually mustered. The data that will be presented here are not meant to give an exhaustive account of difficulties; they are rather used illustratively to support the view that a small ethnic group in a large urban setting lacks an organizational structure commensurate with the needs of organized philanthropy.

### **The Absence of an Organizational Structure**

Confusion was the keynote of the philanthropic campaign. It began without the support of a specialized institutional framework. A public relations person called in to help stated: "These last few days have been the most confused in my entire life. There is no skeletal framework for radio, television and the newspapers. They are standing by, waiting for directions from us." Incorrect news releases stated that the fund had been called off. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation could not go ahead with the publicity until a national committee had been formed. The national chairman, when he was finally appointed and arrived on the scene several days after the campaign had begun, commented: "I do not see that you have gotten anywhere. I was told that I would be heading (the campaign) in a nominal way. If I may make one observation, the campaign has not progressed very far. I do not see any semblance of a national organization."

Pleas for aid brought a surplus of help and the presence of many added to the confusion. The absence of an organization, prepared to train volunteers and to utilize effectively a variety of skills and a large number of part-time helpers, resulted in wastage. Ethnic identification and willingness to help, rather than technical qualifications, were the chief criteria on the basis of which voluntary services were accepted. Emotional predispositions, that impeded rather than promoted efficient organization, were frequent adjuncts of willingness to serve. And without a system of authority whereby tasks and areas of responsibility were assigned, people were too free to engage in any task regardless of their qualifications and to assume unwarranted authority themselves. This led to both inefficiency and conflict.<sup>2</sup>

Officials of the Canadian Hungarian Federation tried to give leadership, but as one worker said: "It's like one subway car trying to take all the passengers." A tremendous number of demands were being placed on a group whose activities prior to the crisis had consisted only of arranging one or two yearly social gatherings. The Federation's right to speak for a number of ethnic organizations was also questioned. A minister commented that some groups would not send in the money which they had collected because their

members did not approve of the Federation's leadership. He explained: "I said at the meeting, when they asked why the money was not coming in, it's because these groups do not recognize the Federation. The Federation is a nominal head of the Hungarians, that is all."

A tremendous number of letters stockpiled, as there was insufficient staff to answer them. Many required an answer from a person in authority and scarce people with authority and linguistic ability were involved in other tasks. Canadian volunteers became engaged in a campaign where much of the everyday communication was in a language which they did not understand.

The first organizational blue print for the campaign called for a national committee composed of a chairman and one co-chairman from each of the provinces. Each co-chairman would head a provincial committee whose job it would be to co-ordinate efforts provincially. In this way, the organizational structure would extend its branches to all levels of the population. However, co-chairmen could not be secured. The campaign had been underway for several weeks when, in desperation, two Federation officials assumed the posts of honorary secretary and Ontario co-chairman. An official representative of both the Federation and the relief fund, while attending to their regular jobs during the day, they were in exceptionally great demand.

When the structure was finalized, it consisted of a purely nominal national committee and an unspecified number of local committees. National business was carried out by the Toronto committee. The suggestion of disbanding the Toronto committee at the end of the local campaign brought a worried reminder from a Federation official: "But ladies, there is no national committee!" To take care of formalities, the Toronto committee was dissolved while the same personnel continued to work as before but then in the name of the national campaign. The frailty of the organizational framework was epitomized by a remark of one volunteer who had carried the campaign activities quite single-handed. She commented: "You know, I suddenly woke up one night and said to myself, 'you realize that you are not only running the city campaign but also the national campaign!'"

A professional in public relations work was assigned to publicize the national campaign. But the untiring efforts of one expert were hardly a match for the mammoth task. Directives sent out in the name of the Canadian Hungarian Relief Fund asked local Hungarian organizations to set up a campaign in their community. The Canadian Red Cross Society sent directives to its local units, asking them to co-operate with the groups. In communities where there were no Hungarian Canadians, it was hoped that another ethnic organization or a group of citizens would carry on. The campaign had to depend mainly on its national publicity to reach communities where there was no local organization. Sometimes, committees worked on their own without any knowledge of the national campaign. During a period

of four months, one campaign would be in its last stage when another would only be starting. Although the campaign initially was meant to have the character of a *Blitzkrieg* and December the 15th had been set as the deadline, because of the slowness with which campaigns started in many centres, it was mid-February before the objective was reached.

With little machinery of co-ordination and no systematized plan, fund-raising depended solely on the initiative of individuals and individual communities. The magnanimous gestures of individuals and groups from all strata of the population must not be overlooked or minimized. The campaign was barely underway when donations poured in. A businessman sent a cheque for \$10,000; an elderly Hungarian Canadian sent her bank-book with her entire savings of \$700; an office-girl canvassed banks during her lunch hour and collected several thousand dollars; and, the individual efforts of a Latvian immigrant gained over \$7000. People who had experienced Soviet domination were particularly generous and helpful. Ethnic organizations, especially those of Eastern Europe and the Baltic countries, gave large donations and engaged in various money-making schemes. Many towns and cities, sparked by the initiative of their citizens, carried out successful campaigns. Churches, service clubs, women's organizations, children's groups, and many others far too numerous to mention, gave financial support generously. Nonetheless, in this day of organized philanthropy, causes which have far less dramatic appeal employ far more powerful tactics and achieve much higher monetary objectives.

### **The Need for Community Sponsorship**

To be successful, a philanthropic campaign must be supported by people of prestige. The Red Cross was asked to administer the fund because, according to one source, a top government official had stated that he wanted it under the auspices of a reputable concern. Another source said: "Until there was a national chairman, we had to use the Canadian Red Cross, as it alone had enough prestige." The chairman of a meeting called together to organize the campaign suggested the names of a former Prime Minister and of another prominent Canadian to head the Toronto campaign. "Either," he stated, "would be acceptable to people in every walk of life."

The Canadian Red Cross Society can boast of an important roster of patrons, among them: Her Majesty the Queen; His Excellency the Governor-General; The Right Honourable Prime Minister of Canada; Major-General the Earl of Athlone, K.G., G.C.B., G.C.M.G., C.G.C.O., D.S.O., A.D.C.; and Field Marshall the Right Honourable Viscount Alexander of Tunis, K.C., G.C.B., G.C.M.G., C.S.I., D.S.O., M.C., LL.D. Not only is the patronage of

the highest officialdom in Canada extended to the Red Cross but also that of the supreme office in the British Commonwealth.

When people are asked to donate money, they must be convinced first that the cause is worthy. Hence, the backing of the right people is essential to a campaign. The Canadian-Hungarian ethnic group, composed mainly of immigrants and a few second-generation citizens, did not have within its own ranks the people who would have been influential nationally.

Secondly, the fund-raiser must be absolutely trustworthy. And that is something the newcomer never is. He has not been in the community long enough for its residents to have gained as much confidence in him as they have in one of their own.

When the campaign is compared with the aforementioned model there are a number of differences:

The main criterion of recruitment was ethnic identification rather than criteria that advanced the organization's goals. In this identification there were a number of elements that deterred from rather than promoted the attainment of the objective.

Since there was no screening, everyone was supposedly welcome. The services of volunteers were, however, to a large extent wasted because of the lack of a training system and of an organization into which to fit people with a variety of skills.

Wide gaps occurred in the organization's structure. A purely nominal national committee and a haphazard assortment of local committees with a void in between left much to chance. The channels of communication were inarticulate, the authority structure, and areas of responsibility were undefined.

The organizers had to go beyond their own ranks to recruit people. They had no technical experts or people of power and patronage who were willing to place financial and other resources at the campaign's disposal.

Entirely inexperienced in the intricacies of fund-raising, as well as having only recently arrived in Canada, the Hungarian Canadians lacked both "know-how" and the "know-who," two essentials in the game of fund-raising.

### **Amateurs Invade an Area Belonging to Professionals: The Character of Red Cross Work**

The Canadian Red Cross is part of a Federation of Red Cross Societies of 74 nations designed to establish a "co-ordinated system of international relief throughout the world". More specifically, the Red Cross is organized: "To furnish volunteer aid to the sick and wounded of armies in time of war... In time of peace or war to carry on and assist in work for the improvement of

health, the prevention of disease and the mitigation of suffering throughout the world.... To give home and help to people everywhere regardless of colour, creed or political belief."

One of the routine functions of this professional humanitarian organization is to handle emergencies, situations that are crises in the lives of others. In Canada, for instance, catastrophes such as floods and fires claim the attention of the National Disaster Services Committee. In addition to its full-time staff of qualified specialists, it can call upon a trained volunteer staff. An official explained why it could mobilize rapidly:

You see, we are set up to handle a campaign. We have the administrative staff, the warehouse facilities, the voluntary force. Our personnel know what to purchase and where. We have stenographers, typewriters and office equipment. We can hire extra stenos if we need them. If the government had to set up an organization to handle a campaign, it would involve tremendous costs. With us, it does not mean having to change anything. Every department assumes extra duties. I carry on with my own work but work on the campaign in addition. And when the operation is completed, we just close the doors. If the establishment had to be set up, it would be difficult also to dissolve the organization. It would take many months....

When fund-raising came under the jurisdiction of the Red Cross, it became an activity in an organization where action is governed by a body of rules and regulations, a set of guiding principles, and is carried out by a hierarchy of persons each with his own specified tasks.

The goals and tactics of operation are clearly defined; definite systems of communication and authority prevail. Ideally, every series of action promotes the organization's goals. Relations among personnel tend toward a certain formality, since stable sets of expectations are built up and interaction is restricted by previously defined roles.

### **Heterogeneous Pursuits and Unexpected Occurrences**

Hungarian Canadians began relief work without professional help. A state of high excitement prevailed at the time. It was reflected in the atmosphere of hustling informality at relief headquarters. The couches were usually filled by men carrying on discussions while women did office work. Delegates from relief organizations outside Toronto visited the headquarters. Committee meetings and press conferences were frequently in session. One worker remarked at the time: "There's lots of good company." A group of workers

would suddenly discover at nine o'clock that they had not eaten and adjourn to the corner restaurant for long conversations over dinner.

This was the period during which enthusiastic volunteers attempted to co-ordinate relief activities by themselves, without the help of a professional staff like that of the Red Cross. Attempts at organizing were continually frustrated by unexpected events that made each day at the relief centre a surprise package. A multitude of projects, schemes and stratagems were afoot in Toronto and in the rest of the country which eventually found their way to the Toronto headquarter offices. Much time was spent advising and channelling the deluge of individual effort. Much of the work had to be done at night, since volunteer helpers had daytime obligations. The account which follows is a harried relief-worker's description of an evening at the fund headquarters. It emphasizes the heterogeneity of the pursuits in which the volunteers were involved.

She had received a message stating that two Hungarians and a flag were wanted in Barrie the next evening. She did not know where to locate the flag and could not find the person who would know.

A wife had telephoned trying to locate her errant, relief-working husband.

A young man, an alleged captain, had dropped by to explain excitedly that he had evidence which proved that a person, who professed to be organizing an army, was actually backed by Communists. The Communists, he said, were supporting him as discreditable propaganda. He had another theory that the person's aims and personality clashed.

Three persons had called to see a Hungarian-Canadian leader. On learning that he was not there, they had refused to give their names but left the message that "three gentlemen from Latvia had called", adding that he would understand. Later on, she had found one of the three men, who had been assumed to have left, with "his ear to the wall" in an adjoining room.

During this episode, a Hungarian Canadian, oblivious to all, had composed a letter which he wanted checked. He had written "due to the mangled details of the campaign". Did he mean the "manifold details"? He did. Close surveillance of his work was necessary. It had been necessary to suggest to him that, in writing the national chairman, one omits telling revelations — such as, "the last few days, it has been a madhouse around here" and "in spite of the publicity, only eight hundred people showed up" — and uses idioms other than "fat cheques"....

People devised their own projects, since Hungarian Canadians and others were interested in doing many things besides raising funds. Some

carried them out without any consultation with the relief office, while others presented them for approval. An elderly spinster, several weeks before the refugees began to arrive, appeared at the headquarters, said that her house was ready for a family, and inquired as to where she could obtain a cradle and a Hungarian-English dictionary. A retired Shakespearian actor volunteered to read Shakespeare to the refugees and to give public readings to raise funds. Several individuals, who were not affiliated with drug companies, began taking orders for drugs to be sent overseas.

Three Canadians who were not of Hungarian descent, weeks after the fighting in Budapest had ceased and when even Hungarian Canadians had abandoned the idea of military aid, hatched a plan whereby they would be parachuted into Hungary. Their plan caused one of the organizers of the volunteer army proposed earlier, The Legion of Freedom, to remark that "Canadians are crazier than Hungarians". In the midst of a scene of pandemonium, an official of a welfare organization remarked: "Every time that we have a campaign, every crackpot in town wants to get in on it."

Another person, without military experience or any apparent group sponsorship, set out to recruit an army for Hungary. He collected more than a thousand dollars in donations, recruited about a dozen followers and placed large advertisements in the newspapers.<sup>3</sup> In explaining the purpose of his organization, he said:

This organization is a completely personal organization of mine. Its aim is the formation of a free army of volunteers, to help actively the Hungarian people in its fight for freedom. I cannot say whether this organization can really help. I believe in the necessity of starting it because no one will lift a finger for the Hungarian people. I intend to do anything I can, as far as the Law permits.

He wrote several letters to the Federal Government, notifications of his project and requests for financial help. His letters to Ottawa brought lengthy replies and enclosures of the speeches given by the Minister of External Affairs before the United Nations Assembly on the Hungarian situation. He was accused of having collected funds under the guise of a priest several years before but the charges could not be substantiated. He aroused the suspicions of several people, nonetheless, and they joined his organization in order to watch him. Hence, this one individual caused numerous other people to take action, as well as some officials of the Canadian Red Cross, the Department of External Affairs and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Excitement produced many unforeseen occurrences. Enthusiasm spread, and, fanned by the events in Hungary, a kind of chain reaction brought more and more people unto the scene. The complications which filled each day made it extremely difficult to follow a plan of operations or to designate

work to volunteers. They were unfamiliar with the situation and unguided as to which activity was sensible and legitimate.

Hungarian-Canadian leaders were called to the public stage, for in giving its support the public also made its demands. Their presence was requested at numerous meetings, at civic and fund-raising functions. One leader remarked that they spent so much time attending meetings that they never had a chance to do anything. Three of the original Toronto committee were sent to Vienna. Some of these people appeared to be swept quite unwillingly into the vortex of activity. It was said of one of the leaders: "Poor X., he would like to get out of all this! He does not like publicity."

The snowballing effect of mass excitement carried certain individuals along with it, left others in its wake and gave many an opportunity to define their own roles. It crystallized the issue of leadership: the Red Cross Headquarters building was regarded as the centre of relief work and the Federation, the publicly acknowledged representative of Hungarian Canadians. Yet, this period, when activity was not cast into an institutional mould, provided scope for individual action. The nature of the situation, characterized by mass enthusiasm and anxiety, lent itself to the manipulation of individuals in a variety of ways. Some were accused of seeking publicity and of exploiting circumstances for purely selfish motives. Others saw themselves only performing special tasks: individuals appeared to desire leadership roles that had given them satisfaction in the past and others settled for fantasy roles. Most volunteers, however, not knowing what to do, wanted simply to be directed into useful activity.

### **A Threat to the Reputation of the Red Cross**

Having contracted to look after the campaign's finances, Red Cross personnel and other professionals viewed the tactics of the "disorganized Hungarians" with dismay and with increasing alarm.

Radio and television announcements referred to the fund by a variety of names, including that of the Canadian Red Cross Hungarian Relief Fund. This, and many other issues, had to be clarified. Bound by its principles to help all peoples, the Red Cross could not be linked with the partisan interests of any group. The Red Cross received a letter offering \$10,000 to the fund on certain specified conditions. The letter was filed away in the fund office without being answered, and located only several days later on the inquiry of a Red Cross official.

The variety of ethnic leaders proved distracting to those who had to work with them and to assume responsibility towards welfare organizations. One such official said:



Hungarians are divided amongst themselves. There are religious and political differences. All Hungarian groups have been collecting money: the R.C. church started its fund, the others wouldn't go along;.... The Catholics will not give to the Protestants nor the Protestants to the Catholics. A Hungarian would go to the radio station, saying he represented the group, and make an announcement. The next morning, another Hungarian would arrive. The radio people would say: "What does this mean? We had an announcement last night:" They would be told: "Oh, them? They are not doing anything. We're the real group running things." They are completely disorganized. All have their headquarters in this building. It's neutral ground for them all.

Members of the ethnic group continually apologized for their lack of organization. One said: "We're emotional. Probably, we do things of which the Red Cross does not approve." And another said: "We were not organized for this kind of campaign; we are all working people. Some had used up all of their holiday time on relief work and others had taken so much time from work that they were afraid of losing their jobs.

Amateurs in the presence of professionals, they felt ill at ease and rationalized in a variety of ways their inability to cope with the situation. At first, Red Cross personnel regarded the Hungarian Canadians with supercilious tolerance. They were watching inept novices fumble at work that was a professional prerogative. Then, highly disturbed over the amateurs' confusion, the professionals voiced their consternation and took action.

A Red Cross official stated that the Red Cross simply could not continue to work with such a variety of people. "I am terribly worried about the reputation of your organization and ours, she said. I have not been home one night since this began. You will have to get organized." Another official said that the campaign was going in circles. "More a clash of personalities than anything else, he said. I gave them jolly old hail Columbia. I told them they had to stop this bickering and organize." And in another community with similar difficulties, a newspaper reporter said : "I told the Mayor that I wouldn't do anything until they got organized." Comments were frequently voiced, such as "I have never seen an organized Hungarian". As a first step towards organization, radio pleas for help, that brought a surplus of novices, were stopped.

The campaign placed other strains upon Red Cross staff. Several departments, especially the financial, were given much additional work. given departments that did not share any of the work load were affected indirectly. Red Cross personnel in the office adjoining the fund's headquarters found their telephones continually in use and arrived in the morning to find evidence of the occupancy of their desks the night before. Finally, doors were installed

between the relief office and the other departments; the fund-raisers were requested also to limit their calls to their own telephones.

Volunteers and Red Cross personnel had different attitudes towards the campaign. The former worked at their regular jobs during the day and devoted their evenings to the campaign. This was an opportunity that would not come again for them and it was their duty to do their utmost. Personnel from the Red Cross regarded the campaign as part of their work: an additional job that should be fitted into the workday — even though they often willingly worked nights — and one to be handled with their customary efficiency. The Red Cross had much at stake in maintaining its high repute. It regarded the Hungarian Canadians simply as another group that required its facilities and help for a short time. In writing its local branches, the National Red Cross stated that, "in addition to its usual function of accepting and administering a designated fund, the Canadian Red Cross Society is, in this instance, taking some action to assist the Canadian Hungarian Federation in the organization of the Canadian Hungarian Relief Fund but is doing so unofficially and anonymously."

The prospect of a mishandled campaign appeared as a real threat to the Red Cross. A reputation, among the public upon whom it is financially dependent and a collegial circle of professional organizations, had to be safeguarded. When the objective had not been reached at an advanced stage of the campaign, the Red Cross assigned to one of its public relations experts the task of "getting the campaign over the top".

### **Imposing a New Definition**

Once fund-raising came under the auspices of a professional organization, the goal was made explicit. The original, all-embracing and vague objectives were simplified and brought within reach. A one-goal humanitarian objective was meant to replace multiple-goal militancy. The following excerpt is an official statement by the Federation of the fund's objective.

The Canadian Hungarian Relief Fund has now been organized by the Canadian Hungarian Federation in co-operation with the Canadian Red Cross Society. The objective of the Fund is to collect money for giving aid to the victims of the tragic events in Hungary. The amounts collected will be used exclusively for Hungarian humanitarian purposes in Hungary as well as among the refugees in Austria.... The Canadian Red Cross is to make arrangements for the proper use of the funds in Hungary and among the refugees who managed to escape to the West.

Policy was defined. The Federation notified local organizations of the procedures that were to be followed.

The Canadian Hungarian Relief Fund collects money only. Clothing, drugs, food, etc., can be readily bought in Europe thus saving the cost of transportation. Please, *do not* collect used clothing since the Red Cross cannot undertake its distribution.... The next step should be the establishment of a close liaison with the local or closest branch of the Canadian Red Cross Society....

The branches of the Canadian Red Cross Society will take no official part in the local committees, but will be most helpful and efficient in assisting you in every way.... In your local publicity, you *cannot* refer to the Red Cross as the *sponsor* of the fund. You *can* say that the Fund is *administered* by the Red Cross Society.

Individualistic activity now met with institutional and sometimes even physical blocks. Instructions were given: "Stress no used clothing. It's of absolutely no value." Political meetings within the Red Cross premises were forbidden. "Tell (a Hungarian Canadian) to carry on his political meetings elsewhere; this is an office for the fund-raising campaign only," a volunteer ordered. The uninhibited flow of people was stopped by rearranging office furniture so that the reception desk would barricade the entrance. Closing the office during the evenings stopped its use as a major meeting place. Near the end of the campaign, a non-Hungarian volunteer was able to say: "This office has ceased being a madhouse."

Efforts were made to centralize and channel communication. A professional was assigned the job of co-ordinating national publicity. The Federation issued a directive to its organizations, that "all statements or appeals on a nation-wide scale must be handled by our headquarters in Toronto". It was suggested to stop the daily newsletter written in Magyar by a member of the Federation to its organizations. A Hungarian Canadian, who wanted to obtain the services of a European reporter, was told that the stories would not be used because there was no guarantee as to their authenticity. At first, there was no control over incoming telephone calls and all calls related to relief work were directed to the fund headquarters. Later, calls not concerned with fund-raising were directed to other agencies.

One factor, the involvement of Hungarian Canadians in refugee work, contributed more than any other to the change in atmosphere at fund-raising headquarters. It was not due to the efforts of organizers but to external circumstances. With the arrival of the refugees, the public's and the Hungarian Canadians' focus of interest changed. The services of Hungarian Canadians were needed at the reception centres. The spontaneous and unanticipated occurrences that had eluded organization at relief fund headquarters now

occurred at the reception centres. The fund-raisers found that they were able to cope with relative ease with the regular campaign tasks.

On December the 15th, a one-day fund-raising *Blitzkrieg*, the last official appeal of the Toronto campaign was made.<sup>4</sup>

Toronto Hungarian Relief Day was well named because it was an all-Toronto effort. With the professional services of a public relations expert, prominent clubwomen secured the co-operation of service, welfare and business organizations, newspapers, radio and television, and help from officials of the Red Cross, Toronto City Police, the municipal government and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

### **Character of the New Sponsorship**

A complete changeover in personnel had occurred from the first all-Hungarian committee, under the chairmanship of Father Simon of St. Elizabeth is Church, to the succeeding committee, a roster of Canadians that represented wealth, social prestige and influence. The committee members were on a first name basis with each other and with many of the city's notables. They commanded a ready supply of voluntary help, from such groups as the I.O.D.E., the Junior League and the Catholic Women's League. It was under the personal influence of committee members that some business and corporations gave generous donations.<sup>4</sup>

With a narrowing of the objectives of relief activity, the whole population was asked to contribute. Before this could take place, leaders from the larger community had to enter the movement. They brought with them the framework of relationships that an urban community possesses but which a small ethnic group lacks. People with prestige and administrative experience came on the scene to give the campaign legitimacy and orderliness.

The fact that the agents and representatives of the larger community were able to organize relief activities better than they had been so far must be credited in part to their prior administrative training for such tasks. It must not be forgotten, however — and this is their major advantage over members of the ethnic group — that their prior business and social training had placed them in a position to draw upon the facilities of the urban community. The new leaders were a highly selected group, in terms of their knowledge of the community's social and economic structure and of the claims which they could make on important people who themselves had claims on others.<sup>6</sup> They were not people rapidly selected among a small social group because of their ethnic identification and their willingness to serve. It is in contrasting those people, their experience and the network of institutional relationships at their disposal, with Hungarian Canadians, their experience and their ethnic group's lack of a social structure, that we can most fairly account for the organizing

ability of our representatives and the disorganization that highlighted much of Hungarian-Canadian activity.

### **Opposition to the New Definition**

The implementation of a new goal and policy brought clashes with the already established ways and activities. Even though fund-raising for humanitarian purposes was the goal agreed upon, the Hungarian Canadians were still interested in all measures that would help Hungary. At times, they had to be reminded that their multiple goal and provocative effort were no longer appropriate. The following incident illustrates this fact.

At a meeting of representatives of government, welfare and service organizations, a Hungarian-Canadian leader produced a telegram to the Minister of External Affairs that he wished the meeting to endorse. The telegram urged sending a United Nations' Force into Hungary. The chairman asked if the suggestion was practical, in the light of Hungary's refusal to allow the entry of neutral observers. The Hungarian Canadian replied that practicality did not matter; it was something that ought to be done. "If there were anything they could do, they should try." A Red Cross official spoke up: "We are here today to help needy people. Greater powers than us look after the political situation." And the chairman added: "The best contribution we can make is to help you set up a Toronto committee."

Since the Federation's authority was not unquestionably accepted, however, a disagreement over goals meant that individuals and groups pursued their own. Individual projects were not abandoned. If a person wanted to organize an army, he did. If the public wanted to send him money, they were free to do so. Individual orders of drugs and other supplies were sent overseas, although the Red Cross and the Federation stressed that only Red Cross supplies were legally admitted into Hungary. They also issued instructions that used clothing was not to be collected but clothes still came into headquarters. People simply deposited used clothing which they had cleaned and refused to take it elsewhere. A Hungarian Canadian stolidly continued his own clothing drive. He had been a refugee once himself and he knew that warm clothes were needed.

Heterogeneous pursuits were given impetus by the external scene. A newspaper story reported that a priest had his own methods for getting supplies into Hungary. Several airlines stated that they were prepared to fly used clothing. A Canadian returned from visiting refugee camps and reported

that supplies were not reaching the refugees. Another asked on his return that individual parcels of magazines and personal supplies be sent to the camps.

The relief fund itself was an issue over which there was discord. The agreement between the Federation and the Red Cross had been that the latter would administer the fund. Writing all Divisional Commissioners, the Red Cross stated:

All moneys collected under the aegis of the Fund will be handed over to the Canadian Red Cross Society for administration.... Before the Fund was officially launched, the Hungarian churches were accepting donations and issuing church receipts valid for income tax purposes. In Toronto, these donations have been turned over in bulk to the Canadian Red Cross Society and one receipt was issued to each church bringing collections. Hungarians throughout the country have been instructed by their Federation to take similar action.

Such a measure, however, would interfere with local autonomy. Groups that did not recognize the Federation's authority had started their own funds and jealously guarded their independence. The Relief Fund, consisting of a nominal national committee without intermediary machinery between itself and the local groups, had no means of enforcing its decision and could do little about recalcitrant groups.

"The Red Cross had agreed to administer the fund, a Hungarian Canadian said, but there had been no agreement on its expenditure." A number of local committees required money for what they considered to be two justifiable reasons: to cover expenses incurred in the campaign and to help refugees who had arrived in their community. The Red Cross could not rescind the fund's declared purpose. Money collected for one purpose could not be used for another. Local committees, however, circumvented this regulation simply by earmarking certain sums for their own use and handing in the balance. Informing members at a meeting that he had spent some money on the refugees, the chairman of one relief committee said that he would inquire later from the Red Cross about the regulation. A minister on a local committee said: "We shall have to get in touch with the Red Cross. We don't want to send (the money) overseas, we shall have a lot of people here to look after. We want to be able to spend it here. The government looks after room and board but there are many other expenses."

Even among the group who had negotiated the agreement with the Canadian Red Cross Society, there was disgruntlement over their lack of a voice in the spending of the funds. They complained that the Red Cross regarded the money as its own. It was said: "We should have kept the Fund in our own hands. The Red Cross could have lent us a person." Speculations arose as to how the Red Cross would spend the money. One person believed

that the Red Cross, having donated a large amount from its own stock at the beginning, was replenishing its treasury by taking an equivalent amount from the fund.

Hungarian-Canadian leaders of the fund-raising campaign felt some resentment toward the professional organization that had taken away some of the roles which they had played in providing early leadership. It was said of an organizer: "X. thinks the Red Cross has sold him down the river. They are sitting back and doing nothing. They took the Hungarians in — but the Hungarians have to do all the organizing. Now, the Red Cross is getting all the publicity."

Misunderstandings arose also over the methods of managing the campaign. Differences in views with respect to the procurement of campaign supplies illustrate this fact. At the beginning, many supplies had been given gratuitously. A printer twice had run off several thousand cheque forms without charge. When ten thousand more were needed, he could not print them immediately but promised to have them ready in a few days. A professional insisted that they were needed at once. "Pay him!" she demanded. A volunteer explained that, after what he had done, one could not turn around and order him. The volunteer was noting that, once a relationship had been established on a benevolent rather than a business basis, it could not be changed even if the professional's emphasis on efficiency demanded it.

Concomitant with the established ways of operating, there were a set of social relationships that complicated the straightforward perusal of a new line. A volunteer told of an instance when she did not know how to face a minister of her acquaintance. He had come into headquarters with a refugee seeking information about how to obtain passage from Austria for the latter's family. "How could I tell him that we are only fund-raising?" she asked. He was standing there with sweat on his brow; and he had been coming in during the whole campaign." The volunteer had worked previously in an undefined situation, characterized by informality. Then, policy had imposed a set of formal relationships that were incompatible with previous modes of interaction.

In summary, it may be said that the imposition of a new definition did not mean that it was readily accepted. Although some activity was institutionalized, other more obstreperous activity was not so malleable. Individuals and groups resisted an outside authority that suddenly invaded their domain and told them what to do. When the rules appeared stringent and unreasonable, and the new definition far removed from actual problems, groups, with the backing of their leaders, developed the norms which to them seemed in keeping with the exigencies of the situation. This applied mainly in the area of interpersonal relationships. When policy is defined in the abstract, with little knowledge of the area of social relationships upon which it

impinges, it may be unrealistic to expect its observance should it conflict with these relationships.

## **Conclusions**

In trying to organize a fund-raising campaign, Hungarian Canadians were confronted with a set of problems. Some originated from their status as novices and some from the fact that it was not a large community, but a small ethnic group, that was embarking on this venture. Inherent in a crisis situation and concomitant with collective excitement and mass enthusiasm, there were, furthermore, a number of unpredictable elements that complicated the task at hand. Allowances had to be made for a host of extraneous and time-consuming tasks. The unplanned occurrences overwhelmed the fund-raisers' improvised scheme of operations. Some of these even defied the organizational powers of the Red Cross, although such an organization is not only experienced but has the facilities and personnel to cope with crisis situations. There is no doubt that some of the organizational difficulties stemmed from the fact that the community, under the pressures of a small ethnic group, was handling a crisis situation and not a routinized activity such as the United Appeal's yearly campaign.

A great deal of attention has been given in this chapter to the fact that the original sponsors of relief activities were not an organized community but an ethnic element of small size and low status. It could not enlist important individuals, large business concerns, national welfare agencies, nor important voluntary associations. These organize society into a web of formal and informal relationships and have to be mobilized for full communal action. No doubt, some important people and organizations came to the group's help, assumed the co-ordination of activity, and assured the success of the venture. Quite often, however, leaders and functionaries of non-ethnic organizations spoke and behaved as if it should not have been necessary for them to provide their services to the extent that they did. They gave the impression that they had not realized what are the limitations of a small ethnic group that is scattered within a large metropolitan community. It is for this reason that the point is emphasized here.

It must be noted also that, when the Hungarian Canadians organized a fund-raising campaign, they entered in competition with some long-established institutions. Philanthropic organizations are intent on safeguarding their exclusive mandate. They are the appointed awakers of the social conscience and protectors of the community against exploitation. Such an organization as the Canadian Red Cross Society could not permit novices to assume its job and once it had accepted responsibility it could not afford to have its record marred. Therefore, in order to protect its own interests and



those of its public, it tried to modify the variety of efforts to coincide with its own legitimate goals.

This study has described the meeting of unorganized and of institutionalized activity. We saw in the materials presented that spontaneous forms of individual and collective activities were suddenly thrust into the domain of organized action. Through a process of redefining, sharpening and pruning, much of the activity was made to fit the requirements of a bureaucratic organization. A definite set of goals and tactics were imposed on a situation that had hitherto been characterized by informality, diffuseness and individual efforts. Some endeavours could be channelled, others could not. Especially resistant to change, were the social relations that had developed during the early stages of the movement.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> [Editor's note]. On this see N. F. Dreisziger *et al.*, *Struggle and Hope: The Hungarian-Canadian Experience* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 176-79.

<sup>2</sup> The following three cases illustrate this point:

A post-war immigrant, who considered her ability to use English far superior to what it was, decided to answer letters from Members of Parliament and other notables who had written expressing sympathy. Because they had given ardent support, she felt that she had to convey to them the Hungarian Canadians' equally strong emotions and appreciation. "We must come behind them and let them know we are there," she expounded. Her letters used jumbled concepts, over-elaborated ideas and extravagant words that gave them such a pompous flavour that they were comical. She called for "unification to annihilate the colossus of Communism for humanity and Christianity, to see that the president of the United States pledges to take action that apathy cease." Her faithfulness to her task sustained a prodigious output, which proved terrible to another worker, fluent in English, who had to rewrite all the letters eventually. When the worker discovered that none of her prose had been sent out, greatly offended she withdrew her services.

The mere presence of another volunteer at a gathering added an element of disorder to it. He continually talked in a loud and excited voice and gave orders to every one within his range. Perpetually confused, he exacted a trying toll on the patience of co-workers. When the refugees began arriving, it was suggested that his talents were too valuable to be wasted in the relief office. He agreed and stationed himself at the airport to welcome the new arrivals. This proved to be a solution that was useful all around.

A worker, with a mania for launching undertakings that he never finished, arranged with a publicity agent, and without the committee's approval, to handle a project. When asked how the professional was to be paid, he shrugged it off by saying that he would contact a firm and asked them to pay the fee as their contribution to the campaign. Since his interests extended to the international scene,

he was in Vienna when the committee was faced with finding a thousand dollars to cover the professional's fee.

<sup>3</sup> Examples of his campaign's advertisements, not to be confused with those of the Legion of Freedom, are shown in one of the appendices.

<sup>4</sup> See the announcements in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Daily Star* of 14 Dec. 1956.

<sup>5</sup> After a meeting, one evening, the chairman of the relief committee was invited to drive home with a businessman who headed a large corporation. he asked her to name the sum that would be appropriate as his firm's contribution to the campaign and she suggested ten thousand dollars. After the matter was taken up formally by the businessman at a meeting of his colleagues, the suggested amount was given.

<sup>6</sup> This campaign, however, was not important enough to the whole Canadian population or the community of Toronto to draw out as its leaders our male representatives of both power and prestige, except in a purely nominal capacity. It was run mainly by important women. Another proof of the fact that the Hungarian crisis did not muster unrestricted support has been given above, when it was indicated that the national committee could not find the provincial co-chairmen that it needed.

The leaders were aware of the fact that they did not represent the community's most powerful figures, its leaders of industry, its presidents of large corporations, people whose word brings action. When a newspaper columnist expressed anti-Hungarian views, the committee would have liked to stop him. Its members did not possess, however, the necessary kind of influence to do it. During the Community Chest Appeal, when this same columnist had spoken against that campaign, a committee member commented, "Several big businessmen went down, had a talk with him, and he changed his tune." Another member, looking at committee colleagues, said: "Yes, but they had people who were influential enough that he would lose his job if he didn't shut up. I doubt that we have anyone like that here."

It may be hypothesized here that the major leaders of Canadian philanthropy were saving their good-will, a most important asset, for other philanthropies.

## **Appendix**

### **A Chronology of Events**

Tuesday, 23 October:

Revolt breaks out in Hungary.

Wednesday, 24 October:

Canadian Hungarian Federation calls a meeting of the leaders of eleven Hungarian organizations. Meeting sends a telegram to national leaders urging their support of Hungary.

Rákoczi Association distributes a handbill with a picture symbolizing Hungary's desperate plight. This picture, enclosed with a telegram to national leaders, urges their support of Hungary.

Mutual Co-Operation League sends a letter to the United States' Secretary of State, Mr. Dulles, and to Canada's Minister of External Affairs, Mr. Pearson, urging the United Nations intervene in Hungary.

Friday, 26 October:

A meeting of Hungarian leaders at Hungarian-owned and operated Centrum Press draws up plans, first, for a brigade to fight in Hungary and, second, to set up a blood bank.

A special prayer service is held at Hungarian United Church.

Hungarians are milling on a street corner; two are arrested when police disperse crowd.

Saturday, 27 October:

A delegation of Hungarian officials meet with: Mr. Pearson to urge the United Nations' intervention in Hungary.

Hungarians and members of other ethnic groups parade to Civic Square for a wreath-laying ceremony.

Mutual Co-Operation League sends a telegram to five world leaders asking their help in Hungary's fight.

An announcement is made that donations for a relief fund are being received at St. Elizabeth's of Hungary Church.

Blood donors are asked to assemble at 10 a.m. on Sunday at St. Elizabeth's Church.

Sunday, 28 October:

Toronto Hungarians rally with Hungarians in Ottawa. They join in a motorcade past the Russian Embassy and later congregate at the National War Memorial.

Six hundred people register for blood bank in auditorium of St. Elizabeth's Church.

Hungarian delegates meet with Red Cross officials to discuss sending plasma to Hungary. Blood bank is cancelled, Red Cross has an adequate supply.

Requiem Mass at St. Elizabeth's Church for Hungarians slain in revolt.

Committee of Church and Federation officials plans the establishment of a regular relief fund.

Monday, 29 October:

Telephone call by Canadian Hungarian Federation to Austria reveals that the frontier is open for the movement of refugees.

A committee is set up to aid in clothes collection.

A Hungarian doctor submits a plan to set up a field hospital on the Austrian border.

Legion of Freedom begins recruiting volunteers.

Tuesday, 30 October:

Hungarian Canadians gather at Malton and see an aircraft leave with a cargo of drugs for wounded in Hungary.

Thursday, 1 November:

A rally takes place at Massey Hall.

An announcement is made that clothing is being collected.

Friday, 2 November:

A Hungarian Canadian starts a chain of telegrams to the Secretary General of the United Nations. More than a thousand telegrams jam telegraph facilities.

Members of Hungarian House hold a special meeting to set up an emergency aid programme.

A Hungarian-Canadian delegation sees Mr. Pearson.

Saturday, 3 November:

Hungarians and members of other ethnic groups hold protest demonstrations at Civic Square.

Handbills distributed urge money donations.

Monday, 5 November:

Main resistance collapses in Budapest.

Social activities cancelled at Hungarian House.

Hungarian churches hold Requiem Services.

Saturday, 10 November:

Hungarian and Polish Canadians join in march to City Hall in demonstration against the Communist domination of their homelands....

[end]



# **Spying on the Refugees: The Kádár Regime's Secret Agents and Canada's Hungarians, 1956–1989**

**Christopher Adam**

**Hungary's state security** agency maintained a keen interest in Canada throughout the Cold War, partly due to the North American country's close ties to the United States, as well as because it was home to one of the largest populations of Hungarian ex-patriots after 1945. While the post-1956 detente between the two superpowers helped ease Cold War hostilities, the activity of Hungarian intelligence officers in Canada actually increased during this period, in large part as a response to the more aggressive and systematic tactics used by Canadian counter-espionage units in an effort to uncover agents from the Eastern bloc countries.<sup>1</sup> Hungary's state security agency used informants and intelligence officers, as well as the assistance and cooperation of Hungary's diplomatic missions, to gather information on Hungarian communities in Canada, collect data on individuals seen as either "friendly" or "hostile" to Hungary's communist regime, ascertain if these immigrants had any prominent contacts in Hungary and to determine Canada's political and military position in the Cold War.

Following the 1964 establishment of the Hungarian Embassy in Ottawa, this mission played a central role in Hungary's intelligence operations in Canada. Informants and agents often met with embassy officials, and diplomats sometimes communicated the findings and results of investigations with authorities in Hungary. In 1969, for example, a number of Hungarian agents travelled to Hamilton where they spoke with a local Hungarian priest who had served as the embassy's contact for several years.<sup>2</sup> Several informants and agents that worked in Canada would be summoned to the embassy on occasion, for debriefing, or to deposit any material they gathered, which would often be transmitted to Hungary by courier, rather than by regular mail.

During the 1950s, especially in the years preceding the 1956 revolution, Hungary's state security was most interested in gathering intelligence on former DPs (displaced persons, i.e. post-World War II arrivals), members of the country's interwar gendarmerie and those involved in the Canadian branch of the World Federation of Hungarian Veterans (Magyar Harcosok Baráti Közössége, hereafter MHBK). Hungary's state security

agency, for example, became aware of the establishment of the Canadian branch of the MHBK in 1952 and that the organization's Hungarian-Canadian members were in "close contact" with the MHBK headquarters in Europe, which allegedly pursued "active intelligence activities against the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of Hungary."<sup>3</sup> According to the report, the Canadian branch had its own "counter-espionage unit," headed by L.D., a former veteran of the Hungarian army, and mainly as a result of these activities, authorities in Hungary felt the need to "uncover and block" the organization. As part of this mission, state security compiled a basic list of those who played lead roles in the MHBK's Canadian branch. The list included personal and physical information on leaders whenever this data was known.<sup>4</sup>

One informant in particular, who used the pseudonyms "Millott" and "János Benedek," provided authorities in Hungary with the most detailed information on the activities of Hungarian veterans, and former members of the interwar gendarmerie. Benedek's decision to cooperate with state security by reporting on Hungarian-Canadians was largely motivated by fear. The agent was approached by the state security agency in early 1957, at which point he was coerced into active service after being confronted with "incriminating evidence" against him.<sup>5</sup> Benedek had been a former member of the gendarmerie during Hungary's interwar regime, and this compromising past led the informant to live a secluded life from 1950 onward, until he was "discovered" by the state security service.

János Benedek was hardly the only one coerced into cooperating with Hungary's state security agency. The unexpected "discovery" of compromising evidence against someone, which could lead to a conviction and a prison sentence, was a tactic frequently used against people that the state security agency wanted to recruit. Another informant who ended up cooperating with state security in much the same way as Benedek was "Károly Füredi," also known as "Floguet," who worked as an electrician in Budapest. In 1951, Floguet was stopped by state security officers in Budapest on his way home from work and after asking for his identification, the officers took him to a nearby police station and charged him with sabotage and collusion with the Americans. After hearing the accusations, Floguet was given the option of "making amends for his mistakes, by proving his loyalty to the people's democracy."<sup>6</sup> Floguet did end up serving as an informant during the 1956 revolution, but then escaped to Italy in 1957. Officials tried to contact him and convince Floguet to move to the Federal Republic of Germany and serve as an informant there. Floguet, however, refused and relocated to Montreal in 1958. Hungarian officers spent the next six years trying to track him down, as they feared that Floguet's silence meant that he had been hired by a Western intelligence agency. Hungarian intelligence officials tracked down four of Floguet's home addresses in Montreal, but even with the active assistance of



the Hungarian Embassy in Washington DC, they failed to find him and finally gave up looking in 1966.<sup>7</sup>

Unlike Floguet, Benedek cooperated with state security for several years and received a very comprehensive assignment before he was sent to Canada. This involved collecting information on MHBK's Montreal branch, as well as on other right-wing organizations established by Hungarian veterans and members of the gendarmerie. He was also directed to befriend those individuals who were "engaged in direct or indirect hostile activity" against Hungary.<sup>8</sup> The informant's own interwar past, as well as the presence of his uncle in Montreal, who was a leading figure among right-wing immigrants, allowed Benedek to obtain inside information on the affairs of the MHBK and similar groups in Canada. Benedek's orders involved taking part in the activities of the local Hungarian community, but he was to do so in such a way as not to attract too much attention or suspicion. On a grander scale, the state security people also asked that Benedek observe any political and military cooperation between Canada and the US, and uncover the locations of ammunition depots.<sup>9</sup>

Benedek was provided with a contact, "Zoli," to whom he addressed most of his letters, which contained detailed observations on Montreal's Hungarian community, as well as more brief observations on communities in Toronto, Hamilton and Calgary. All correspondence, however, was written in a friendly, colloquial manner, so as not to draw attention or suspicion. The majority of Benedek's reports seemed "benign" in nature, as he tended to argue that the veterans and former gendarmerie officials in Montreal were largely inactive, ageing and exhausted. When reporting on his uncle, Benedek painted a portrait of a "tired, old gentleman, who approaches his past in Hungary's gendarmerie as nothing more than a nice memory," and shies away from overt politicizing.<sup>10</sup> Yet Benedek's reports do provide information on tension and conflict within the Montreal community, and even among veterans and former gendarmerie officers, which was often based on a hostility between lower and higher ranking officers.<sup>11</sup>

Benedek reported that there were five separate groups of former gendarmerie officers in Canada and their total membership stood at around 250, but many of them were not believed to have been active within the community.<sup>12</sup> In general, however, Benedek seemed to avoid polemical language when describing the Hungarian community in Montreal, perhaps in part because he did not want to implicate his elderly uncle, or other people in the community who were oblivious to his true role and had learned to trust him. Politically, Benedek portrayed Montreal's Hungarians as having been comprised of relatively reasonable people who rejected the extremist, fascist politics that had existed in Hungary during World War II. For example, Benedek noted how the Hungarian Committee of Montreal decided not to elect G.D., the MHBK's local leader, due to his "Arrow-Cross gravitations"

and his "widely known connections with Ferenc Szálasi," Hungary's late Arrow-Cross leader.<sup>13</sup> Ultimately, Benedek's reports on Hungarian-Canadians led state security to open dossiers on four people affiliated with the gendarmerie and veteran associations.<sup>14</sup>

One of the first major studies written by a Hungarian state security agent on Canada's political, economic and socio-cultural fabric, and Hungarian immigrant communities was by an informant known as "Du Garde." Du Garde, a former Communist party functionary from Baranya County, left after the 1956 revolution and agreed to cooperate with Hungarian state security and collect information on his friends, family and acquaintances in Canada and the United States, in exchange for being allowed to return home.<sup>15</sup> Du Garde recorded his experiences while in Canada four months after having relocated to Vienna in November 1963. Having spent six and a half years in Montreal and Toronto, Du Garde's observations are among the most detailed of any Hungarian state security agent, especially as they relate to Canadian party politics within the context of the Cold War, everyday life in Canada and the activities of Hungarian communities, as well as his relationship with colleagues, friends and acquaintances. When writing about the Liberal Party, Du Garde observed that it was a "right-wing, civic movement" and that it served as a "tool in the hands of American capitalists aimed at taking control of political power in Canada."<sup>16</sup> While Du Garde felt that of all political parties, the liberals "best represented the interests of American big money and the aggressive powers," the agent saw the Conservatives under John Diefenbaker in a much more benign light, noting that rather than being associated with US interests, the party had stronger ties with Britain, included within itself the "pacifist tendencies of certain Protestant religious sects," and that it was more inclined to sell grain to China and to the Eastern Bloc countries.<sup>17</sup>

Not surprisingly, the left-leaning New Democratic Party (NDP) was portrayed in the most sympathetic light. Du Garde observed that under its leader, Tommy Douglas, the NDP was closely linked with Britain's Labour movement, that it supported entering into dialogue with the Soviet Union, called on the banning of atomic weapons and enjoyed the support of the Communist Party of Canada in those ridings where the latter did not field its own candidates.<sup>18</sup> Du Garde also took note of what he felt was an over-complicated and disunited political system in Canada, where the make-up of provincial legislatures did not represent the composition of the federal parliament in Ottawa. The Hungarian informant suggested that these extenuated political, ideological and regional conflicts could be used to the Eastern bloc's advantage, especially in terms of getting the West to support "peaceful co-existence" with the Soviet Union and to slow down the "advance of American imperialists."<sup>19</sup>

In addition to taking advantage of political and regional tensions within Canada, Du Garde also suggested that the country's Protestant churches — several of which supported pacifist causes — be used to promote a ban on atomic weapons and to develop peaceful co-existence between the two sides in the Cold War. The agent felt that the Unitarians and the United Church of Canada were most open to these causes. Du Garde became very familiar with the United Church, as he joined Toronto's Deer Park congregation in 1961 and became an active member of the local men's association.<sup>20</sup> Du Garde stood out not only as the church's only Hungarian, but also as the sole immigrant, in a congregation dominated almost exclusively by people with English and Scottish heritage. The informant suggested that he earned the pastor's trust in part because of this.<sup>21</sup> The story that Du Garde used when explaining his arrival to Canada to Pastor John Wilkie and others at the church, was that he was forced to flee Hungary in 1956, due to the country's communist regime. He also played devil's advocate by challenging Pastor Wilkie in terms of his belief that the West must learn to co-exist with the Soviets and that it must take the first steps towards nuclear disarmament. Du Garde argued that this was unrealistic, because the Soviets would not reciprocate by also banning atomic weapons. Yet it becomes clear from his reports, that Du Garde was impressed by Wilkie's answer when the pastor noted that "Christ would never allow the use of these weapons."<sup>22</sup> The agent saw in Wilkie someone who could potentially be used to help propagate these ideas and he was keen on contacting the pastor upon his return to Canada.

Although Du Garde identified himself as a secular Jew, he explained his decision to join the United Church by noting that he believed it would help further his application for Canadian citizenship and Pastor Wilkie did, indeed, serve as one of his references.<sup>23</sup> Du Garde also tried to get closer to Wilkie by enrolling his son in the Sunday school where the pastor taught, and encouraging his child to befriend the pastor's own son who was of a similar age.

As was common practice with other agents, Du Garde regularly modified his immigration and arrival story, depending on the people he met. For example, while members of the United Church were told that he fled Communism, when he met with A.D., a Polish Jew with whom he worked for six months at a store in Scarborough, Du Garde explained that he had to escape in 1956, because "fascists once again rose to prominence during the revolution and that all Jews had to leave the country."<sup>24</sup> Only a handful of people knew of his past membership in Hungary's Communist Party and those that did had sometimes been members themselves. After Canadian authorities once visited his apartment to inquire about his past, Du Garde observed that a female acquaintance of his had also been a party member, but received citizenship without any problems and with no questions, apparently because

Canadian authorities were not interested if women were once party members.<sup>25</sup>

Du Garde believed that by "sending in the appropriate people, these religious organizations can offer fertile ground to propagate the politics of peaceful co-existence."<sup>26</sup> Du Garde also singled out Jewish congregations and observed that despite the presence of a "strong Zionist influence" — which he found to be entirely disagreeable — left-wing groups could still propagate their values within these organizations, especially by working together with those rabbis that opposed the development of nuclear weapons.<sup>27</sup>

Some of Du Garde's most important observations were on Canada's Hungarian communities, even though his general views on the different cohorts of Hungarian immigrants to Canada reflected the beliefs widely held by most officials in Hungary. Du Garde presented those primarily peasant and working-class Hungarians who immigrated to Canada during the 1920s and 1930s in the most positive light, noting that the majority of them "remain patriotic and feel a sense of nostalgia for Hungary."<sup>28</sup> According to Du Garde's observations, most of these immigrants were also positive about the more recent developments in Hungary, such as the post-1945 land reform and even the nationalization of factories. As such, this group of Hungarians (some of whom were, indeed, members of Communist organizations, or subscribed to the *Kanadai Magyar Munkás* [Canadian Hungarian Worker] weekly newspaper) were classified as being "friendly" to the new regime.

The way in which post-World War II immigrants were presented by Du Garde, however, contrasted starkly with the portrayal of the interwar generation. Those who immigrated between 1945 and 1956 were scorned, and those that came between 1945 and 1946 (many of whom were DPs) were classified as "enemies" of the new order in Hungary. According to Du Garde, "this group forms the Hungarian immigration's most reactionary core, and they are strongly anti-Communist."<sup>29</sup> Yet Du Garde felt that this group posed a very limited threat to Hungary's interests, despite the fact that a range of veteran and far-right associations existed well into the 1960s, such as the "Hungarist Legion." Most of these organizations, however, were relatively small, they had limited financial resources and Du Garde felt that their membership was slowly dying out, as most of them were well over 50 years of age.<sup>30</sup>

Du Garde's attitude towards those who fled Hungary after the suppressed 1956 Revolution was mixed and ambivalent, and this closely reflected the views of most Communist officials in Hungary. The fifty-sixers were seen as being the most heterogeneous of all immigrant cohorts, in terms of profession, class, educational background and ideological beliefs. According to Du Garde, "there are many valuable people, who integrated into Canadian society — albeit with difficulty — and distance themselves from all propaganda directed against Hungary."<sup>31</sup> At the same time, the agent also

reported that there were “many common criminals” among the fifty-sixers, some of whom were serving prison sentences.<sup>32</sup> This was also in line with what officials in Hungary tended to proclaim about those who fled in 1956. Yet Du Garde suggested that the “majority” of recent immigrants who had not succeeded economically in Canada, who felt disappointed and did not join Hungarian community organizations, could be brought into closer contact with contemporary Hungary.<sup>33</sup> Du Garde also noted that the Hungarian-Canadian Communist community — largely based around Toronto, Hamilton and Ontario's Tobacco belt — could not be counted on in its current form as being of any assistance in this venture, as their newspaper (the *Kanadai Magyar Munkás*) suffered from a declining readership, while affiliated associations were “sectarian” and unwilling to reach out to disenchanted fifty-sixers.<sup>34</sup> Yet at the same time, Du Garde recommended the establishment of a “progressive mass newspaper, as the immigration's most reactionary groups are demoralized and are in the process of falling apart.”<sup>35</sup>

Du Garde suggested that the best way for Hungarian agents to weaken “enemy” groups within Canada's Hungarian communities, was to take advantage of already existing rivalries and conflicts and to exacerbate them whenever possible. This was the approach he suggested when dealing with Canada's most influential Hungarian weekly papers — *Magyar Élet* and *Kanadai Magyarország* — both of which were generally right-wing and anti-communist, but were also in fierce competition with each other. Their respective editors, Márton Kiss Kerecsendi and István Vörösváry, occasionally initiated lawsuits against each other, as well as diatribes on the pages of their papers.<sup>36</sup>

Du Garde produced reports on approximately 27 friends and acquaintances in Canada, as well as two relatives, five acquaintances in the US, eight in Austria and one in Israel. This is an addition to the names of Hungarian community leaders and members he mentioned in his lengthy reflections on his experiences in Canada, as well as brief lists containing the names, employment information, home addresses, family situation and date of immigration of 121 Hungarian engineers in Ontario.<sup>37</sup> Similar lists were also compiled for 13 Hungarian engineers in Montreal,<sup>38</sup> as well as 17 professional engineers working for government agencies in Ontario.<sup>39</sup> The vast majority of written material was created between 1964 and 1967, during which time Du Garde lived in Vienna. The informant reported his findings to his superiors at the Interior Ministry when he visited Budapest in March 1967.<sup>40</sup>

Du Garde followed a detailed set of guidelines when compiling information on his friends, colleagues and acquaintances. In each case, he would try to find out about any connections they may have in Hungary and abroad, as well as information on their political and party affiliations, their ideological beliefs, association memberships, business connections, their circle of friends, personal data relating to their place of birth, citizenship,

ethnic and religious origins, marital status, home address and current employment.<sup>41</sup> Du Garde was also interested in the level of knowledge that people he was observing had in terms of domestic and international politics and specific beliefs on key issues, such as world peace, the Cuban crisis, the fate of Berlin, anti-fascism and racial or ethnic questions.<sup>42</sup>

While the majority of people that Du Garde reported on were either community leaders, businesspeople, or prominent members of cultural and religious organizations, a few of his reports focused on Hungarian Canadians with no such prominent position. For example, G.H. and E.H. were two sisters who rented an apartment together in Toronto. They had fled Hungary in 1957 and worked as seamstresses in a garment factory and in other low paying jobs.<sup>43</sup> Du Garde became acquainted with the two women in 1957, when he worked at the same garment factory in Toronto. The informant reported that both were "reactionary" and that E.H. may have been involved in the Arrow-Cross movement in Hungary, during World War II, although she would have been very young at the time.<sup>44</sup> Despite having produced a detailed report on the sisters, and while a certain level of trust and friendship had developed between the three of them, he felt that upon his return to Canada there would be no compelling need to remain in contact with them, due to their low societal standing, unless the two could be of help "as part of a special assignment."<sup>45</sup> Du Garde arrived at the same conclusion in the case of another working-class couple from Toronto, J.T. and Z.T, both of whom fled Hungary in 1956 and who the informant classified as "remarkably reactionary."<sup>46</sup> The only difference was that unlike the sisters, J.T. and Z.T. were aware of Du Garde's past as a party functionary in Baranya County, as they originated from the same area.<sup>47</sup> Yet Du Garde rapidly determined that they were not likely to "out" him, as the couple lived a secluded life, had few friends and thus posed no risk.

Perhaps due to his friendship with Pastor Wilkie and his warm reception at the Deer Park United Church, Du Garde placed a special emphasis on maintaining contacts with prominent members of this Protestant community, and gathering information on them. This is why he suggested that upon his return to Canada, he might "further develop his relationship" with Mrs. A, who left Hungary in 1956 and worked for the United Church's main offices in Toronto.<sup>48</sup> Du Garde believed that although Mrs. A and her husband were both conservative, they did not make hostile comments about the regime in Hungary and Mrs. A in particular maintained important ties with United Church leaders, such as Pastor Wilkie and other key figures. Yet it appears as though those reading Du Garde's report were unsure of what to make of the fact that he mentioned how he maintained "especially warm contacts" with Mrs. A, even after he left Canada. A question mark in the margins of the report and the underlining of these words suggest that officials in the Interior Ministry may have felt that there was more motivating Du Garde's intentions

and interest in Mrs. A than met the eye, especially since the agent was in the process of getting a divorce from his own wife at roughly the same time.<sup>49</sup>

Du Garde returned to Canada in 1965, and visited the recently opened Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary in Ottawa, where he met with "B," and furnished him with several lists of names and addresses of individuals that the informant thought might be of interest in the future, as well as a directory of groups that Hungarian state security could keep in contact with.<sup>50</sup> These lists included the directory of the Deer Park United Church, the leaders of Toronto's Hungarian Jewish Alliance, as well as the North Toronto Business Association's list of members. Yet B was not interested in these lists, noting that the latter had almost no value, as the data was completely legal and publicly available. B was, however, interested in five individuals that Du Garde had reported on, and asked him to try to follow leads in each case.

One of Du Garde's final assignments involved producing a detailed guide in 1967, geared towards helping future informants immigrate to, and settle in Canada. The eleven page, typed document examined all aspects of arrival and integration in Canada, including passing through customs and passport inspection, renting an apartment, finding employment and even the importance of joining a community club, as well as the "necessity" of being a member of a church.<sup>51</sup> "In Canada you must belong to a church, whether you want to or not. Which church you decide to join does not matter, but you must belong to one."<sup>52</sup> When Du Garde's superior in Hungary read the report, he felt that the agent "exaggerated" the central role of churches in Canadian society, but noted that the document could be useful when sending new informants to Canada.<sup>53</sup> The existence of such an extensive study suggests that Hungarian state security had every intention of sending agents to Canada, even in the late 1960s and 1970s.

Tensions between Canada and Hungary continued unabated during the late sixties and early seventies, with the RCMP keeping tabs on people suspected of colluding with authorities in Hungary and Hungarian officials increasingly concerned that Canada was stepping up its counter-espionage activities. When E.L., the Montreal-based Hungarian Trade Commission's secretary and a citizen of Hungary, unexpectedly quit her job in January 1969, vanished from her apartment and only contacted her workplace after a week had elapsed, in order to inform her employers that she has been permitted to settle in Canada and was given a work permit, Hungarian officials presumed that she had been in contact with Canadian counter-espionage officers for years.<sup>54</sup>

Hungary closely monitored changes in the way in which Canada conducted its counter-espionage activities in 1969-70, partly because Hungarian officials working at the embassy in Ottawa, as well as at the trade commission in Montreal, reported that they were being much more closely

watched. One Hungarian official visiting Montreal found that his hotel room had been thoroughly searched while he was out and that his wife had been followed by Canadian officers.<sup>55</sup> Around the same period, two RCMP officers visited the workplace of a Hungarian immigrant who was a close acquaintance of a Hungarian intelligence officer, affiliated with the Trade Commission in Montreal. The acquaintance noticed that the RCMP officers produced a complete list of all people associated with the Trade Commission during the meeting and many of the questions had to do with the end of the current consul's mandate and his return to Hungary in August 1969.<sup>56</sup> Although it was seen as standard practice for the RCMP to increase its interest in the work of an Eastern Bloc country's mission when high-ranking diplomats were preparing to leave, authorities in Hungary were finding that activities of Canadian counter-intelligence officials was becoming more systematic, orderly and thorough.<sup>57</sup>

The Hungarian Embassy in Ottawa soon learned this first-hand when on January 10, 1970, János Hegedüs, the mission's First Secretary in charge of commercial affairs, found himself accused by the RCMP of espionage and was promptly expelled from the country.<sup>58</sup> Hungary ended up "retaliating" soon after, by expelling a Canadian diplomat who worked at the Canadian embassy in Budapest. Hungarian authorities continued to closely monitor the activities of Canadian diplomats in Budapest even into the early 1980s, by interviewing neighbours in their respective apartment blocks and rummaging through their garbage.<sup>59</sup>

When it came to the activities of Hungarian diplomatic missions in Canada, the RCMP was correct in suspecting that the Hungarian Trade Commission in Montreal was involved in collecting intelligence and that several of its high ranking employees were, in fact, in contact with Hungarian State Security. The most prominent was A.S., who was also referred to as "Maclou." Maclou originally served as the director of the state-run *Kultura* Foreign Trade Corporation, which dealt with the sale and distribution of Hungarian books and magazines abroad. The state security contact first visited Canada and the US in 1959 with instructions from his superiors to engage in research on subjects that may be of use to future agents, such as the relationship and cooperation between Canadian and American intelligence officers, how business circles viewed the detente between the US and the Soviet Union, and the degree of influence that the Hungarian immigration's "fascist and progressive movements" each have within the host country.<sup>60</sup>

Yet Maclou's relationship with Hungarian State Security was ambivalent and strained from the start. Although he was not an official intelligence officer, Maclou did serve as one of the agency's official contacts. He did, however, place limits on his cooperation and noted that he would only participate in assignments that did not endanger him, or his foreign trade activities in any way.<sup>61</sup>



Despite this condition, Maclou was well respected and intelligence officers in Hungary felt that since he was discreet and cautious, he could handle the task at hand. Perhaps this explains why Maclou was chosen to lead the Hungarian Trade Commission in Montreal, when it was first established in 1964. The Trade Commission was meant to play a key role in Hungary's intelligence operations in Canada and authorities felt that this new office could help gather sensitive information on Canada and the US.<sup>62</sup> Initially, the Montreal Trade Commission was to have three employees, including a trade counsel, an administrator and a secretary, but the government of Hungary and the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP) agreed, that additional staff members would be added in the future.<sup>63</sup> Maclou was appointed to lead the Trade Commission and he began his mandate in October 1964.

Hungarian authorities miscalculated when they appointed Maclou to head the commission. The commissioner provided the Interior Ministry with virtually no useful information and refused to cooperate with the Hungarian Embassy in Ottawa. In 1965, "B" from the embassy complained that when he invited Maclou to Ottawa, the commissioner was "secretive" and that he "did not accept any advice given to him, nor did he heed warnings."<sup>64</sup> Even more troubling was that Maclou regularly went on official trips without consulting with the embassy before hand, often spent his weekends with 1956 dissidents in Montreal who he had befriended and even called into question whether Canadian authorities were engaged in counter-intelligence work against the embassy and the trade commission.<sup>65</sup> According to B, Maclou "wanted to avoid providing a detailed account of his work and stated that although he knows many people, he only has basic information on them, but nothing that would be of interest" to the embassy.<sup>66</sup> Maclou, it appeared, was intent on providing "benevolent" reports on individuals, and was not comfortable releasing too much information to embassy officials in Ottawa, nor to authorities in Hungary. In the end, B informed Maclou that he intended to travel to Montreal in the near future, and that he expected to discuss all his Canadian and Hungarian acquaintances, but the commissioner was not at all enthusiastic about the idea.<sup>67</sup>

The situation at the Trade Commission continued to unravel when I.K., a military attaché and informant, was assigned to Canada and asked for Maclou's help should he stumble upon any problems or face challenges while getting accustomed to his new posting.<sup>68</sup> Maclou was unwilling to help and "prohibited" I.K. from providing any information to the embassy in Ottawa on the Trade Commission's programs and plans, because the commissioner would "only communicate what he sees fit."<sup>69</sup> When Maclou demanded to see the operational reports that I.K. had written, the latter refused, which led to a heated argument and "scandalous scenes" at the Trade Commission.<sup>70</sup>

Hungarian authorities gave up on trying to acquire valuable intelligence from Maclou in March 1967, noting that the commissioner was only

willing to “maintain the most basic levels of official contact” with the Interior Ministry.<sup>71</sup> Maclou's unwillingness to cooperate and provide compromising information on his acquaintances in Montreal demonstrates that informants did enjoy a certain level of autonomy, and what information they passed on to their superiors was, at least in part, their personal choice.

Despite Maclou's unwillingness to cooperate, Canadian authorities recognized that the Trade Commission's original purpose was, in part, to gather intelligence. Hungarian officials in Ottawa and in Budapest were convinced that the RCMP was actively involved in counter-espionage activity directed against the embassy and the commission, well into the late sixties and seventies. For example, Hungarian authorities believed that when on September 20, 1965, the Trade Commission was broken into — but the intruders only seemed interested in searching through the files and papers — the RCMP was behind the action and that it also kept the embassy's building under direct surveillance that same night.<sup>72</sup>

Hungary's heightened interest and concern regarding what it saw as increased and more effective counter-intelligence activity on the part of the RCMP led authorities at the Interior Ministry to prepare a report on intelligence and counter-intelligence operations in Canada in 1981. The material in the report was partly based on Soviet findings and included detailed information on how the RCMP monitored the activities of Eastern bloc embassies and how the unique characteristics of specific cities — such as the relatively depopulated streets in downtown Ottawa — were used to their advantage.<sup>73</sup>

Even if Canada stepped up its counter-intelligence activities, Hungary was not dissuaded from sending informants to Canada during the mid-eighties. “István Kovács,” for example, was one such informant, who visited Andrew László, the editor and publisher of *Magyar Élet* (Hungarian Life), a weekly newspaper printed in Toronto but distributed widely throughout Canada and the United States. The paper had a reputation of being both conservative and staunchly anti-Soviet, and László also seemed to have contacts in President Ronald Reagan's administration. Kovács spent one month in Canada, in November 1982, and his assignment was to gather information on László, his paper, and Hungarian immigrants in the editor's entourage, as well as to detect differences and tensions within the community, especially among those who found the editor's politics and style too extreme.<sup>74</sup>

Kovács was systematic in the way in which he collected information and his report aimed to shed light on what he believed were László's connections with underground opposition leaders in Hungary, his contacts with Hungarian immigrants living in Western Europe, and plans that he and other immigrants may have had to weaken the Hungarian regime and the Soviet Union's authority in Eastern Europe by funding or otherwise supporting the opposition. Despite the fact that László did not fully trust Kovács, the

informant was able to gather a significant amount of information which interested Hungarian authorities. László claimed that *Magyar Élet* received funding from Canadian and American governmental sources, as well as directly from the "secret service," due to the paper's reputation for being strongly anti-Soviet and broadly supportive of US foreign policy, especially under the Reagan administration.<sup>75</sup> According to Kovács's report, László's daughter, "Dudu" was responsible for keeping in touch with the "Secret Service."<sup>76</sup>

In addition to his political contacts in the US, Western Europe and with opposition figures in Hungary, László also claimed to know a significant amount of information on the Hungarian Embassy in Ottawa, and asserted that "only spies work there," specifically referring to "Sz," one of the more prominent diplomats, who was apparently being closely watched by the RCMP.<sup>77</sup> Kovács painted a disturbing image of László, noting that he had an "important role in the Hungarian immigrant community."<sup>78</sup> Kovács's findings led Hungarian authorities to follow up on the intelligence and verify some of the most controversial statements, such as the alleged public funding that *Magyar Élet* received and László's contacts with opposition figures in Hungary.

Kovács's reports on Hungarians in Canada and *Magyar Élet* in particular may be best characterized as "malevolent," especially when compared with the relatively harmless and mundane observations produced some other informers. Several of the agents assigned to Canada were themselves victims of coercive tactics used by Hungarian state security, but a few demonstrated a significant degree of agency, by writing "benign" reports that would not likely cause problems for people being named and providing officials in Hungary with limited and selective information. At times, this lack of 'useful' information frustrated Hungarian authorities, but it did not dampen their interest in Canada during the Cold War. Canada's position as America's northern neighbour, its close political, economic, social and military ties with the US, as well as the existence of large populations of Hungarian immigrants in major urban centres like Toronto and Montreal, made it fertile ground to gather information of significance in relation to both international politics during the Cold War, and also to issues of domestic interest to Hungary.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> A handful of books have examined the development of the RCMP's Security Service and the activities of Soviet bloc agents in Canada. John Sawatsky's *Men in the Shadows: The RCMP Service* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1980) is among the most prominent of these. Sawatsky consulted with professional RCMP

historian Stan Horrall, when researching this book, as well as published primary sources and material from the Parliamentary Library. This book, however, is more a journalistic piece than a scholarly historical examination, in light of the author's career as an investigative reporter. An academic alternative, especially in terms of examining the early postwar period, is Reg Whitaker's *Cold war Canada: the making of a national insecurity state, 1945-1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994) and the same author's *Double Standard: The Secret History of Canadian Immigration* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1987).

In this paper I refer to individuals mentioned in archival documents by their initials rather than their complete names — while I identify agents and informants by their pseudonyms. Complete names, however, will appear if the individual who was monitored by Hungary's state security was a public figure.

<sup>2</sup> "Ottawai munkatársunk jelentése," Budapest, December 22, 1969, 38, In: O-20071, Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára (Historical Archives of Hungarian State Security, hereafter ÁBTL), Budapest.

<sup>3</sup> Kanyó András, Határozat (Decision), Budapest, September 24, 1952, 24, In: 0-8-022 ÁBTL.

<sup>4</sup> Kimutatás, Budapest, December 8, 1955, 54-55, In: 0-8-022 ÁBTL.

<sup>5</sup> László Kovács, Jelentés (Report), "Benedek János ügynökünk," Budapest, May 2, 1957, In: "Millott," BT-641/1, ÁBTL.

<sup>6</sup> "Beszervezési javaslat" (Involvement Proposal), September 22, 1951, In: BT-827 (Floguet), ÁBTL.

<sup>7</sup> Jelentés (Report), Washington, October 14, 1964, In: BT-827 (Floguet), ÁBTL.

<sup>8</sup> Felhasználási terv (Application Plan), Budapest, October 28, 1958," In: BT-641/1, ÁBTL.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, BT-641/1.

<sup>10</sup> Benedek's first letter to "Zoli," 68, In: MT-539/1, ÁBTL.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>13</sup> Benedek's second letter to "Zoli" (handwritten), 26., In: MT-539/1, ÁBTL.

<sup>14</sup> József Kira, Jelentés (Report), August 6, 1963, 78, In: MT-539/1, ÁBTL.

<sup>15</sup> Du Garde, Jelentés (Report), A.K., February 26, 1964, 117-118, In: MT-182 ÁBTL.

<sup>16</sup> Du Garde, "Kanadai Tapasztalatok" (Experiences in Canada), 8. In: MT-182 ÁBTL.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>21</sup> Du Garde, Jelentés (Report): Mr. John Wilkie, March 4, 1964, 131, MT-182, ÁBTL.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 131-132.

<sup>23</sup> Du Garde, Jelentés (Report): Mr. John Wilkie, March 4, 1964, 131, MT-182, ÁBTL.

<sup>24</sup> Du Garde, Jelentés (Report): Mr. A.D., February 23, 1964, 103, MT-182, ÁBTL.

- <sup>25</sup> Du Garde, Jelentés (Report): S.Z. és O., February 23, 1964, 107-108, MT-182, ÁBTL.
- <sup>26</sup> Kanadai Tapasztalatok, 16.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.
- <sup>37</sup> Mérnökök – Ontario (Engineers – Ontario), 190, In: MT-182, ÁBTL.
- <sup>38</sup> Mérnökök – Montreal (Engineers – Montreal), 190, (Handwritten note) MT-182, ÁBTL.
- <sup>39</sup> Köztisztviselők – Ontario, (Public Servants – Ontario), 190 (Handwritten note), In: MT-182, ÁBTL.
- <sup>40</sup> Istvan Varga. R. szds. Jelentés (Report), Budapest, March 31, 1967, MT-182, In: ÁBTL.
- <sup>41</sup> Du Garde által jelentett személyek (Du Garde's Reports on Individuals), 190 (Handwritten note), In: MT-182, ÁBTL.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.
- <sup>43</sup> Du Garde, Jelentés (Report), H.G. és H.E., February 24, 1964, 147, In: MT-182, ÁBTL.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.
- <sup>46</sup> Du Garde, Jelentés (Report), T.J. és Z., March 4, 1964, 149., In: MT-182, ÁBTL.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.
- <sup>48</sup> Du Garde, Jelentés (Report), P.A. és A.A., February 27, 1964, 122, In: MT-182, ÁBTL.
- <sup>49</sup> Du Garde, Jelentés (Report), A. K., February 26, 1964, 117-118, In: MT-182, ÁBTL.
- <sup>50</sup> B., Jelentés (Report), Du Garde által hozott anyagok és konkrét feladatai végrehajtása, (Du Garde's material and the execution of his assignments), July 23, 1965, 171, In: MT-182, ÁBTL.
- <sup>51</sup> Du Garde, Tervezet (Plan), March 29, 1967, 211, MT-182, ÁBTL.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 211-212.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.
- <sup>54</sup> Viktor Csapó, "Kivonat az ottawai jelentésből," (Excerpts from the Report from Ottawa), February, 28, 1969, 31. In: 13-OD-3740, ÁBTL.
- <sup>55</sup> Viktor Csapó, "Kanadai munkatársunk jelentése az elhárítás tevékenységéről" (Our Canadian colleague's report on counter-espionage activities), 32, In: 13-OD-3740, ÁBTL.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

- <sup>57</sup> Viktor Csapó, "Ottawa-i munkatársunk jelentése" (Our Ottawa-based Colleagues Report), December 19, 1969, 38, In: In: 13-OD-3740, ÁBTL.
- <sup>58</sup> Sawatsky, *Men in the Shadows*, 291.
- <sup>59</sup> Objektum dosszié, O-18747, ÁBTL.
- <sup>60</sup> Ervin Kassai, "Feladat-terv" (Assignment), "Maclou," December 3, 1959, 40-41, In: K-655/67, ÁBTL.
- <sup>61</sup> Ervin Kassai, "Jelentés" (Report), "Maclou," December 8, 1959, 43-44, In: K-655/67, ÁBTL.
- <sup>62</sup> Tamás Szabó, "Feljegyzés" (Notes), September 9, 1964, 55, In: K-655/66, ÁBTL.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.
- <sup>64</sup> "B.," Jelentés (Report), Ottawa, April 22, 1965, 43., In: K-655/67, ÁBTL.
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>68</sup> "B.," Jelentés (Report), Ottawa, May 30, 1965, 47., In: K-655/67, ÁBTL.
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>71</sup> István Varga, Határozat (Decision), Budapest, March 24, 1967, 62, In: K-655/66., ÁBTL.
- <sup>72</sup> Béla Mészáros, *et al.* Összefoglaló jelentés (Comprehensive Report), Budapest, July 21, 1970, 50, In: 13-OD-3740, ÁBTL.
- <sup>73</sup> "Kanada operatív helyzete," (The Operational Situation in Canada), Budapest, 1981, 101-102., In: 13-OD-3740, ÁBTL.
- <sup>74</sup> Török Sándor, *et al.*, Jelentés (Report), Szolnok, February 15, 1983, 72., In: M-40277, ÁBTL.
- <sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.
- <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.
- <sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

## **Immigrant Entrepreneurship: How the '56-ers Helped to Build Canada's Economy**

**Éva Tömöry**

**Entrepreneurship** is one of the newest fields of study in the management sciences.<sup>1</sup> The phenomenon of entrepreneurship, however, is far from novel — it is one of the oldest activities of mankind. To identify new business possibilities and to exploit them in new ventures for economic gain has always been important in human life.

The use of the concept of “entrepreneurship” goes back a long time in both the French and English languages. “Entrepreneur” was originally a French word. It appeared for the first time in the 1437 *Dictionnaire de la langue Française*. The most common meaning of the word was “celui qui entreprend quelque chose,” alluding to a person who is active and achieves something. Medieval French authors referred to the entrepreneur as someone who is tough and prepared to risk his own life and fortune. For a long time no similarity to the French entrepreneur existed in the English language. In 1755 *A Dictionary of the English Language* used the following definition: “Adventurer, he that seeks occasion of hazard, he that puts himself in the hand of chance.” The 1956 Hungarian refugees were entrepreneurs in this classical sense of the term. Many of them risked their lives and fortunes during the revolution; they faced hazards, took enormous risks and put themselves in harm’s way when they crossed Hungary’s border.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the subject of entrepreneurship and the 1956 Hungarian refugees. First, the elements of entrepreneurship in light of the experiences of five 1956 Hungarian refugees who became successful entrepreneurs, will be illustrated. Next, the 1956 Hungarian refugees will be compared to a highly entrepreneurial ethnic group of the United States: the Cubans. The paper will analyze Roger Waldinger’s interactive model of ethnic business development in the context of the 1956 Hungarian refugees. Finally, opportunities for Hungarian ethnic entrepreneurship research will be discussed.

Recent entrepreneurship research is characterized by a long standing difficulty of how to define the central concepts within entrepreneurship and small business research and to define the entrepreneurial domain. Many of the elements of entrepreneurship are multifaceted and heterogeneous, and difficult to qualify and quantify. Different studies have used different approaches, depending whether viewed from an economic, management or psychological perspective. The theoretical study of ethnic entrepreneurship is based primarily within the field of sociology. The early attempts at measuring entrepreneurship were shaped by the focus on firm size that was mostly decided by number of employees. In this context, entrepreneurship was mostly identified with the number of Small Medium Enterprises. Self-employment figures were also used as a measure to reflect the level of entrepreneurship. Later studies such as Paul Reynold's postulate that entrepreneurship is defined as individuals who are in the process of establishing a company or who have recently started a company (within the last 42 months).<sup>2</sup> In our paper the terms entrepreneurship, the starting of a company, and small business will be used interchangeably.

Small businesses have been vital for the growth of an economy. In 2003 the Bank of Montreal Financial Group estimated that small to medium enterprises or SMEs (defined as business with fewer than 500 employees and the self-employed) accounted for nearly 63% of all jobs across Canada in that year. Since 1983, the SMEs' employment figures have grown at 2.4% compound annual rate representing a cumulative 3.7 million increase. Meanwhile, employment at large enterprises has grown at a rate of 1%, representing a cumulative increase of 1.0 million. Since 1983, SMEs have created more than 78% of all new jobs in Canada.<sup>3</sup> Small to medium firms are leaders in innovation. Most Canadian exporters are small to medium firms (85%), and entrepreneurship has become the number one choice for Canadians as a rewarding career path (41%).<sup>4</sup>

Traditionally, studies of entrepreneurship have focused on the individual characteristics of successful entrepreneurs such as personality, educational attainment, work experience, and ethnic origin. Personality studies have found that the prototype entrepreneur is opportunistic, innovative, imaginative, an ideas-person, and agent of change, restless, adventurous, proactive and is someone who adopts a broad financial strategy.<sup>5</sup> Entrepreneurial vision and family traditions are also associated with entrepreneurship.<sup>6</sup>

### **The '56-ers as Entrepreneurs**

Frank Hasenfratz, a 1956 refugee from Hungary, recognized a business opportunity in the auto parts industry. "He was working in the machine shop



of a company whose products included fuel pumps for Ford Motor Co. Almost a quarter of the pumps were defective, which so frustrated Hasenfratz that he quit the company and landed the contract to supply the pumps himself. It was an adventurous move for a young breadwinner with two small children. In 1965 the sectoral free trade introduced under the Canada-U.S. auto pact came into effect, and Hasenfratz started getting more and more contracts from Detroit. His auto parts business, Linamar took off.<sup>7</sup> In 2006 Linamar, with close to 11,000 employees in 36 manufacturing locations, generated sales of nearly 2.3 billion Canadian dollars.

William Mihalik who came to Canada after the 1956 revolution, was imaginative; he anticipated and foresaw a demand for used clothing among the newly arrived Hungarians. Because in the beginning the refugees could not find a job in their fields of expertise, many of them took entry-level employment in the hospitality industry. "Mihalik took a chance in 1958 on a shuttered used-clothing operation at 54-56 Kensington Ave. He committed to a \$50 monthly rent and named it William's Clothing Store. He started his operation by taking gifts of bottles of scotch to Toronto's Goodwill and other thrift stores. He made each store manager an offer, call me first if you get white shirts, black pants, tuxedos and fur coats, and I will bring you another bottle. Soon, he was doing good business supplying a generation of Hungarian waiters with work clothing".<sup>8</sup> In 1981 his son Tom bought the business from him, and it became Tom's Place. In 1998 Tom's Place sold about \$8 million worth of designer clothing. His sales per square foot, a key measure in retail, top \$1000, more than twice the industry average.<sup>9</sup>

Anna Porter, another 1956 Hungarian refugee, the founder of Key Porter books, is an ideas person. The success of her publishing company in the small margin industry is due to her approach to writers and their writing. "I suppose coming from a country where freedom of speech was a serious problem and writers tended to be imprisoned, I have always valued the freedom to ask the writer, what is on your mind, even if it is critical of our government, as most writers are" said Anna Porter.<sup>10</sup> Key Porter Publishing had such an excellent reputation among authors, that some of the finest writers in Canada, such as Farley Mowat, Allan Fotheringham and Margaret Atwood chose to publish their works with it.<sup>11</sup> By the time Anna Porter sold her publishing company in 2005 it was the largest Canadian-owned publishing house in the country.

Entrepreneurs are considered successful, in part, if they visualize a future not seen or thought possible by others in their industry. Robert Lantos, a 1956 Hungarian refugee, had an ambitious vision. He wanted to stamp Canada on the entertainment-world map. By convincing American TV executives that Canadian products would play on their networks he had TV series and telefilms in development at every U.S. network by 1995. His company, Alliance Communication Corporation was the largest producer and

distributor of Canadian and International films and TV shows in Canada, exporting over \$130 million worth of products in 1994. In 1998 he sold his controlling interest in Alliance to focus on the creative process.<sup>12</sup>

Andrew Sarlos, a Bay Street investor and a 1956 Hungarian refugee, adopted a broad financial strategy when he started his investment company. With an initial \$500 investment, in 1974 he set up his personal holding company, Donbarn Investments Ltd. and went out to find a financial backing. He approached businessman Max Tanenbaum and told him: "Look, I have reached the point in my life that I no longer want to work for someone else, I want to be on my own, I believe my nature no longer suitable to be an employee, but I have background, I have experience, I have capability and I believe you and I can work together as long as I don't work for you and I am independent." When Max Tanenbaum asked Sarlos how much money he wanted, he answered boldly, \$250,000. In a very short period of time Tanenbaum gave Andrew Sarlos the money without any security.<sup>13</sup> Andrew Sarlos knew how to play the odds. In 1977 alone the value of stock in his investment trust, HCI Holdings Ltd., more than tripled and at one point so many people wanted to buy shares in his firm that trading on the Toronto Stock Exchange had to be halted for four hours.<sup>14</sup>

Individuals are more likely to be self-employed if there is a family tradition of self-employment and if they had worked at part time jobs as children.<sup>15</sup> After Robert Lantos and his family left Hungary, his mother made dresses, and his father sold factory textiles at a market stall and Robert's first job was to help his father.<sup>16</sup> Tom Mihalik also worked in his father's clothing store during his school year. Anna Porter's grandfather, Vilmos Racz, was a well-known editor and publisher in Hungary. In late 1945 Andrew Sarlos' father had a serious accident, which made him incapacitated. Sarlos had a part-time job at the age of 14 to help out the family.<sup>17</sup>

The revival of small business has been widely accompanied by the infusion of ethnic groups into the ranks of proprietors. Self-employment has accounted for a substantial share of employment among newcomers to Canada and to the United States over the last few decades. Borjas, using U.S. census data from 1970 and 1980, examined the propensity for immigrants and native born groups to be self-employed, finding that the likelihood of being self-employed is 11.7 percent for native-born, versus 16.5 percent for immigrants.<sup>18</sup> The historical record also shows considerable disparities in self-employment among various immigrant groups. In the United States Hispanic-owned businesses account for the largest category of minority-owned firms. Although Cubans represent a small percentage of the Hispanic population, they have achieved a remarkable growth in ethnic entrepreneurship in Miami. The literature attributes a central role to the influx of Cuban immigrants to the transformation of Miami, which has been called the capital of Latin America, from a stagnant city to a booming economy.<sup>19</sup> The

golden exiles, the immigrants who left Cuba after Castro took power, are very similar in characteristics to the 1956 Hungarian refugees.

Before the 1959 Cuban refugees arrived to the United States there were three waves of exodus from Cuba. The first wave of immigrants came in the mid-1800s. Cuban political exiles plotting to overthrow Spanish rule took refuge in three U.S. cities, New York, Key West and Tampa. Several entrepreneurs in the cigar industry moved their operations from Havana to the United States in the 1860s and 1870s, providing additional employment to new Cuban immigrants. In the 1930s a large number of immigrants came to Miami, fleeing the effects of the revolution against Geraldo Machado.<sup>20</sup>

By 1956 Canada already had three waves of Hungarian immigration. The first wave came during the turn of the twentieth century. They were driven from their homeland by poverty, rural overpopulation, and economic dislocation.<sup>21</sup> The second wave of Hungarian immigrants was "pushed" by political upheavals: revolution, counter-revolution and territorial dismemberment of the country during and after the First World War. The third wave left Hungary near the end of World War II because of the country's imminent conquest by the Red Army.

On January 1, 1959, the Cuban rebels triumphed, dictator Batista fled to the Dominican Republic, and Fidel Castro took control. Castro transformed Cuba into a communist state, nationalizing industry and confiscating private property. As a result tens of thousands of Cubans left their homeland. A communist regime was also the cause of the exodus of close to 200,000 Hungarian refugees in 1956 and 1957. Both Cubans and Hungarians left with the knowledge that going back to their home country was not an option. Both groups faced a language barrier in their new countries. The Cuban immigrants of the 1960s were doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, judges, bureaucrats, merchants and skilled workers. At the time on the CBC News Eric Sevareid characterized the Cuban exodus, as "the biggest brain drain the Western Hemisphere has know".<sup>22</sup> Professional elements were over-represented among the 1956 Hungarian refugees also; about half of them were high or technical high school graduates, a great many of them were engineers, medical doctors or technicians. J.W. Pickersgill, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in 1956, summarized: "I think we got as fine a group of immigrants as ever came to Canada in the whole of our history."<sup>23</sup>

There were many similarities in the characteristics of the two groups, but their image in their new countries was very different. While the 1956 Hungarian refugees enjoyed overwhelming support both from the governments and the public, the Cuban exiles had to face hostility.

The Miami city authorities made it more difficult for Cubans to live in their city than did any other municipality in the United States. Miami's City Hall did not issue business licenses anywhere North of Eighth Street to people who did not speak English. To ease the problems of Miami, the federal

authorities undertook a massive effort to relocate the Cuban refugees to New York and New Jersey. The American media was predicting ethnic frictions and social disorder. We should add that in 1959 the Cuban refugees had arrived to the United States during an economic recession compounded by a period of unusually bad weather. In 1956 the Hungarian refugees had come to Canada during a period of economic prosperity. However over the years the Cubans not only pulled themselves up from poverty, but they turned the economy of their adopted city around. Cuban entrepreneurs opened numerous car dealerships, construction firms, textile and leather goods manufacturing. Miami's Cuban population was large enough to sustain Cuban grocers, clothiers, barbers and other tradesmen. By 1985 there were some 18,000 businesses owned and operated by Cubans in the city.<sup>24</sup> The success of the Cuban exiles in Miami is a much-studied topic in ethnic entrepreneurship. Comparing the group characteristics and the circumstances of the migrations it is safe to speculate that the 1956 Hungarian refugees made a similar contribution to Canada's economy.

The question why some ethnic groups do better in business than others is pivotal to academics, businessmen and politicians. Pioneers in the study of ethnicity and entrepreneurship, Roger Waldinger, Howard Aldrich and Robin Ward tried to answer this question using a framework based on two dimensions: the opportunity structure in the host country and the characteristics of the ethnic group.<sup>25</sup> Waldinger and his co-researchers identified two opportunity structure conditions that are essential for the development of immigrant business: market conditions and access to ownership. Market conditions that favour products or services that are aimed at fellow ethnics, or an economic environment in which a wider, non-ethnic market might be served, coupled with opportunities for ownership, are conducive to ethnic business development. Waldinger, Aldrich and Ward argue that predisposing factors such as: selective migration, blocked mobility and aspiration levels, combined with the ability to mobilize resources, are the most critical ethnic group characteristics that determine the success of self-employment. Close ties to fellow ethnics, the networks of kinship and friendship and favourable government policies are the conditions out of which ethnic entrepreneurship may arise. Waldinger and his associates classify the conditions that influence the self-employment process for an immigrant group into three categories: (1) pre-migration characteristics, (2) the circumstances of migration and their evolution, and (3) post migration characteristics. The Waldinger, Aldrich and Ward model is dynamic; it is the interaction of the two dimensions that creates the ethnic enterprise.

One purpose of this study is to demonstrate, using the "Waldinger model," that the 1956 Hungarian refugees as a group were predisposed to self-employment. By mobilizing critical resources, they thrived in an entrepreneurial environment. The method of our analysis will be qualitative,

and our approach will be analytical. Our examination of the experiences of the 1956 Hungarian refugees will be based on the existing literature on Hungarian Canadians.<sup>26</sup>

### **Pre-migration Characteristics**

The Waldinger *et al.* model is designed to explain immigrant entrepreneurship. Although the 1956 Hungarians were refugees, they shared several characteristics with other entrepreneurial economic immigrants.<sup>27</sup> They were skilled, educated, came mainly from urban centres, and were often from the middle class of their country. One can assume that at least the potential for entrepreneurship existed among them. However, because they were refugees, they were in many ways distinct from other immigrant groups. While economic immigrants often make extensive plans to start a new life in another country, learn the host country's language, and collect capital, the 1956 Hungarian refugees had no opportunity to learn English before they left their homeland, and coming from a communist country, none of them had any capital. Economic immigrants select the country of their destination on the basis of where their skills will be in most demand. The 1956 Hungarian refugees had little choice as to where to go. Those among them who chose Canada were grateful that at least one country was willing to offer them a home. While economic immigrants often retain trading relationship with their country of origin, and may return there to arrange deals or to borrow money, the 1956 Hungarian refugees had no access to their homeland. Some of these characteristics had special implications for their involvement in the self-employment segment.

### **Selective Migration**

Leaving one's home to take up a life in a new society is self-selective. Emigrant workers tend to be more motivated and more inclined towards risk, which gives them an advantage in the entrepreneurial competition.<sup>28</sup> The events that led to the coming of 37,656 Hungarian refugees to Canada started with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's historical "secret" speech in February of 1956 denouncing Stalin and his crimes. In June a worker's uprising was crushed in Poland, but in that country a more liberal communist regime surfaced. Unrest soon spread to Hungary. The Hungarian Revolution began on October 23, 1956, when in Budapest students met to express solidarity with the new Polish regime, which advocated a greater freedom of speech and worship. The repression of this protest by police led to rioting, which in turn led to swift intervention by Russian troops and tanks from Soviet bases from

inside Hungary. Some units of the Hungarian army joined the revolutionaries. By the end of October the Revolution seem to had triumphed when the Soviet leadership decided to intervene once more, this time with large forces sent in from the Soviet Union. Resistance was soon crushed. There was much destruction in Budapest. Altogether some 2,500 Hungarians lost their lives in the fighting and 20,000 were wounded.<sup>29</sup> Hunger began to stalk Budapest. Terror returned as the arrest and deportation of thousands to forced labour camps started. After mid-November, tens of thousands of Hungarians began leaving their country through the Austrian and Yugoslav borders.

Most of the 1956 Hungarian refugees made the decision to leave their homes in an instant. Many of those who ended up in Canada never even contemplated leaving their homeland until they found out that the police were looking for them, presumably because of their role in the revolution. During the revolution Andrew Sarlos had joined the National Guard, the newly formed volunteer militia. Their arsenal was limited and his comrades-in-arms were untrained youngsters. Within a week after the second Soviet intervention all resistance ceased. Anna Porter had been at school when a friend told her that there was a demonstration going on that day, October 23rd, 1956. Excitedly, the young teenagers headed out to the event and joined what grew into the Hungarian revolution, all the while not quite clear on what was happening. Anna even got hold of a gun when they were handed out from the back of a Hungarian military vehicle. When the revolution had failed, Anna's mother collected some money by selling their paintings and gathered what belongings they could take and headed to the border.<sup>30</sup> During these days Frank Hasenfrazt was elected a revolutionary council member. He took part in the fighting, and his unit destroyed two Soviet tanks. When he saw that the chain of command broke down, he knew the revolution was near the end.<sup>31</sup> As a refugee he ended up in the French port Le Havre. In Le Havre he signed on to a freighter for a passage to Canada in exchange for work. The 1956 Hungarian revolution was an entrepreneurial self-selective process. During the events of the revolution and after its defeat, the 1956 Hungarian refugees demonstrated their entrepreneurial spirit, their willingness to take risks, and their ability to adapt to new circumstances. It is not surprising that J. W. Pickersgill, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in 1956, called the group "an Immigration Minister's dream."<sup>32</sup>

### **Blocked mobility**

The blocked mobility or relative disadvantage thesis argues that the barriers experienced by immigrants due to their lack of language skills, non-recognition of their credentials, unfamiliarity with the social, economic and legal structure of the host society cause many to turn to self-employment as an

alternative to wage labour. Immigrants' limited range of income generating skills spurs them into business as well. The Hungarian communist system in the early 1950s deliberately and systematically isolated the country, and within it the individual citizens, from all Western influences. Most of the refugees knew very little of their new country and few of them knew English.

In the late 1940s in Hungary, Marxist-Leninist dogma was imposed on the country's political and economic system. All institutions became controlled by the state, itself run by the all-powerful Communist Party. Thereafter the economy was centrally planned without respect for market forces. Generally accepted economic principles were ignored, the economic system was characterized by unmet demands, inferior quality consumer goods, and arbitrary treatment of employees and customers.

In terms of education the 1956 Hungarian Refugees as a group were highly qualified. Although in Hungary a large number of them — both men and women — had been employed in technical and skilled occupations, their talents were not readily marketable in Canada. In many cases the refugees' technical expertise was above the Canadian standards in their respective fields, but in addition to their inability to communicate, the refugees lacked the knowledge of basic Canadian industrial practices. Lacking the opportunity for appropriate career employment, one could argue that a number of 1956 Hungarian refugees were more likely to strike out on their own. Some Hungarian refugees would perhaps enter small business, because it allowed them to earn a living while limiting interaction with the unfamiliar culture of the host-country.

Andrew Sarlos graduated in economics at the Karl Marx University in Budapest, but he had no papers to prove it. When he came to Canada he started as a clerk at a small accounting firm for \$25 per week, and to supplement his wages he was also working in a soft drink bottling and imported gourmet food business. William Mihalik was unable to find steady work at first; to support himself, he opened a clothing store in Toronto's Kensington Market. When he arrived to Canada young Hasenfratz ended up working on a farm near Guelph.

### **Aspiration level**

Immigrants' social origin also influences the way they perceive their chances of getting ahead. They view their job's status, as well as their economic rewards differently than members of their host country. William Mihalik had worked in clothing and furniture sales before he left Hungary; in Canada he ended up doing the same line of work — he became a shopkeeper. His son, Tom Mihalik, an immigrant himself, had a hard school life. "He did not know English, was teased for his accent, for his looks, he was just different. He took

refuge is his father's store." "When I was 12 years old," remembers Tom Mihalik, "I knew I wanted to run a clothing business like my father. And I wanted a Cadillac Eldorado."<sup>33</sup> A young man born in Canada and aspiring to work as a manager behind a desk in an office might find the idea of taking over a small store less than ideal. For a 1956 Hungarian refugee being self-employed could be a dream fulfilled. For a Hungarian citizen in communist Hungary the opportunity of owning a small business was very slim. By the beginning of the 1950s all banks, mines and strategic big businesses had been nationalized and almost all small-medium enterprises had been forced into collectives. Existing small business owners were intimidated, in some cases they faced physical violence and even their families were discriminated against.<sup>34</sup> Since some of the 1956 Hungarian refugees would know somebody, who before the communists had taken power made a respectable living as an owner of a small business, and maybe because being self-employed had been all but prohibited in their home country, some of them were eager to give it a try in Canada. "I had a dream many years ago to have a small machine shop with a few employees," said Frank Hasenfratz.<sup>35</sup>

The 1956 Hungarian refugees were predominantly young people, only about 5000 of them were over the age of 45. Because of their age, their perceptions of job hierarchy were different than that of a more mature group's. It could be argued that the 1956 refugees were more concerned with economic mobility than with social status. Taking over or starting a small business was in their view probably a positive alternative to working for someone else, as well as the best way of getting ahead.

### **Circumstances of Migration**

Migration scholars increasingly agree that whether newcomers arrive as temporary migrants or permanent settlers, makes a great difference in their propensity to seek a life of self-employment. Immigrants who plan to return home, or visit home regularly and assess success in terms of their pre-migration standard of living, are more interested in instant financial rewards, and will likely work for someone else. Permanence is likely to add an edge to the settler's quest for opportunity. If a temporary migrant does not succeed in the country of his destination, he or she can return home. For newcomers who come to their new homeland for good, success is a must as for them there is no going back. It is for this reason that permanent immigrants tend to be more self-assertive, which is a requirement of entrepreneurial success.

As soon as the 1956 refugees crossed Hungary's borders they knew that there was no returning. They were aware of the violent reprisals that the newly-established Kádár regime inflicted on its real or perceived enemies. After the fall of 1956 many thousands in Hungary were imprisoned and



thousands were executed.<sup>36</sup> For many years after 1956 the Hungarian refugees faced prison terms if they returned. When it became obvious to Andrew Sarlos that the revolution could not go further, he felt that he was left with little choice. Staying in Hungary would mean prison, and with his record, probably death. For Sarlos the decision to leave was relatively easy to make. For him the evil he knew was far worse than the uncertainty he faced.<sup>37</sup> Frank Hasenfratz knew that for his membership in the revolutionary council he would either end up in Siberia or be executed. The Hungarian refugees, knowing that they had to make a future for themselves in emigration, were probably more interested in long-term economic progress than short-term financial success; and dead-end jobs might have spurred them into starting up a business of their own. Setting up a business is a risky endeavour. Immigrants who plan to return home with some capital would take the safer option and work for someone else, while the entrepreneurial Hungarian refugees would plan for the long run and might take the risk to start a small business.

Another condition of successful immigrant business activity is settlement pattern. Permanent immigrants usually arrive with immediate family members; temporary immigrants often leave family members behind. Therefore temporary immigrants must send funds to support families living at home, while permanent settlers can use the money to start up a business. Family members can also be sources of cheap labour to maintain economies of scale. Generally, the single immigrant has the propensity to accumulate financial capital, the foundation of any enterprise, at a higher rate. Should a married refugee decide to become self-employed, he or she may rely on his or her spouse for financial support needed to enter into ventures, or help with running a small business. Most of the 1956 refugees did not leave family behind. More than half of them were single and most were male. The next largest group, about 40 percent, were married, and the rest were divorced, widowed, or were children.<sup>38</sup> The refugees as a group had family statuses that were conducive to venturing into entrepreneurship. Frank Hasenfratz, Robert Lantos, Anna Porter and Andrew Sarlos left Hungary as singles. William Mihalik left his wife and son at home, they joined him in 1968.

### **Post-migration Characteristics**

Another factor that has a strong effect on the outcome of self-employment is the environment where the immigrants settle down. A great deal of research suggests that cities and well-defined geographic regions are incubators for entrepreneurship.<sup>39</sup> Cities function as "open systems" to attract talented people from various backgrounds and stimulate their creative capacities.<sup>40</sup> The majority of the 1956 Hungarian refugees came from cities, in particular from Budapest. It is not surprising that most of them established themselves in

Canada's major metropolitan areas. Refugees who arrived by ship at Halifax and St. John and were supposed to proceed by train to their appointed destinations in the West, rather disembarked in Montreal. It was estimated that over 40% of each trainload got off. Only the installation of a few railway guards around the station stopped the slipping out of the Hungarian refugees.<sup>41</sup> Nearly half of the refugees settled in Ontario, Toronto receiving the largest number of them, nearly 8,100. Ottawa and Montreal also received large number of Hungarian immigrants. It has been estimated that close to 7,000 Hungarian Jews entered Canada after the revolution.<sup>42</sup> They were a highly urbanized group, and there is every reason to believe that the overwhelming majority of them settled in Montreal and Toronto, the main centres of Jewish-Canadian life. By living in Canada's economically and socially most diverse, open, innovative regions, Toronto and Montreal, the refugees largely increased their chances of entering into the entrepreneurial stream. Another characteristic of a supportive environment that is critical for an immigrant is that the know-how of running a business can be acquired through on-the-job training. What is at work is the principle of cumulative social advantage: members of an ethnic group whose characteristics favour self-employment will be more likely to be hired by someone from the same ethnic group. Through their employment they will be more likely to be able to learn the business skills needed to eventually venture out on their own.

Immediately after their arrival in Canada, the 1956 Hungarian refugees were generally well treated by members of the three previous groups of Hungarian immigrants. Although the previous generations had very different immigration experiences, which led to some ill-feelings and friction, for the most part the old Hungarian community tried to help the refugees. First hand knowledge about the workings of ownership also gives an advantage to the would be entrepreneur. It is safe to speculate that among the three waves of immigrants there were a few Hungarians who had already established businesses and were willing to hire the new-arrived refugees. Probably the jobs were at an entry level, but it gave the newcomers an opportunity to learn by observation, laying the foundations of self-employment. After all, in a restaurant, working in the kitchen, is the logical occupational bridge to becoming a restaurateur.

### **Resource Mobilization**

William Peterson, one of the best-qualified scholars in the field of ethnic studies in the United States, defines the word ethnic as an adjective that refers to differences between categories of people. When it is linked to the noun "group", it implies that members of that group have some awareness of group membership.<sup>43</sup> Members of an ethnic immigrant group are able to rely on

support based on mutuality; they can also create resources that offset the harshness of the social and cultural environment they encounter. The social structure of an immigrant community tends to breed organizations both formal and informal. These informal and formal structures tend to provide ethnic entrepreneurs with resources that give them competitive advantage in the business world. Ethnic entrepreneurship is the formation of enterprises by an individual who uses some type of support, instrumental and/or expressive, from the ethnic community whose member he or she is.<sup>44</sup>

Resource mobilization focuses on the social structures through which members of an ethnic group are attached to one another and the way these social structures are used. Such structures consist of two parts: the network of kinship and friendship of the ethnic communities and the interaction of these networks within the larger economy. Many of the formal Hungarian organizations that came into existence with the influx of the 1956 refugees were defined by the revolution. After their defeat, freedom fighter organizations went into exile. Some established "branches" in a number of countries, including Canada. Another Hungarian refugee organization was the Federation of Hungarian University and College Students of North America, with a member association in Canada. Just as important were the artistic and professional groups founded after 1956, most of which were brought about by refugee artists, musicians or professionals. Such an organization was Toronto's Kodály Ensemble. Examples of new organizations were the associations of engineers, writers, agronomists, teachers and so on. Many informal organizations came into existence as well. With the addition of thousands to the Hungarian community, many activities that were not feasible before became realities. Ethnic schools were organized, where parents could meet informally, soccer teams were formed. Both Toronto's and Montreal's Jewish-Hungarian community also became very active. The 1956 Hungarian Refugees revitalized Hungarian community life.

As the refugees settled into the networks of Hungarian groups, it became more likely that within these networks business related support and the spread of relevant information would take place. The 1956 refugees' social networks probably provided the opportunity for obtaining credit that was important to start a business. In addition to capital, through these organizations the owners of small businesses could rely on sources to obtain information about permits, laws, regulations, management practices, sites and reliable suppliers. Through the Hungarian community, partners could have been also secured. Partners are crucial to small business development, because they enable the immigrants to pool capital, reduce the need for outside labour, and reduce costs, which is essential to maintain the competitive edge. The informal Hungarian organization probably helped its members to connect to Hungarians in higher positions. These connections would have given an opportunity to secure loans and maybe money partners.

An important issue facing small businesses is hiring employees. Unlike native-born Canadians, the 1956 refugees who started small businesses probably did not face difficulties in labour recruitment. In immigrant firms, ethnicity provides a common ground on which the terms of employment are negotiated, conflicts are resolved. Usually when an ethnic owner retains a kin or friend for employment, there is an understanding that the employment relationship is reciprocal.<sup>45</sup> The relative ease of finding employees through the immigrant networks gives new enterprises viability.

An informal gathering place for the 1956 refugees in Toronto was the area on Bloor St. between Spadina Ave. and Bathurst St. nicknamed "Schnitzel Row" because of the number of Hungarian restaurants and delis which could be found here.<sup>46</sup> Another location was the Spadina Ave. and Kensington Market area. In the late 1950s and early 1960s one was as likely to hear Hungarian spoken in these two areas as one would English. "Kensington back then still had a lot of Jewish stores and a lot of Hungarians," remembers Tom Mihalik. "Most of the stores were family businesses, the owners lived on the second floor and the store was on the main floor. There was a real Hungarian community here. We had our own church, theatres, butchers and grocers. Kensington Market was haven for me. William's clothing store was a gathering place for Hungarians in the market. William Mihalik would cook breakfast in the store, and would play chess with the men who came by in the morning."<sup>47</sup> Should a refugee need some help, job, information, maybe a little money or just psychological support, it was in these places that he or she would look and find them. Small business owners would also frequent these places to find reliable employees, to meet potential suppliers and customers or just for news. These areas would significantly increase the competitive advantage of Hungarian small businesses.

It is safe to speculate that common ethnic ties allowed the 1956 refugees to enter into business transactions within the fairly large, established Hungarian community. When small firms trust each other, the cost of transactions between them is likely to be lower, which would increase their profit margin. Regular cooperative transactions between entrepreneurial Hungarian suppliers, subcontractors and customers would have increased efficiency and ultimately the staying power of the Hungarian small business.

Governments vary substantially in the level of economic assistance they provide to immigrants and ethnic minorities. On the political scene both the Canadian federal and provincial governments took exceptional measures to facilitate the settlement of the refugees. In 1956 Canada opened its doors and lowered existing barriers to immigration more quickly, and behaved more magnanimously, than during any previous refugee emergency. This country took in over 37,000 Hungarian refugees, almost 20% of those who had reached Austria, compared to the 38,000 admitted by the United States.<sup>48</sup> Neither the Prime Minister nor the Cabinet placed any explicit ceiling on the

number of Hungarian to be admitted. The Cabinet established no formal guidelines regarding financial expenditures or any other related matters involving the movements of Hungarian refugees.<sup>49</sup> In many cases normal immigration procedures such as screening for health, securities etc. were dispensed with.<sup>50</sup> Canada not only accepted every Hungarian refugee who wanted to come, but it also paid for the refugees' passage as well. There were complex negotiations between the federal and provincial government regarding their acceptance of specific number of refugees, and their responsibility for health and other care.<sup>51</sup>

The 1956 Hungarian refugees arrived to their final destinations in Canada as fast as the government was able to bring them in by ship, plane and train. Clearly, they were not facing any restrictive conditions with respect to opening small businesses. On the contrary, they enjoyed unprecedented support from both levels of government. The economic conditions in Canada were also in favour of the 1956 Hungarian refugees. The country had prospered during the decade since World War II. Generally, Canada's gross national product and rate of unemployment suggested that the economic boom would continue.<sup>52</sup> In light of prosperity and the need for skilled workers, it seemed that the economy would be able to absorb rapidly the large influx of refugee workers. The media and public opinion climate were overwhelmingly positive as well. A small northern Ontario town expressed reservation about the refugees, stating publicly: "We don't want them." Canadian public and media disapproval was so swift and emphatic that the town was forced to issue an official apology.<sup>53</sup> As a result of the overwhelming Canadian support, the 1956 Hungarian refugees who contemplated to open up a small business should have felt encouraged.

## **Conclusions**

The Waldinger *et al.* model implies that no single characteristic, whether pre-migration or post-migration experiences or circumstances of migration, will determine the level of self-employment, but what will is how these various characteristics interact with one another and with the local opportunity structure. The 1956 Hungarian refugees were endowed with abundant predisposing factors: they were risk takers — highly motivated, well prepared, and able to adjust. They were ready and willing to build a new life in Canada. Probably for many of them the quest for the "good life" was using their entrepreneurial spirit and starting a small business. Circumstances also helped the formation of small enterprises. Both fellow Hungarians and Canadians welcomed them. Canadian cities acted as an incubator for the active Hungarian social networks, entrepreneurial creativity and innovation. The governments at both levels encouraged them, at least indirectly. There is

every reason to believe that as the 1956 Hungarian refugees' predisposing factors and their opportunities for resource mobilization interacted, it gave rise to many successful Hungarian entrepreneurs. The case study literatures and anecdotal evidence substantiate this hypothesis.

While entrepreneurship and the Cuban exile experience have a varied voluminous academic literature, the 1956 Hungarian refugees as ethnic entrepreneurs is an unresearched academic subject. Potential entrepreneurs, policy makers and academics would largely benefit from the scholarly study of the rich experiences of the Hungarian refugees who ended up as entrepreneurs. But time is running out: many of them, including William Mihalik and Andrew Sarlos, are already gone.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The following paragraph is based on Hans Landström, *Pioneers in Entrepreneurship and Small Business Research* (New York: Springer, 2005), 7-11.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Reynolds, "National panel study of US business start-up: Background and Methodology," in *Advances in Entrepreneurship, Firm Emergence, and Growth*, ed. J. A. Katz, Vol. 4 (Stanford, CT: JAI Press, 2000), 153-227.

<sup>3</sup> Bank of Montreal Financial Group, *Small Business Research*, Vol. 3, October 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Canadian Federation of Independent Business, *Small Business Profile*, December 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Chell, et al., *The Entrepreneurial personality: Concepts, cases and categories* (London: Routledge, 1991), 154.

<sup>6</sup> Sam Youl Lee, Richard Florida and Zoltan Acs, "Creativity and Entrepreneurship: A Regional Analysis of New Firm Formation," *Regional Studies*, 38, 8 (November 2004): 881.

<sup>7</sup> Gordon Pitts, "The Blueprint Boys," *The Globe and Mail*, June 24, 2005, p. 30.

<sup>8</sup> Cathal Kelly, "Men's shop a T.O. fixture," *Toronto Star*, October 9, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> John Heinzl, "Tom's tactics: low prices and larger than life," *The Globe and Mail*, July 10, 1998, p. B23.

<sup>10</sup> Gyle Konotopetz, "Literary dynamo kindles lifelong passion," *Business Edge*, 5, 44, December 22, 2005.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> "Local Mogul: Robert Lantos is an ambitious, autocratic, volatile and flamboyant," *Toronto Life*, Toronto, Vol. 29, Iss. 13, p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Sarlos, *Firework: The Investment of a Lifetime* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1993), 67.

<sup>14</sup> Peter C. Newman, "The life and death of Bay Street's guru," *Maclean's*, Toronto, May 12, 1997, Vol. 110, Iss. 19, p. 50.

<sup>15</sup> David G. Blanchflower and Andrew J. Oswald, *What makes a young entrepreneur?* National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper No. 3252, 1990, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> "Local Mogul: Robert Lantos," 60.

<sup>17</sup> Sarlos, *Firework*, p. 14.

<sup>18</sup> George Borjas, "The self-employment experience of immigrants," *Journal of Human Resources*, 21 (Fall 1986): 485-506.

<sup>19</sup> Barry B. Levine, "The Capital of Latin America," *The Wilson Quarterly*, 9, 5 (Winter, 1985): 48.

<sup>20</sup> Bella L. Galperin, "Cuban American Entrepreneurs: Champions of Economic Development in Florida," Paper presented at the International Council for Small Business Conference, 2005, Washington, D.C.

<sup>21</sup> The paragraph is based on Nándor F. Dreisziger, "The Refugee Experience in Canada and the Evolution of the Hungarian-Canadian Community," in *Breaking Ground: The 1956 Hungarian Refugee Movement to Canada*, ed. Robert H. Keyserlingk (Toronto: York Lanes Press, 1993), 65-85.

<sup>22</sup> Levine, "The Capital of Latin America," p. 54.

<sup>23</sup> J. W. Pickersgill, "The Minister and the Hungarian Refugees," in *Breaking Ground: The 1956 Hungarian Refugee Movement to Canada*, p. 51.

<sup>24</sup> Levine, "The Capital of Latin America," p. 55.

<sup>25</sup> Much of the following is based on Roger Waldinger, Howard Aldrich, and Robin Ward, "Ethnic Entrepreneurs," in *Entrepreneurship: The Social Science View*, ed. R. Swedberg, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 356-388.

<sup>26</sup> What follows is largely based on Nándor F. Dreisziger, *et al.*, *Struggle and Hope: The Hungarian Experience in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982).

<sup>27</sup> The following paragraph is based on Steven J. Gold, "The Employment Potential of Refugee Entrepreneurship: Soviet Jews and Vietnamese in California," *Policy Studies Review*, 11, 2 (Summer 1992): 177-178.

<sup>28</sup> Barry Chiswick, *Human Resources and Income Distribution: Issues and Policies* (New York: Norton, 1978).

<sup>29</sup> Ignác Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX. században* [The History of Hungary in the 20th Century], 3rd revised ed. (Budapest: Osiris, 2005), p. 395. For a brief overview of events in Hungary in English see Nándor Dreisziger, *Hungarians from Ancient Times to 1956* (Ottawa: Legas, 2007), 131-143.

<sup>30</sup> Andrew Princz, *Bridging the Divide: Canadian and Hungarian Stories of the 1956 Revolution – Ötven év távlatából: Kanadai és magyar történetek az 1956-os forradalomról* (Montreal: ontheglobe.com, 2006), pp. 128-129.

<sup>31</sup> *Young rebels*, Directed by Susan P. Aykler, 2006.

<sup>32</sup> Howard Adelman, "An Immigration Dream: Hungarian refugees Come to Canada – An Analysis," in *Breaking Ground: The 1956 Hungarian Refugee Movement to Canada*, 37.

<sup>33</sup> Kelly, "Men's shop."

<sup>34</sup> M. Laki, *Kisvállalkozás a szocializmus után* (Budapest: Közgazdasági Szemle Alapítvány, 1998).

<sup>35</sup> "Linamar Corporation: Frank Hasenfratz Named Canadian Manufacturing Hall of Fame Inductee," *Marketwire*, June 26, 2007.

<sup>36</sup> *Young rebels, op. cit.*

<sup>37</sup> Sarlos, *Fireworks*, p. 32.

<sup>38</sup> Joseph Kage, "The Settlement of Hungarian Refugees in Canada," in *Breaking Ground: The 1956 Hungarian Refugee Movement to Canada*, p. 100.

<sup>39</sup> Lee, Florida and Acs, "Creativity and Entrepreneurship," p. 881.

<sup>40</sup> J. Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961).

<sup>41</sup> Earl. E. McCarthy, "Hungarian Refugee Movement: Transportation and Settlement in Canada," in *Breaking Ground: The 1956 Hungarian Refugee Movement to Canada*, p. 61.

<sup>42</sup> B. L. Vigod, *The Jews in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1964), 6.

<sup>43</sup> W. Petersen, "Concepts of Ethnicity," in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. S. Thernstrom (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 234-242.

<sup>44</sup> Edna Bonachich and Judith Modell, *The Economic Basis of Ethnic Solidarity: Small Business in the Japanese American Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

<sup>45</sup> Sarah Ladbury, "Choice, Chance, or no Alternative? Turkish Cypriots in Business in London," in *Ethnic Communities in Business*, ed. R. Ward and R. Jenkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 105-124.

<sup>46</sup> Steven Sandor, "Toronto's Hungarian heritage," *CANOE - CNEWS - Canada*, October 20, 2006; <http://cnews.canoe.ca/CNEWS/Canada/2006/10/26/2040723.html> [12 February 2008].

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Adelman, "An Immigration Dream," p. 37.

<sup>49</sup> Gerald. E. Dirks, "Canada and Immigration: International and Domestic Considerations in the Decade Preceding the 1956 Hungarian Exodus," in *Breaking Ground: The 1956 Hungarian Refugee Movement to Canada*, p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> McCarthy, "Hungarian Refugee Movement: Transportation and Settlement," p. 59.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* p. 58.

<sup>52</sup> Dirks, "Canada and Immigration," p. 8.

<sup>53</sup> Susan M. Papp, "Flight and Settlement: The 56-ers," in *Hungarians in Ontario*, ed. S. M. Papp, a double issue of *Polyphony, The Bulletin of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario*, 2, 2-3 (1979-80): 68.



## **Remembering 1956: Invited Immigrants — The Sopron Saga**

**Márta Mihály**

**I am telling my story.** I do not intend to speak for anybody else in my group, which numbered 289, the Sopron Foresters, with whom I landed on Canada's shores early in 1957. Memories fade and the narrative may change. There is one thing though I know for absolute certain: I never intended to leave my homeland. Yet I had to, under duress, first as a child from Székelyföld in Transylvania, soon after World War II, and again in 1957. I know also that the saddest day of my youth is the 4th November 1956, the day when the Hungarian revolution collapsed. Times, places and political regimes changed, but in my heart and in my tradition I remained a proud, Székely Hungarian, free and privileged as a Canadian citizen.

My father was a forester and in 1956 I was studying to be one, in the last year (5<sup>th</sup> year) of my studies in Sopron, just months before my diploma dissertation was due in forest engineering. The thought of freedom inspired me, which also sustained our Revolution. I was sure of our Revolution's glorious victory. I believed in the rebirth of a free and independent Hungary. I know too that the hopes of the Hungarian nation were similar to mine. But ours was the dream in 1956. Cast out from my country by force and landing on the Canadian shores were the reality.

In this paper I would like to tell my version of the Sopron foresters' saga as I remember it after 50 years. Most of it is engraved into my heart's emotions forever, even if the memory of the mind may fade. The Revolution and what followed for 50 years is a unique historical chapter in the annals of Hungarian immigration to Canada.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of November, 1956, I walked across the border from Sopron into Austria. I was one of more than 500 from the same institution among over 80 of my classmates in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of Forest Engineering. The 500 were a mixed lot: students from three faculties (forest, mining, and civil engineering), a good number of professors, and family members. The Soviet tanks bearing down on us, the border unguarded from the Sopron side, the Austrians did not stop us.

A good number from the Sopron group was brought together by the Austrians and stayed together first near the border in Judenau in the hopes that

soon we shall go home. As the days passed, our hopes slowly began to fade. Soon, Dr. Drimmel, the Austrian minister of education, appeared with arrangements for us to move to a grandiose mansion at Ferienhort on the shore of picturesque St. Wolfgang Lake (the place is known from the *Sound of Music* film). Dr. Drimmel thought this was a good transitional environment for us wanting to study German and to rehash materials we covered in class before we returned home. As the weeks went by the political situation in Hungary worsened. Returning was a big risk that many tried with various successes. Slowly the news of our existence at Ferienhort become known practically all over the globe. Immigration agents from different countries started to appear. We were an ideal target, we were young and educated.

It was at that time, to be specific, the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 1956, that J.W. Pickersgill, Canada's minister of immigration, and a certain "Mr. Cox," a government representative, appeared. They brought a credible invitation. According to this, we were to be guaranteed by the Canadian government to continue our studies in Canada in Hungarian with our professors, during the period from 1957-1961, until all members of the group graduated. We would be the Sopron Division of the Faculty of Forestry at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. After graduation we were to receive an appropriate university diploma, so it would be acceptable, if we returned to Hungary. This last point was very important to me, still hoping for a return to my homeland. The invitation was many ways good news, but it provoked arguments for and against the move. Many opposed it, mainly my classmates in the 5<sup>th</sup> year; others thought that Europe would be better. Finally by ballot the Canadian offer won! I supported it.

All in all 30 of the 5<sup>th</sup> year students accepted Canada, some stayed on in Europe, and a good number returned home. A copy of our contract with Canada was sent back to the University in Sopron and an authenticated copy was placed for safekeeping in the Vienna Archives.

The Canadian government's invitation may have been a unique event in the history of their immigration, but it was a very definite stand also against the Soviets. This made us a global sensation. All the leading papers and journals sought the story, their way, hoping to create controversy and sensation. We were pestered by journalists and had to resist. The excitement did not fade until months later, it continued on well after we settled down in British Columbia.

Our decision was lauded by contemporary poets and writers. J. A. Michener, the well-known American writer, travelled to the Austrian border to witness the struggle of the freedom seekers, he felt sorry that the Sopron group did not go to America. "What a vital impulse Vancouver is going to get" he wrote in his book *The Bridge at Andau* in 1957.

After enjoying for almost two months the Austrians' gracious hospitality, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December our Canadian journey began. 289 of us

left Salzburg and travelled across Europe by train to Liverpool, England. In the harbour the luxury liner *Empress of Britain* awaited us. It was New Years Eve and well-dressed citizens were everywhere on the way to parties. Liverpool was in very festive mood. Close to midnight I located my four-person cabin and settled in. Since I had very little to put away, the settling in was quickly done.

Mid afternoon on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1957, we left Europe. I remember the small farewell celebration on the deck. These were highly emotional hours for me; I still find it painful to think of it.

We arrived in St. John, in New Brunswick on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 1957. Most of us were seasick. It felt good to be on land. We received a welcoming cable from ministers Pickersgill and Sinclair. We were given \$8 per person and some toiletry. The city welcomed us and I felt very grateful. Exactly 10 years before there was another arrival for my family, as Székely refugees from Romania to communist Hungary. The Hungarian authorities did not want us in.

We boarded the train on the 19<sup>th</sup> of January in St. John on the east coast and began the journey west. We stopped for a warm welcome in Montreal, than in Ottawa where Pickersgill was waiting for us at the train station. He called our train, the "the freedom train". We crossed the snow-covered country with stops and other welcomes in Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Edmonton and at our first destination, Abbotsford near Vancouver, in British Columbia. People, young and old of all nationalities came to the stations to greet us. The Salvation Army and the Red Cross were waiting for us at all stations. All with welcoming presents and smiles. I felt humbled and very grateful for the generosity.

After a month stay in Abbotsford we moved on, arrived on the 20 of February to Powell River where we spent six months. We were given housing by the local paper and pulp mill. Well kept and well fed, we had time to rest and start in earnest to learn English. Our cost was covered by the \$65 per month, the amount each person received from the Department of Immigration. This help lasted until the end of the year.

The community of Powell River was a small factory town located on one of the fiords of the British Columbia coastline, not very far from Vancouver. It was there that we had the first opportunity to see the famous coastal rainforest. What a magical experience it was. Very different from anything I saw before. The trees were very tall, as if reaching to the sky, covered with bryophytes attached to bark and branches, like a bridal veil, standing in the misty sunshine. The ground covered with heavy undergrowth of ferns and other luscious green plants and giant decaying tree trunks lying in a chance created pattern, made the forest appear impenetrable. This was virgin forest, a mysterious and secretive place. I knew it right away: the massive complexity

of this forest and enormous biomass, a true *dauerwald*, defies my understanding of silvics and silviculture.

We spent 6-8 hours a day learning English. It was very concentrated and most effective. We had the highly qualified personnel of the provincial department of education, who did not speak Hungarian at all.

Spring arrived, and it was time to look for summer jobs. Very few of us found any, the ones who did, were very lowly jobs, with a minimum pay. We were very disappointed and convinced that all the low-paying jobs were reserved for the Sopron group in B.C. But we did not know the ways of the Canadian students. They were in fact happy to get any kind of job for the summer, even with low pay. They were able to save up their tuition fees and more, for expenses, during the usual four months summer break. This was contrary to our experience at home, with much shorter summer breaks, including four weeks compulsory forestry training and another four in military camps. The State placed us into positions, set our wages, and gave directions as the bureaucrats saw it. This arrangement of total control robbed us from any experience useful in search for work in Canada. We did not know how to bargain and how to say no. Then another thing, we had absolutely no experience in the inner workings of the immigration system. This system automatically delegates everybody, who does not speak English or French sufficiently well to the same level, regardless of education or know-how. This is fine to a point, but there is more to the system I did not know, until I met professionals who came to Canada before me, which I considered then and consider now immorally predatory. People with high-level training are enticed to come, but then when they arrive the same system that brought them here prevents them practicing their profession in the most ridiculous ways of exclusion. So, when I started to search to pinpoint the roots of our problems in the early years, I started to think of Canada as the country of Ph.D. dishwashers and MD hospital orderlies. And I realized how much a mistake it is to encourage the brain-drain from other, much worse off societies outside, and wasting talent not utilized, once inside.

At the beginning of September we all moved to Vancouver, rented student accommodations near the university, and began classes in Forestry. Our professors spent the summer to prepare for the new curriculum, adapted to Canadian principles. It was a tremendous undertaking, requiring dedication to the profession and first of all to the students.

In spite of the lack of summer jobs, 210 of my fellow students enrolled in Forestry at the University of British Columbia. We all paid our tuition fee, exactly the same amount as any Canadian student, who took similar courses, and were given the same responsibilities and the same privileges. Nothing more and nothing less! Most of us had no money to pay the tuition fee, but we could apply and get a bank loan. I paid my loan back to the Bank of Montreal in two or three years. I remember once László, my

classmate and husband, and we ran out of money, and the electricity bill was due. László went to the manager in the Bank of Montreal for a \$10 loan. He gave him ten dollars.

In April, 1958 I graduated. I received my university diploma for studies that began almost six years before. I felt sad that my parents were not with me. But it was my investment and my own treasure. I was proud and happy. It was a very high achievement in Canada for a female in 1958. There were no female forestry students at U.B.C. or female graduates at that time. I was among the first female to graduate from the Sopron division in Vancouver. Nobody informed us of the non-existence of female foresters, before we came to Canada. It was a very sad discovery. Out of our 30 classmates, 27 graduated.

Life was a series of ups and downs for me and for all female graduates in those days in Canada. I could not get a professional position. So history was repeated: one more B.S.F. working in the lowest echelons on the job scale. It was a difficult beginning. Many of my classmates decided to continue studies for higher degrees out of dedication to the profession or perhaps due to the lack of proper professional opportunities. The others did all kinds of work, but we survived, until a better position came along. It was not easy, but we were young, totally free, and equal to all, full of hope for a better future.

The Sopron Division closed its doors in the spring of 1961. The total graduates numbered 140. From the 5th year 27 students graduated, the 4th 37, the 3rd 33, the 2nd 20 and from the 1st 23. 57 colleagues received their diplomas at other universities, 13 left for private business. Our professors had to start from the beginning after 1961. Most of the older ones retired, others had difficulty in finding reasonable positions.

I base some of my numbers on the reports of László Adamovich and Oszkár Sziklai,<sup>1</sup> my former professors, and Kálmán Roller,<sup>2</sup> the one-time dean of the Sopron Division. Their data are from 15 and 25 years after the Sopron Division closed its doors and about as far back from the time when I am writing this essay. The results I see are most impressive. I feel very proud, because what the Sopron foresters achieved is not from inherited wealth. It is coming from search for knowledge, from consistent hard work and perseverance against all odds. The achievements are the fruits of well-used time, well invested energy, and unwavering commitment. The higher the achievement the costlier it gets.

What kind of achievements do I talk about? Usually 10% of a typical Canadian class go for a graduate degree. In the Sopron Division 25% of the graduates got a master degree and 11% earned Ph.D. About 25% received different kinds of financial help for their studies. My own class procured many higher degrees: 10 M.Sc. and 6 Ph.D. degrees, in total 60% of 27.

But, in spite of the high academic achievement, the Sopron foresters had some unique difficulties on the outset of their forestry practice. They came from the European forestry tradition as practiced in a small country. They saw their role as protectors of the environment and frugal users of the forest resources. They knew a sustained yield silviculture that is intensive and continuity oriented. They were raised on the idea that the forest was there to nourish and protect in a conservationists sense, and take its products with a view to the consequences for the total environment. This view was not shared in the 1950s by the Canadian forest industry. They still operated on the basis of the 19th century doctrine, plainly speaking, they "mined" the forest as it were an inexhaustible supply of wood. The aim was to harvest as much timber as possible out of a forest and damn the consequences. This kind of logging operations was a total shock to me: high-grading with heavy machinery, leaving behind a devastated landscape. I could not understand the practice and all the waste of biomass disgusted me. They were not even willing to discuss what they were doing without painfully trying to point out our "naïveté" or outright lack of touch with reality. Thomas Berry (1990) explains better than we could at that time the dreadful reality which is now clearly manifested, after many years of abusive management:

In this disintegrating phase of our industrial society, we now see ourselves not as the splendour of creation, but as the most pernicious mode of earthly being. We are the termination, not the fulfilment of the earth process. If there were a parliament of creatures, its first decision might well be to vote the humans out of the community, too deadly a presence to tolerate any further. We are the affliction of the world, its demonic presence. We are the violation of earth's most sacred aspects.<sup>3</sup>

How right he is! Thomas Berry is the most provocative eco-theologian of our time. He dedicates his book, *The Dream of the Earth*, to nothing less of creation than "the Great Red Oak" beneath whose sheltering branches the book was written.

On balance, I feel the Sopron foresters passed through those early formative years with flying colours. I dare to say, that they were effecting changes in the system. Whatever the reasons, but I suspect their presence as leading administrators, research scientists and educators had much to do with it. Now we see a much more regulated reforestation practice, less destructive, supervised logging, and better waste management. Their influence also awoke the need for a better and healthier forest as an environmental protection.

The Sopron foresters' influence is easier to infer from the actual facts of their careers. Many of them are now retired from high position in government services, business, and academia. The Sopron foresters pointed the way to make the profession see lasting benefit in a colossal change:

opening up the forestry schools and professional practice to women. Browsing through the Forestry Faculty's and student lists at U.B.C., I am happy to see the change. Female forestry professionals are now in responsible positions in every field of this lovely profession. I like to think that we were pioneers and had shone light on possibilities.

We have well-known university professors among us. Several thousand of well regarded scientific articles, essays, and monographs that have appeared in recent decades were written by Sopron foresters. These are accessible in libraries and on the internet. I mention one example, my husband, László, whose work I know best, having been his research associate in many projects. His very early book of 1978 *Multivariate analysis in vegetation research*<sup>4</sup> and his rise to full professorship after seven years out of graduate school is not a unique case among the Sopron foresters who, quickly moved to the fore front of their fields. My classmate, Dr. L. Pászner, university professor (U.B.C.), now retired, left his mark on forestry wood science as an inventor with patents on cement bonding of wood, wood hydrolysis to sugars and novel pulping methods of wood. Many of my colleagues received highly meritorious awards and through recognition by peers moved up into the highest echelons of their profession.

The political situation in Hungary drastically changed after the Soviets left. People of the country began waking up to freedom, slowly coming into their life. The foresters at home were free to reach out. Many joint projects were proposed and consummated. Again I use László's case for an example, which I know best. In recognition of his contribution to theory and applications in his field, statistical ecology, he was elected into the ranks of academicians in the Hungarian Academy of Science in Budapest. Going to the induction ceremonies, Dr. Bálint Zólyomi of the Academy met us at main entrance. By a friendly hug, he said: Welcome home László, son of our native land. Dr. Gábor Fekete introduced László to the members of the Academy and to the invited guests. It was an emotional gathering and a supreme testimony to the times: the contributions to science by a Sopron forester, exiled by the communist regime and recognized at home. What an honour it was! I also spoke at the inaugural, as wife and research partner, not realizing that I am breaking an almost two century's tradition of the Academy. A few years later our adopted land's highest scientific institution, the Canadian Academies of Science (a division in the Royal Society of Canada) elected László to its community of fellows. It was immense honour and also memorable occasion for a Sopron forester to take chair among Canada's scientific elite, under pomp and ceremony at the Parliament in Ottawa.

We are students no longer, just retired foresters, but there is a fitting memento, to remember the time, long-long time ago, at the adopted university of U.B.C. It is an open gate carved of yellow-cedar, a native tree in the mountains overlooking Vancouver, in the Székely tradition. This magnificent

work of art is the creation of emeritus research scientist, a Sopron forester, László Józsa. It stands by the Forestry building of U.B.C., overlooking the memorial park honouring the life and work of another Sopron forester, a classmate, Gyula Juhász. Inscribed on the open gate, in three languages is: "Our future is rooted in our traditions". The open gate invites all to look back into their tradition and draw strength from it. This gate is a thank you gift to the people of Vancouver and to all Canadians for their generosity in time of our need, in behalf of a 140 Sopron graduates.

Another instrument well fitting to characterize the strength of Sopron tradition is a periodical that links the members of the group through a life time and promotes camaraderie, is the *Kapocs* newsletter. We are now spread over the globe, but we are connected by *Kapocs*, thanks to the hard work and good offices of its editor, László Rétfalvi, and his editorial board.

I quote the text of Pickersgill's final address to the Sopron foresters:

Most of the countries of refuge wanted to receive Hungarians who could start to work immediately, but we in Canada alone encouraged students to come here to complete their studies. We believed, in the long run, their additional qualifications would increase their contribution to their new homeland. I believed that the Sopron faculty by staying together to complete their studies could make an even greater contribution to the development of our forest industry and our national life. In the quarter century since 1957, Dean Roller and the professors and students from Sopron have exceeded my highest hopes. In every province and region of Canada graduates of the Sopron faculty are numbered among the leading citizens. The freedom fighters from Hungary... was as fine a group of immigrants as our country ever received. Among the very best were the foresters from Sopron.<sup>5</sup>

There is no need for further comments by me.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Laszlo Adamovich and Oszkar Sziklai, *Foresters in Exile: The Sopron Forestry School in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1970).

<sup>2</sup> Kalman J. Roller, "Hungarian Foresters in Canada," in *Sopron Chronicle, 1919-1986*, edited by the Sopron Alumni, U.B.C. (Toronto: Rákóczi Foundation, 1986), 1-177; see also the same author's *Mi is voltunk egyszer az Akadémián: Soprontól – Vancouverig* (Toronto: Pythagoras, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco, Ca.: Sierra Club Books, 1990)



<sup>4</sup> László Orloci, *Multivariate analysis in vegetation research* (The Hague: W. Junky Publishers, 1978).

<sup>5</sup> See Pickersgill's foreword to the *Sopron Chronicle, 1919-1986*. For more of his writings on the subject see "The Minister and Hungarian Refugees," in *Breaking Ground: The 1956 Hungarian Refugee Movement to Canada*, ed. Robert H. Keyserlingk (Toronto: York Lane Press, 1993), 47-51.



**PART III**

**About Books:**

**Review Articles and  
Book Introductions**

by:

Lee Congdon

Christopher Adam

Sándor Zsíros

Janet Kerekes

Edit Toth



## **Society as Family: The Loyalties and Illusions of Laura Polanyi**

**Lee Congdon**

Judith Szapor. *The Hungarian Pocahontas: The Life and Times of Laura Polanyi Stricker, 1882-1959* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, 2005). viii + 218 pages. \$40.00.

**On 11 August 1957**, Michael Polanyi sent a collection of family documents to his older sister Laura, known affectionately as “Mausi.” He addressed them to “the custodian of the family's traditions.” (p. 190, note 148) Those traditions of achievement, he could assure himself, were worth preserving. He himself had had a distinguished career as a scientist and was beginning to make his mark as a philosopher as well. His older brother Karl was a social and economic historian whose book, *The Great Transformation* (1944), was recognized as a classic on publication. Several of their cousins, including the Marxist theorist Ervin Szabó, had made important contributions to the cultural life of *fin de siècle* Hungary. And as we now know, further distinction of the intellect and imagination lay in the future.

Judith Szapor, herself Hungarian born, became interested in the Polanyis after being introduced to the “Great Generation” (born between 1875 and 1905) by György Litván, who has done so much to make that generation's story known. Litván's guidance, along with her commitment to feminism, prompted her to write her dissertation on Laura Polanyi, but she soon discovered that that remarkable woman's life was deeply embedded in her family's history. As a result, she devotes a great deal of attention here to Laura's mother, Cecile Wohl, and daughter, Eva Zeisel.

Laura Pollacsek, her maiden name until 1912 (we have Szapor to thank for authenticating the date), was born in Vienna in 1882. Her father, Mihály Pollacsek, was, until misfortune arrived, a successful railway engineer of Jewish origin. He met Cecile Wohl, the daughter of a Vilna rabbi and historian, in the imperial capital and married her in 1881. Seeking even greater opportunity, Pollacsek moved his family to Budapest in the 1890s, by which

time his wife had presented him with two sons, Adolf (b. 1883), who later pursued a career in business, and Karl (b. 1886).

During her years in Vienna, Cecile had met Anna Klatschko, whose husband Samuel moved in a circle of émigré Russian revolutionaries. Excited by their utopian dreams and clandestine activities, she was not happy about having to move to Hungary and never, despite linguistic gifts, attempted to master the Hungarian language. Bored, she began to open her home to young intellectuals eager to explore new ideas emanating from Western Europe. To members of the Great Generation such as Oszkár Jászi, György Lukács, Béla Balázs, and Anna Lesznai, she soon became "Mama Cecile."

There seems to be little doubt that Cecile hoped that her daughters, Laura and Zsófia, would pursue careers other than that of wife and mother. But as Szapor reminds us, educational and career opportunities for women in turn-of-the-century Hungary were not those of twenty-first century Canada, where she herself now lives and teaches. Nevertheless, Hungary's liberal government did make it possible for Mausi — if we may call her that — to enroll as a private student at the Lutheran Boy's Gymnasium before moving, in October 1896, to the National Women's Educational Association Gymnasium. In 1900, she matriculated in the University of Budapest's Faculty of Arts, where she studied Hungarian history under Henrik Marczali, a distinguished historian of Jewish origin.

In 1904, before she had completed her doctoral work, Mausi surprised her family by marrying Sándor Stricker, a successful businessman, and making a conscious decision to place husband and — eventually — children ahead of career. No doubt her mother regretted that decision. Szapor certainly does; or perhaps it would be fairer to say that she regrets that Mausi could not have "had it all": husband, children, *and* career. This regret leads her to take a short detour from her narrative path through the thickets of feminist theory.

Szapor also regrets the fact that Mausi was more of a radical — closer to the social democrats and the "bourgeois radicals" around Jászi — than a feminist. "A woman," Mausi once wrote, "*is always in closer association with a man belonging to her economic class than with any other woman.*"<sup>1</sup> And what is, to Szapor at least, just as depressing, she "remained silent on the less than stellar pre-war record of the Social Democrats and Radicals on the issue of women's vote." (p. 65)

But however short she fell of the feminist ideal, Mausi did manage to complete her doctorate, help her cousin Szabó edit the *Bibliographia Economica Universalis*, and deliver lectures in which she issued calls for educational opportunities equal to those available to men. She made no attempt, of course, to seek a university appointment; family obligations alone militated against it. In order, however, to see to it that her own children were introduced to the progressive outlook on life and society, she founded an experimental kindergarten.

From 1911 to 1913, Mausi and others of like mind instructed a small group of children, including two of her own and the six-year-old Arthur Koestler, in reading, writing, arithmetic, and eurhythmics, all within the context of a "secular moral education." That, indeed, was the title she gave to a piece she published in *Szabadgondolat*, the journal of the Galileo Circle, a radical student group for which her brother Karl served as first president. In it she called for the rejection of a morality based upon religion and the adoption of a secular morality based, in some way not clearly stated, upon natural science and conducive to human "cooperation." "Happy the school boy or girl," she wrote, "for whom this word is as familiar as the names of the Sacraments are to us."<sup>2</sup>

Mausi had to close her school when her husband moved the family to Vienna for business reasons. In the last year of the Great War, however, the Strickers returned to Budapest, where she organized the women in Jászi's Radical Party. After the fall of the 1919 Soviet Republic and the formation of a counter-revolutionary government, the Strickers, who risked being targeted by roving bands of anti-Semites, elected to remain in Hungary — while the Polanyi brothers, Karl, Adolf, and Michael (b. 1891), chose to leave. They were soon followed by the Stricker children — Michael, Eva, and Otto (George).

Because of what one might call Mausi's internal exile during the interwar years, Szapor turns her attention next to Eva's misadventures in Soviet Russia. A gifted ceramist who had been perfecting her art in Germany, Mausi's daughter visited the Soviet Union in 1932, where, as she and other political pilgrims believed, a great social "experiment" was under way. She went first to Kharkov in Ukraine to join her fiancé, the physicist Alex Weissberg, who was helping to "build socialism." At Mausi's insistence, she married Weissberg, and began work in the Soviet china industry. Recognizing her abilities, the Soviets entrusted her with important positions in Leningrad and Moscow, where, in May 1936, she was caught up in the Terror.

In the middle of the night, Mausi, who was staying with her, woke her and whispered that the secret police were in the living room. They took her into custody and charged her with plotting to assassinate Stalin. Szapor has read her unpublished account of her sixteen-month ordeal and finds it disconcertingly inconsistent, though some of the details she provides match those she once confided to Koestler, who, over her objections, borrowed them for *Darkness at Noon*. Nor is Szapor impressed by Eva's attempts to explain why the Soviets eventually released her; that remains a mystery.

Many pages later, and in a different chapter, Szapor picks up the threads of the Soviet story, and we learn that Mausi, her daughter's false arrest and brush with death notwithstanding, hoped to write a book extolling the virtues of Stalinism. Unlike her brother Michael, who, after meetings with Soviet scientists in Moscow, saw through communist propaganda, she "took

Stalin's official line at face value." (p. 139) In a letter of 1943, she wrote this to a friend:

It seems clear to me now that the policy to make a *happy family* [emphasis mine] of the Soviet people — nationalities, classes (workers, peasants, intelligentsia), generations, plants and kol-khozes, believers and unbelievers — was not only set but was deemed of such first class importance that not even the consequences of the unforeseen murder of Kirov (in December 1934) could prevent that 1935 was a year devoted to teach the people the pursuit of happiness. (p. 139)

Mausi dreamed of a society that was a family writ large: she projected her own selfless attitude toward her family upon people living under Soviet rule. As a result, the fact that her daughter fell into the clutches of the Soviet political police did not dash her hopes for Stalinist society: like her brother Karl, she was one of those for whom socialism had become a religion. Whether or not she subsequently changed her mind about the Soviet Union, we do not know. It is unlikely, however, that she would have abandoned the social and political beliefs that had given her a sense of public — as opposed to private — purpose.

That Mausi never wrote her planned study of Soviet family policies was due not to any disillusionment but to the fact that, as Szapor shows in a moving chapter on "the odyssey of the Polanyis," she had all she could do to help family and friends escape Nazi occupied Europe; she herself was briefly detained in Vienna, but, on the eve of the war, made it to New York, where she lived out her life. It must have broken her heart that neither she nor anyone else was able to save her sister Zsófia, her brother-in-law Egon Szécsi, and their child.

Sometime in the early 1950s, an aging Mausi seized upon an unexpected opportunity. Bradford Smith was writing a biography of Captain John Smith, during the preparation of which he had come across an article by Lewis Kropf, a historian of Hungarian origin, according to which John Smith's account of travels in Hungary and Transylvania was fanciful. Because the Captain's veracity was of such importance to the early history of Virginia, Bradford Smith decided to seek a second opinion; Karl Polanyi recommended his sister for the task of historical investigation.

She accepted the challenge eagerly and her subsequent research endures as a model of thoroughness and scholarly inspiration; she demonstrated conclusively that Smith's account was, in fact, remarkably accurate. As Szapor observes, however, Smith's rehabilitation "became a veritable obsession of Laura's last years." (p. 146) One reason for that obsession, I once suggested, was her admiration for an authentic "hero of the commoners and the commoner hero."<sup>3</sup> Szapor thinks my explanation inadequate, and she



is probably right. Mausi, she says, "identified with him because of the tremendous odds he had to face, both in his life and after his death." (p. 149) Mausi too had had to triumph over many odds and Szapor has done a fine job of recounting them. After reading her book, one is left with a feeling of regret concerning her political illusions but of admiration for her devotion to family.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Cited in "Néhány szó a nőről és nőnevelésről," in *Írástudó nemzedékek: A Polányi család története dokumentumokban*, ed. Erzsébet Vezér (Budapest: MTA Filozófiai Intézet Lukács Archivum, 1986), p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Laura Polanyi Stricker, "Világi erkölcsstanítás" in Vezér, ed., *Írástudó nemzedékek*, p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> Laura Polanyi Stricker, quoted in Lee Congdon, "The Hungarian Pocahontas: Laura Polanyi Striker," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 86, 3 (1978): 276.



# The Catholic Church in Interwar and Wartime Hungary

Christopher Adam

Leslie László. *Church and State in Hungary, 1919-1945*. Pannonhalma – Budapest: METEM, 2004. 400 pages. Paper.

**The role** of the Catholic Church in the evolution of Hungary during the Horthy era has been a neglected field of study among Western historians. Yet exploring the complicated relationship that clergy and Catholic intellectuals had with the country's conservative regime is central to understanding this period. Leslie László, a retired political science professor from Concordia University and currently an ordained priest in Ottawa, has tried to remedy this situation, by producing one of the most in-depth studies of Hungarian Catholic history ever to appear in the English language. A handful of Western historians and other academics have touched on the history of the Catholic Church in Hungary during this period, but most of these analyses were within the broader context of interwar European society and politics and, by their very nature, lacked the level of detail that characterizes Fr. László's study.<sup>1</sup> Although this work is based primarily on research conducted decades ago, as part of the author's PhD dissertation, the sheer lack of a similarly detailed English study on the subject means that the work has not lost its overall value as an informative survey of Hungarian church and state relations over a period spanning more than a quarter century.

The author argues that while the Church was essentially conservative in its politics during the period following the end of World War I, it was not outright reactionary and did not attempt to resist all reforms that aimed to undo the vestiges of feudalism, which persisted in this primarily agricultural society. Church officials made their voices heard on issues of social justice, as Hungary moved ever close towards more comprehensive industrialization. The clergy and Catholic politicians were occasionally at the forefront in terms of the introduction of progressive legislation, such as limited land reform, protection for the industrial working class and basic social security programs.<sup>2</sup>

Fr. László sees his book as a "case study" in the relationship between Church and state, in what he believes was an essentially "developing

country.”<sup>3</sup> Since Hungarian society during this period was primarily agrarian, it is not entirely surprising that the Church played such a key role. Church officials enjoyed a close relationship with most political leaders and the clergy's position was strongest in the field of education, with the state providing parochial schools “lavish” financial support.<sup>4</sup>

The author appears to have written his work within a tense Cold War political context; one in which he felt that the Church had been unfairly treated by both Marxist historians in Eastern Europe, as well as by western academics who focused on the Church's conservative tendencies and its failure to condemn all forms of anti-Semitism. As such, Fr. László argues that these studies have been one sided and failed to pay attention to Catholic efforts aimed at rescuing Jews during the Second World War. Fr. László envisaged his work as an attempt to “set the record straight,” yet the danger inherent in this approach is that his book comes across as less critical and nuanced in its examination of the church's relationship with the Hungarian state during this highly contentious period in history.<sup>5</sup>

This problem is perhaps most evident in Fr. László's in-depth discussion of Bishop Ottokár Prohászka's anti-Semitism. Fr. László recognizes that Prohászka was an anti-Semite, despite the bishop's repeated claims to the contrary.<sup>6</sup> Prohászka had spoken in favour of the *numerus clausus* and restricting admission of Jewish students to universities. The bishop also believed that the apparent over-representation of Jews in key professions, as well as their alleged gravitation to liberalism was “harmful” to Hungarian society.<sup>7</sup> Fr. László observed that Prohászka was willing to jettison values of individual equality, if he believed that this served the collective good. Based on a reading of the bishop's articles, Father László argues that Prohászka's emphatic anti-Semitic statements were not the outcome of a “hatred” for Jews generally (even though the author recognizes that the bishop had a negative opinion of the majority of Hungarian Jews), but rather a “passionate love for his own Christian Hungarian people,” noting that Prohászka “pitied his well-meaning but unbusinesslike people and feared for their livelihood in the face of the shrewder and more resourceful Jews.”<sup>8</sup> The author appears to accept at face value that the driving force behind Prohászka's anti-Semitism was this well-intentioned, though strongly paternalistic concern for the majority population, based upon prevailing stereotypes of Christians and Jews.

Yet if one were to read between the lines and take Prohászka's own justification of his anti-Semitism with a grain a salt, it would be reasonable to suggest that the bishop was more concerned with upholding the existing social order in Hungary and resisting efforts to transform society into one based on liberal social and economic principles, such as meritocracy, free market and a more critical approach to institutions of authority. Liberalism seemed to propagate many of the values that Prohászka (and other authoritarian conservatives at the time) found both disturbing and potentially threatening.

These included the emphasis on individualism, secularism and the notion that one's social and economic status should be determined by personal achievement and professional success, rather than by one's family background, social class, or religious affiliation. Fr. László should have considered the possibility that the bishop's anti-Semitism was not necessarily out of a noble (if remarkably simplistic) concern for allegedly downtrodden Hungarians, but out of fear that liberalism — as represented by many urban elites, a section of the professional middle class and some Jewish Hungarians — was a threat to the Church's dominant position in society. The revolutions of 1918/19 represented a traumatic period for ecclesiastical leaders and the nobility. As such, it would not be overly cynical to suggest Prohászka's socioeconomic views, and his anti-Semitism, were likely informed not only out of a sense of benevolent paternalism, but at least as much out of fear for the direction that much of modern industrial society was taking.

Fr. László makes a valid point when he notes that even if Prohászka and probably many other Catholic leaders held anti-Semitic views, their anti-Semitism was starkly different from the genocidal variant adopted by Nazis during the Second World War. The key difference was that Jews who converted to Christianity and were baptized were essentially welcomed into the fold, whereas Nazis offered no such opportunity.<sup>9</sup> Fr. László also points out that this form of anti-Semitism hardly began and ended with the statements of Catholic Church leaders. Intellectuals such as Gyula Szekfü sometimes espoused a similarly fatalistic view of the alleged dominance of Jewish Hungarians vis-à-vis those of Christian origin.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, one may conclude that the verbal, non-violent form of anti-Semitism espoused by Prohászka and many others (which aimed to remove Jews from positions of influence through legislation) was only a few steps away from the annihilationist policies of Nazism.

While the legacy of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust certainly overshadows the history of the entire period, this theme is not the direct focus of Fr. László's examination of church and state relations. The Catholic Church has often been labelled as reactionary for its support of an anachronistic regime — especially from the perspective of a modern liberal democracy, where the separation of church and state is a rarely questioned ideal. Fr. László makes a thought-provoking point by observing that the sudden removal of the church from the centre of society would have created a "spiritual vacuum," which could then be filled by totalitarian ideologies.<sup>11</sup>

Although Fr. László was not able to consult material in Hungarian archives when he originally completed his research, his use of a wide array of published primary sources ensures that his work is well documented. In some cases, a greater degree of nuance would have strengthened his work, but the book remains valuable as a survey history of a topic barely touched by western scholars.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> One of the most comprehensive examinations of church-state relations in Eastern Europe was written by Sabrina Ramet, a political scientist. Sabrina P. Ramet, *Nihil Obstat: Religion, Politics and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press: 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Leslie László, *Church and State in Hungary, 1919-1945* (Pannonhalma–Budapest: METEM, 2004), 206-207.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 332.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 126-127.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 128-129.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 129-130.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

## **The Lives and Struggles of Hungarians in America**

**Sándor Zsíros**

Translated by Erzsébet Molnár

Béla Várdy and Ágnes Huszár Várdy. *Újvilági küzdelmek. Az amerikai magyarság élete és az Óhaza* [Struggles in the New World. The Lives of Hungarian Americans and the Old Country]. Budapest: Mundus Magyar Egyetemi Kiadó, 2005. Hard cover, 370 pp., table of contents in English and Hungarian, name and subject index, ISBN 963 9501 22 0.

**Having red through** the collection of essays by the prominent Hungarian-American historians and literary scholars, Professors Béla Várdy and Ágnes Huszár Várdy from Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, I am saddened by the book's apparent message. It seems to suggest that the days of Hungarians in America are numbered. And what is even more heartbreaking in this barely perceptible message is the possibility that their — and perhaps our — passing will not be bemoaned by anyone of our neighbours. This sad message appears to be present in the volume, even though there is not a single sentence about the approaching passing of the nation. The authors did not write about Hungarians of Hungary, but rather about Hungarian Americans and their relationship to the mother country. The twenty-three studies in the volume constitute an overview of the Hungarian presence in North America. This presence may reach back as far as the arrival of a certain Tyrker during the reign of King St. Stephen (997-1038) of Hungary, who is revered as the Christianizer of his nation. But this Tyrker episode is closer to a myth than to accepted historical truth. Different is the case with Stephen Parmenius of Buda (ca. 1555-1583), a prominent Protestant scholar, who reached the shores of North America as a member of the famed Gilbert Expedition in 1583. But this daring Hungarian became the victim of a shipwreck close to Nova Scotia.

The nearly two dozen studies in this volume give us an overview of the most important issues faced by Hungarian Americans in the course of the past several centuries. These include two summarizing essays on their history and literature; five studies on Louis Kossuth (1802-1894) and his famed visit to (1851-1852) to the United States; four studies on Hungarian-American literacy, historical scholarship, and centres of Hungarian Studies; five essays on the birth and development of Hungarian-American churches, the lives of

the turn-of-the century economic immigrants, and their relationship to the Slovaks who emigrated from what used to be Upper Hungary; five studies on the nature and effect of the Treaty of Trianon upon Hungarian Americans; and finally two studies on the changing American image of Hungary and Hungarians since the mid-19th century, and on their relations with the new Hungary that had emerged from behind the Iron Curtain following communism's collapse in 1989-1990. The collected studies in this volume permit us a glimpse into the lives and struggles of the Hungarian immigrants in the United States, and they also tell us how these immigrants have enriched American society by their contributions in many different fields, in many different ways. As an example, Hungarians have played a role in the American War of Independence that resulted in the birth of the United States of America. Similarly, they had a role in the American Civil War nearly a century later, which solidified the indivisible unity of the new nation, and brought about the liberation of the slaves. This also holds true for the turn-of-the-century economic immigrants contributed their "sweat and blood" to the building of America's industrial society. Moreover, they also produced a series of new generations whose members became hardworking and useful members of American society.

This process of migration and Hungarian contributions to America continued during the interwar years, when numerous internationally known scientists, scholars, and artists entered the country, fleeing from the spread of Fascism and Nazism. Although few in numbers, their contributions were so extensive that some observers began to speculate about the unique "mystery of the Hungarian talent." The most prominent scientists among these immigrants included: Theodore Kármán (1881-1962), Leo Szilárd (1896-1964), Eugene Wigner (1902-1994), Zoltán Bay (1900-1992), John von Neumann (1903-1957), and Edward Teller (1908-2003). But there were many others, in many different fields, a number of them becoming Nobel Laureates. Among them were George Hevesy (1885-1966), György Pólya (1887-1985), Gábor Szegő (1895-1985), George Békésy (1899-1972), Dénes Gábor (1900-1979), Charles Goldmark (1906-1977), and later John Kemény (1926-1992) and George Oláh (b. 1927) in the sciences and mathematics; Béla Bartók (1881-1945), Fritz Reiner (1888-1963), George Széll (1897-1970), Eugene Ormándy (1899-1985), Antal Doráti (1908-1988), and Sir George Solti (1912-1997) in music; Oscar Jászi (1875-1957), Ferenc Molnár (1878-1952), and Géza Róheim (1891-1953) in literature and the social sciences; Titus Bobula (1878-1961), Marcel Breuer (1902-1981), and William Fellner (1905-1983) in architecture; and members of the unusually gifted Polányi family, Charles (1886-1964), Michael (1891-1976), and John (b. 1929), who embraced a number of disciplines. Hungarian immigrants were also present in significant numbers in the birth and development of the American film industry. The most prominent among them were Adolf Zukor (1873-1976),



William Fox [Fischer] (1879-1952), and Sir Alexander Korda (1893-1956). This list of these names can fill us with pride. We believe there are not many nations in the world that have produced so many geniuses, and who have contributed so much to the New World in proportion to their numbers.

The younger members of the post-World War II political refugees and their descendants, as well as those who left Hungary during the anti-Soviet Revolution of 1956, have found their way into America's scientific, industrial, business and financial world in great numbers. In some instances, they moved into the highest levels in their chosen fields — such as in the case of George Soros (b. 1930), Andy Grove [Gróf] (b. 1936), Steven F. Udvar-Hazy [Udvarházy] (b. 1946), and Charles Simonyi (b. 1948) — demonstrating once again the talent and resourcefulness of the Hungarians. Today there exists something approximating a “Virtual Hungary” on the North American continent. But there are some questions in our mind: On the one hand, will the successful members of this “Virtual Hungary” be willing to help their small native country and their fellow Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin? And will the mother country have the courage to utilize the knowledge and achievements of its successful children, many of whom are waiting for the call for help? These questions are posed by the authors already in their introductory study to this volume. We must voice our agreement with them, but also our doubts about the Motherland's willingness to accept help, as well as her ability to aid the survival of the dwindling Hungarian population of North America. One can hardly deny that an intimate interaction between Hungary and the Hungarian-American communities is an essential precondition for the survival of those communities, and for the continuation of the Hungarian language and culture in the English speaking world of North America. Our doubts about Hungarian future in the New World is supported by data supplied by the authors themselves. Thus, we learn from their book that of the 800,000 Magyars (among nearly two million Hungarian citizens) who emigrated to the United States since the mid-19th century, in 1980 nearly 1.8 million (1,776,000) still claimed to be fully or primarily of Hungarian origin. But of these only 180,000 (10%) spoke Hungarian at home. Ten years later their numbers had shrunk to less than 1.6 million (1,582,000), of whom only 147,902 (less than 9%) spoke Hungarian within their families. We know from other source that the census of the year 2000 showed further decline among Hungarian Americans. Their numbers had shrunk to below 1.4 million (1,398,000), and the number of Magyar-speakers among them to 117,973 (barely over 8%). We can learn about the fundamental reasons for this astonishing decline from the extremely rich collection of notes that the authors have appended to their studies. (There are more than 650 notes that refer to the more than 230 printed sources. The reader is also aided by a detailed name and subject index that had been appended to this volume.)

Having read the book, we have become ambivalent about Hungarian future in North America, and this ambivalence is accompanied by a good dose of pessimism. This is all the more so, as we know that the two authors have approached their subject *sine ira et studio* (without anger and prejudice). Thus, while describing the successes and achievements of immigrant Hungarians, they also point out the latter's failures, disappointments, and personal tragedies. The most serious reasons behind these failures appear to be failed illusions. The resulting disappointments general become hotbeds of dissension, breach, and infighting among them; and this appears to characterize Hungarians everywhere. We cannot leave unmentioned the negative role that some of the non-Magyar nationalities of the Kingdom of Hungary — within Austria-Hungary — have played in the lives of Hungarian-Americans. This is particularly so with respect to the Slovaks from the former Hungarian Highlands. Most of them being semi-literate peasants, they first became conscious of their national identities only in America, where under the leadership of their nationalistic priests they began to work against Hungary. Thus, in a sense, they were among those who had laid the foundations for the Treaty of Trianon (1920), which codified the dismemberment of Historic Hungary, along with the whole Austro-Hungarian Empire. The result was birth of several small multinational states, motivated by extreme forms of nationalisms, which Balkanized Central Europe and lead to the outbreak of World War II. The resulting emotional conflicts are still around us everywhere, causing considerable problems not only for Hungarians, but for all nationalities in the Carpathian Basin.

One of the largest sections of the book is entitled "Kossuth in America." It contains five slightly abbreviated and revised studies from three different publications. The first of these describes Kossuth's "Triumphant Tour" in the United States in 1851-1852. The leader of the defeated Revolution of 1848-1849 was received with great ovation as the anointed champion of liberty and as a prophet of human freedom. Yet, seven and a half months later he left the United States as a bitterly disappointed man. He returned to Europe incognito under the name Mr. Alexander Smith. He had come with great hopes, but he left filled with disappointments, for he was unable to achieve any of his goals. He came in the belief that he could gain the support of the United States for a renewed war against the Habsburgs. But in those days America was still under the Washingtonian principle of "non-intervention." Moreover, most of them expected that Kossuth, as the champion of liberty, would fight for the liberation of slaves in America. It did not happen, because these two goals did not mash. The authors of this volume explain the reasons for these mutual failures and disappointments.

A separate section, containing four different studies, deals with the development of Hungarian-American journalism and Hungarian-American studies at institutions of higher learning in the United States. After describing

the story of the ephemeral early Hungarian newspapers in America, the authors discuss in detail the establishment of the two major Hungarian-American dailies, the Cleveland-based *Szabadság* [Liberty] (1891) and the New York-based *Amerikai Magyar Népszava* [American Hungarian People's Voice] (1899). Both papers began as weeklies, but within a few years both of them became "national" dailies (1904, 1906). They competed against one another fiercely, even though they both represented the same basic Kossuthist Hungarian nationalism that was the dominant ideology of all of the turn-of-the-century economic immigrants, and remained so into the post-World War II period. Unfortunately, the coming of the post-World War II immigrants with their different tastes, social backgrounds, and political views, and the rapid decline of the number of Hungarian speakers among the "old timers," resulted in the decline of both of these newspapers. During the 1960s they both reverted to being weeklies, and in 1996 they merged into a single weekly. The merged newspapers, which in 2007 are in the 117th year of their publication, now function under the combined title *Amerikai Magyar Népszava/Szabadság* [American Hungarian People's Voice/Liberty]. In the course of the past century there were many other short-lived newspapers, but in the long run none of them could compete with these two flagships of Hungarian-American journalism. The two dailies became the "Bible" of the semi-literate early 20th-century economic immigrants. Circumstances in America forced most of these immigrants to sharpen up their literacy skills so as to survive in the very competitive industrial society. These newspapers and their short-lived rivals represented the main bond among the Hungarian immigrants, who were scattered in two dozen different states within the Union. They were the primary means of information from the homeland, they relayed job opportunities to the immigrants, and they informed the members of the various Hungarian-American communities about the goings on in their fraternal associations, social organizations, and religious congregations. Their content and language was generally of modest level, because they had to be geared to the educational level of the immigrants. At the same time they stood for a kind of Hungarian patriotism that fulfilled the needs of the immigrants, while also asserting their faithfulness to their newly found second homeland. The content and political orientation of the merged papers remained unchanged until 2006. But then, under a new owner and editor, it began to reflect more the political altercations in today's Hungary, than the needs and interests of the Hungarian-American community. While fulfilling their obligations to their communities and to their nation, Hungarian-American newspapers also carried on a defensive war against the Slovak-American press, whose tone during the period of economic immigration was increasingly anti-Hungarian. Emerging Slovak nationalism carried out a ferocious campaign against the Hungarians. They were depicted in the most unfavourable terms, and Hungary was castigated as a "prison of nationalities."

Eventually these accusations were also taken up by the English-speaking American press, defaming the Hungarians, and preparing the ground for Hungary's dismemberment following World War I.

Naturally, clashes went back and forth in these ethnic newspapers, each trying to destroy the other's reputation. Some of the most vicious Slovak attack appeared in the April 15, 1894 issues of *The Pittsburgh Dispatch*, which reads as follows:

A Magyar is regarded by the general public as a sort of fiend incarnate, who roams about the hills of Fayette and Westmoreland counties with a firebrand in one hand, a bomb in the other, and a knife in his teeth, leaving a trail of blood and ashes behind him. He is popularly supposed to subsist on the refuse of slaughter houses and to live in pig sty, and stables.... The ferocious act of the Magyar... has brought him the distinction of being a most intractable citizen.... [He] is a direct lineal descendant of that horde of wild men, who under the leadership of Attila swept over the Ural Mountains into the land of the Goths and Vandals, now Austro-Hungary, subduing the people and exacting tribute from those having dominion over it.... The Magyar, or Hungarian, first appeared in the Connesville coke region in 1885.... [He] is a short, stocky fellow... of repulsive countenance, a greasy, coffee-colored complexion.... The Magyar is always ready to fight, if he has friends to help him through..., [but if] resisted by determined officers they become abject cowards.... At the White mines... a few years ago, an old storeroom, about 30x60 feet... was transformed into barracks, in which 87 families of Magyars lived, ate, slept, drank, fought, and died.... Bed bugs were present in such numbers that they could be scooped up from the floor by the shovelful. On the mattresses of the beds there was a veritable glue made by crushing the vermin, as the Huns had rolled about in their troubled dreams. The floors were covered with a two-inch accumulation of filth, and the glass in the windows so begrimed with dirt as to exclude the light of the day.... It is quite certain that he [the Magyar] has acquired many of the vices and but few of the virtues of the people among whom he has sojourned, which, added to those inherent in his nature, render him an individual of whom almost any community would be glad to be rid.

The ethnic churches also joined in this fray. We can read about all this in the study titled "Hungarians and Slovaks in Turn-of-the-Century America." It is well known that in the late 19th and early 20th century many millions of European, including nearly two million Hungarian citizens of various nationalities migrated to America. Most of them came from the ranks of the landless or impoverished landed peasantry, who wished to make their fortunes in the New World and then repatriate. Until the years preceding World War I,

these migrant groups were made up mostly of young men, who wanted to work hard for a few years, spend as little as possible, then return home and become independent small farmers or craftsmen. A few of the immigrants did achieve this goal by accumulating enough "capital" to be able to repatriate and set themselves up as independent farmers. They built impressive houses and bought a few acres of land. In this way they emerged out of poverty and also rose in their social positions in their villages. The majority of the immigrants, however, stayed in the New World. Rapidly industrializing America simply offered them much more than their homeland. Life was still hard even in the United States, for it was filled with trials and tribulations. They had to work under awful conditions, and without the protective laws that were passed during the New Deal. But in America they still had a brighter future than in their homeland. Meanwhile, before the coming of the protective laws, only their fraternal, social institutions, and churches gave them a degree of protection. Although promising a better future, America in those days was still insensitive to major social issues.

Fraternal organizations came into being to fulfil some of the needs that contemporary American society was unable to provide. They became the immigrants' welfare institutions, and in the course of time they also assumed various cultural functions by becoming citadels of increasing literacy and national culture. We can also mention the role of the "boarding houses" that provided a "home away from home" for the immigrants. But at the same time they also became centres of debauchery under the inhuman conditions the immigrants were forced to endure. Thirty-forty young men were squeezed in a hostel run by a husband-wife team, which many times became the source of arguments, personal jealousies, fisticuffs, and even murders. On the other hand, they also constituted communities in which the immigrants tried to help each other.

In addition to the fraternals, Hungarian-American churches also played a key role in forming Hungarian communities, and in keeping their Hungarian identities. The role of the religious congregations cannot be overemphasized in the preservation of national identity and culture. This role was even greater than that of the fraternal groups. At the same time it must be pointed out that the role of the Hungarian churches in America has changed considerably, as compared to their role in the motherland. In the contemporary Hungarian village, the church was a holy place that concerned itself exclusively with religious matters. It was not a place for non-religious social events. Any form of profane expression or deed within its walls was regarded as a sin. The other important village institution was the village inn or pub, which was exclusively a male preserve. It was in the village inn where the men congregated after work and after Sunday church services, and found outlet for their socio-cultural needs. Women were excluded from this "fraternity." The latter usually congregated in front of their houses, and discussed in great detail the

goings-on and the ever changing personal relations in the village. All this changed drastically in America, where the two institutions — the church and the village inn — became interlocked. Whereas in Europe the church basement was occupied by the crypt, where the most important personalities of the village or town were laid to rest, in America this church basement became the social hall, where men and women met on common grounds. While those above were praying, those below were enjoying themselves and living it up. Social events, church dinners and even dances were held in the subterranean church basement, which would have been unthinkable in Hungary. It would have been regarded as profane act and a major sin. But mingling social and religious life in the church building was most natural in America, and it remains so even today.

Along with the changing role of the churches buildings came the changing role of the priests and pastors. They too had to assume various non-religious social functions, which would have been unthinkable back home. Moreover, the church members who financed the building of the church, also assumed greater role in running the affairs of the congregations, which resulted in the lessening of the powers of the clergy. As described by the authors of this volume,

Hungarian-American churches and priests have become essential components in the lives of the immigrants. In these Hungarian--American churches they could pray in Hungarian, they could talk to each other in Hungarian, they could practice their rituals in Hungarian, and they could speak to each other about their joys and sorrows in Hungarian. Hungarian-American churches, therefore, were really Hungarian churches, where at least as much emphasis was put on one's Hungarianness as on one's religiosity and religious affiliation. As such, these churches, parishes, and congregations were more 'national' in character than those in Hungary, where one's Hungarian identity was a given fact, and where emphasis was naturally on religion, and not on nationality.

The authors devote a great deal of attention to the sketching the development of the various Hungarian denominations in the United States. Both Catholic and the Protestant churches appeared in America at the end of the 19th century. The number of the Catholic parishes spread through this continent-size country largely via the activities of Father Károly Böhm [Charles Boehm] (1850-1932). His actions were paralleled by those of Father Kálmán Kováts (1863-1927), who placed even more emphasis upon the preservation of the Hungarian national identity within the Catholic Church than did Father Boehm. Occasionally, this lead to disagreements between these two pioneers of Hungarian Catholicism in America. The Hungarian

Reformed (Calvinist) Church was also planted in America about the same time, toward the end of the 19th century. Hungarian Reformed congregations grew in numbers largely through the activities of Rev. Gusztáv Jurányi (1856-192?). Rev. János Kovács (1861-1921), and Rev. Zoltán Kuthy (1875-1821). As a result of their work, Hungarian national identity became almost synonymous with Hungarian Reformed identity. The two merged into the single idea of "Hungarian Calvinism." Personal disagreements among the various pioneers and their immediate successors, however, soon resulted in a breach within the Hungarian Reformed Church. Initially, the cause of this breach was the question whether Hungarian Reformed congregations in America should be under the Hungarian Mother Church in Hungary, or should they join one of the American Protestant denominations. This breach, which subsequently became even more intense, eventually split the Hungarian Reformed Church in America into half a dozen different sub-denominations. This split naturally created havoc among the Hungarian Calvinists. Yet, even so, they achieved great things for the various successive waves of immigrants. But with the rapid Americanization process in the second half of the 20th century, the number of the Hungarian Reformed congregations declined significantly, and those that survived also became ever smaller.

This decline and disintegration also became evident in case of the Hungarian Catholic parishes in America. This process can be demonstrated with the fate of St. Elizabeth Parish in Cleveland, Ohio. Founded by Father Charles Boehm [Károly Böhm] in 1892, by the interwar years this pioneer parish had 7,000 parishioners. All of them lived in the same section of the city, in the Buckeye Road region, in Cleveland's so-called "Little Hungary." Due to dying off of the old immigrant generations, and the influx of African Americans in the 1960s and beyond, the number of parishioners declined rapidly. By the end of the 20th century, St. Elizabeth parish members numbered barely 400, and even those lived mostly in the suburbs, attending the Sunday masses in their original church simply to keep the church and the parish from going out of existence. The rapid assimilation of the second, third, and fourth generations of Hungarians, and the decline of religiosity, makes the future of these Hungarian "ethnic churches" very bleak. The coming of two waves of post-World War II immigrants — the DPs and the 56-ers — infused new life into the Hungarian-American community and its institutions, including their churches. But because of the relatively small numbers of these political immigrants (26,000 and 42,000), and because of the 56-ers greater propensity to melt into American society, this revitalization was only temporary. This was true in spite of the fact that university-level Hungarian Studies Programs had their heyday in the 1960s through the 1980s. The collapse of communism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union ended these golden years very rapidly. By the early 21st century only a few major universities — especially Indiana University in Bloomington and Columbia

University in New York — were able to preserve some of what they used to offer by way of Hungarian Studies during the golden age of that discipline in the United States.

The two world wars created a peculiar situation for Hungarian Americans. They had to face the reality that their new country, the United States, had a role — however minor — in their old country's dismemberment at Treaty of Trianon (1920), and once more in the Treaty of Paris (1947). During the interwar years Hungarian Americans became reconnected to their Old Country, which also discovered them suddenly and unexpectedly. Their joint sorrow and pain brought them together once more. They also became involved in the protest movements that tried to reverse Hungary's dismemberment. These movements took various forms, including mass demonstrations, the unveiling of a second Kossuth statue in New York, the establishment of the "National Association of Hungarian Americans" at a "Hungarian National Congress" in Buffalo, New York, and a sensational ocean flight by György Endrész (1893-1932) in 1931, only four years after Charles Lindbergh's original feat in 1927.

The Second World War caused even more difficulties for Hungarian Americans, when their Old Country became embroiled in the war on the side of the Axis Powers. Although the reasons for this alliance was simply Hungary's effort to regain some of the lost Hungarian-inhabited territories from the succession states of Austria-Hungary, it still placed Hungary and the Hungarians on the wrong side in this war. The great majority of Hungarian Americans supported Hungary's effort to regain the lost territories, but an equal number of them disliked its alliance with Germany and Italy. The struggle between the pro-revisionist majority and the anti-revisionist minority played itself out in the so-called "Eckhardt versus Vámbéry controversy," which created much havoc within the Hungarian-American community, but ultimately lead to nowhere. The only person who was able to represent Hungary on the highest level was Archduke Otto von Habsburg (b. 1912), the oldest son of the last king of Hungary, who during the first half of the war had a close relationship with President Roosevelt. Unfortunately, political-military developments in the course of 1943-1945 altered the situation to a point where Otto's influence declined and his views lost their significance.

We cannot leave unmentioned an astonishing study entitled "Hungarian Women in Soviet Concentration Camps 1944-1949." The author, Agnes Huszár Várdy, unveils many facts about the horrendous fate and tragedy of many tens of thousands of innocent Hungarian women. During the last phase of the war they were collected and deported to Soviet slavery. Their ranks included many young girls between the ages of 15 and 17, as well as women several months into their pregnancy. Their story will be told in several volumes to be published by the authors of the book under review.



The last section of this volume has two astonishing studies about the changing image of the Hungarians in the United States, and about the consequences of the fall of communism upon Hungarians at home and abroad, as well as upon their relationship to each other. The first of these studies demonstrates clearly the difference between the image and the self-image of the Hungarians — the latter being significantly higher than the former. But this is universally true for all nationalities and all individuals. What is interesting in case of the Hungarians is the fact that the highpoint of their national image in America was in the mid-19th century. It was connected with the American visit of Louis Kossuth in the course of 1851-1852. Thereafter, this image declined significantly, largely due to the coming of the semi-literate turn-of-the-century economic immigrants from Hungary. Almost two-thirds of them were not even Hungarians, but only citizens of Hungary. Yet, they were the ones who created the lowly “Hunky” image that persisted well into the post-World War II period. Only in the 1950s and 1960s did the Hungarian image begin to rise again, partially because of the many gifted Hungarians who immigrated to America, and partially because of the heroic image of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

The final study in this impressive volume has some daring conclusions about the regime change, following the collapse of communism in 1989-1990. After four decades of Soviet communist domination and misadministration — which ruined the country economically and transformed the nation morally — finally a “government with a national spirit” was formed under the leadership of Prime Minister József Antall (1932-1993). The fall of communism created a euphoria in Hungary, which was also taken up by Hungarian Americans. Tens of thousands were thinking about repatriating to the old country. However, these dreams never materialized. The Antall government made one mistake after the other, partly due to great external political and economic pressures, and partly in consequence of its inability or unwillingness to deal with the most important issues inherited from the Soviet-communist period. Nobody was held accountable for the criminal acts of the previous forty years. Hungarians at home, as well as Hungarians Americans were shocked to see that none of the vicious henchmen of communist rule were called to account. In point of fact, most of them remained part of the administrative system, and by helping each other, these communist (now ex-communist) *apparatchikis* were able to “privatize” many million dollars' worth of property into their own packets. In this way, in addition to escaping punishment, they were able to move from the ranks of “party aristocracy” into the ranks of “money aristocracy.” As a result, the new Hungarian society became increasingly polarized, with the decent Hungarian remaining on the bottom of society, while the former communist bureaucrats moving into the ranks of the *nouveau riches* [new rich]. Those who suffered the most were the intellectuals without party connections, and pensioners who

could barely establish a minimal existence for themselves. Given these realities, the plans for mass repatriation evaporated very suddenly. And this was all the more so, as prospective repatriates soon became aware that they were not really wanted at home. This was made absolutely clear to them by various semi-official pronouncements, which indicated that neither they, nor their expertise were needed in the new Hungary that the new regime was ready to build. This building process, however, was soon sidetracked, and by 1994 there was such a universal dissatisfaction in the country that Hungarian electorate returned the ex-communist Socialist Party into power.

This is an excellent book, which opens one's eyes, but also makes one sad. Its message is filled with pessimism, not only about the future of Hungarian Americans, but also about the fate of the Hungarians in Hungary, as well as in the former Hungarian territories of the Carpathian Basin.

## **Masked Ball at the White Cross Café: Introducing a Book about Jewish Emancipation and the Origins of the Holocaust\***

**Janet Kerekes**

**Today, in certain assembled groups**, there will be Hungarians, Hungarian Jews, Jewish Hungarians, Jews who identify themselves only as Hungarians; and likewise, there are Englishmen, English Jews, Jewish Englishmen, and Jews who identify themselves only as Englishmen. Once upon a time, it was hoped that there would have been only two identifiable groups: Hungarians and Englishmen.

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\* A speech delivered 25 September, 2005 at Israel's Book Store, Toronto, Ontario, to launch *Masked Ball at the White Cross Café: The Failure of Jewish Assimilation*. Copyright © 2005 by University Press of America, Inc., Lanham, Maryland. Boulder. New York. Toronto. Oxford. The book examines the efforts of Hungarian Jews to assimilate after emancipation, between the years 1867 and 1920. Notably, it is written from the non-Jewish perspective, and hence, a byproduct of this work is to do away with the notion of anti-Semitism and typical renderings of anti-Semites. *Masked Ball* exposes the real issue at stake after emancipation, which gave rise to the Jewish Question: the assimilation of the Jews into the host society, the imperative to become 'just like us.' Crucial to understanding the pivotal role of assimilation is the centuries leading up to 1867 (which may be considered the benchmark for emancipation in Western and Central Europe). Chapters on the era of Toleration, the Enlightenment, and the Liberal era provide this grounding. Simultaneously, the book engages in a comparison with Britain, and shows that Jews' efforts to assimilate were unsuccessful not only in Hungary, but also in Britain. Within the limits set by the national context, both countries responded uniformly to the presence of unreformed Jews in their midst. By employing 1920 as the cutoff date, the argument is made that by this year the finality of the rejection of Jewish non-assimilation was clear. The role of contingency, which determined the precise fate of European Jewry, came into play at that time.

When I first scribbled down that it was the emancipation of the Jews that had caused the Holocaust, I had no idea that I would be on a journey that went backwards from 1939 all the way to the Enlightenment. It was a time-consuming exercise and one that forced me to suspend my own identity in order to carry out this work with integrity. What did make my task somewhat easier after a while is that I found these two hundred years were bound by one primary theme: the assimilation of the Jews. So sensitive did I become to the literature that eventually I could tell when a translation had not been faithful to the original meaning. Which is not to say that my translators were inferior in any way; they were excellent. What this does illustrate is that we have such preconceived notions about both the meaning and intent of comments directed at Jews from the Enlightenment on that they dictate what we see on the printed page, despite what is written there.

Summarily labelled as 'anti-Semitic', these references to Jews revolved around Jewish assimilation, even though the word itself was not always used. Beginning with the Enlightenment, it was hammered at ever since... That is, until the Holocaust. I would not say that the subject of Jewish assimilation has been neglected for the last sixty years. I would rather say it became taboo. Why? Because nobody wanted to admit into the historical record the rather popular opinion that Jews had failed to assimilate. To do so would be to indict the Jews as instruments in their own destruction, and this was an unthinkable proposition after the horrors of the Holocaust. At the same time, the image of Europeans as unwilling to live with Jews who were unassimilated indicted the Europeans in the Holocaust. An equally unacceptable proposition. Least of all did anyone want to admit into the historical record that already before 1900, this failure and its likely disastrous consequences were clear to a number of people — both Jews and non-Jews. "A new unrest is perceptible throughout the civilized world on the subject of the Jewish Question," wrote the Englishman Arnold White in 1899. "The conclusion, therefore, seems obvious, that either the situation must be dealt with — i.e., by Europe as a whole — or an alarming outbreak against the race and the clock of civilization thus be thrown back for a hundred years."<sup>1</sup> The best thing was to bury the whole issue of assimilation, for it implicated everybody. And so it has been.

How would you have recognized an assimilated Jew? The point is, you wouldn't have. For an assimilated Jew was exactly 'just like us.' Precise definitions of assimilation are lacking. The reason for this, I would suggest, is that assimilation was considered an outcome, not a process: the process was the implementation of a series of reforms articulated by the Enlightenment thinkers (below) which culminated in assimilation. Thus, there were indicators of successful assimilation, as well as signs of failure to assimilate. For example, Péter Ágoston, author of one of the seminal works on the Jewish Question in Hungary in 1917, wrote that assimilation implied that Jews would

pick and choose from the whole population rather than tending to help only their coreligionists.<sup>2</sup> Signs that Jews had failed to assimilate came in the form of a general list as well as more specific complaints. Composing the former was the Jews' embrace of Zionism; their cosmopolitanism; the coupling of cosmopolitanism and Zionism with an enthusiastic nationalism (an irritating and impossible combination according to many, if not most Europeans); their supranational tendencies; their saturation of the professions; their monopolization of fields ranging from the theatre to the press to capitalist enterprises; their lopsided participation in the economy; their disproportionate involvement in radical politics; their stunning financial successes in times of economic distress for others; the large number of Jews who remained traditional and rejected the very concept of assimilation; the feeling, to use a quote, "that it doesn't matter what side he's on, because he can't begin to understand our problems or our ethics or our morality or our way of looking at things;"<sup>3</sup> the domination and Jewification of society; and lastly, their 'Jewishness', which seemed so obvious to so many. More specific complaints include this comment by István Lendvai: "The Caesarian madness of the intellectual ghetto, which entertains that he is the only *civis europaeus* and everybody else is a stupid barbarian."<sup>4</sup> Or, this statement by Charles Booth: "The whole district has been affected by the increase in the Jewish population. It has been like the slow rising of a flood... No Gentile could live in the same house with these poor foreign Jews."<sup>5</sup>

To be considered authentically Hungarian, or British, or French there was a litmus test. And the litmus test of successful assimilation was, in the words of Hungarian historian István Szabó: "If the assimilant, without any reservation has donned the new *volk* consciousness of his identity, and his lost identity is henceforth as indifferent to him as any other alien identity."<sup>6</sup> There were probably only a tiny number of Jews about whom this could have been said. Obviously, we no longer adhere to this meaning of assimilation. Today, here in North America at any rate, the prevailing ethos is one of pluralism. Assimilation in a multicultural environment has more to do with the newcomer adjusting than becoming 'just like us.' In fact, there is no 'just like us.' This change in meaning has created all kinds of confusion and added to the difficulties of studying this subject. Thus, Barry Rubin writes in his book, *Assimilation and its Discontents*, "Most of their two millennia in the Western world, Jews assimilated only infrequently,"<sup>7</sup> implying that assimilation has always been a possibility. The mechanism of assimilation as a way to join the larger society did not exist before the Enlightenment. Conversion was the only way Jews could find acceptance, and conversion has nothing in common with the notion of assimilation. And then, there is the well-known expression, "Jews were more German than the Germans," which is meant to underscore not only how assimilated German Jews were, but Jews in general, as well. Perhaps we should take a look at this expression. To be *more* German than the

Germans? Instead of assimilating, Jews simply forged a new distinction for themselves, and were considered caricatures. This failure to assimilate is what people called the Jewish Question.

Yet there are two countries which have received the Good House-keeping Seal of Approval for producing assimilated Jews, where Jews were accepted. One is Britain, and there is almost universal consensus on this point. The other is Hungary, where what I would call a regional consensus obtains. Hungarian Jews have been proclaiming for decades that nowhere else were Jews so assimilated. Would these reputations hold up under intensive examination? I am afraid they did not. Not only was the Jews' effort to reform and thereby assimilate unsuccessful in both Hungary and Britain, but many of the issues revolving around non-assimilation were similar. For example, concerning the fulfilment of their patriotic duty in Hungary during World War I, the military command called attention to the number of immigrant Galician Jews who hid out rather than enlisting or who deserted. Jews feel the same way they did in the Middle Ages, wrote Ágoston;<sup>8</sup> wars then were no affair of theirs because they did not belong to any party. In Britain, less than one per cent of those eligible had enlisted as of October 1916.<sup>9</sup> Lacking identification with Britain, English-born Russian Jews saw no reason to fight the Germans; in fact, some Jews expressed solidarity with their Anglo-German and Anglo-Austrian brethren. Lacking any appreciation for the fact that Russia was Britain's ally, they considered it grounds for indifference to the war cause. Of the many who did not enlist some cited opposition to war, their parents having left Russia so they should not be conscripted; others cited religious reasons.<sup>10</sup>

Between the covers of this book lies a world that will probably be as foreign to readers as it was to newly emancipated Jews. This world is the non-Jewish world, where Christians were living for the first time with Jews as part of their society, and not separate from them. And for many non-Jews, this was an experience that provoked disappointment, frustration, and bitterness. The difficulties inherent in assimilating have been recorded by some historians. But that was not the interest of Christian Europeans. Their interest was to see that Jews lived in harmony with their non-Jewish neighbours. And they had articulated the means by which Jews would be able to accomplish this. What they found was that Jews refused to comply, or they were incapable of complying, or they did not understand what was required, and thus remained unassimilated. To make matters worse, emancipated Jews started to display new traits that screamed non-assimilation. It was not, for example, a sign of embracing the norms of society, of wanting to be a part of society, of an expression of happiness or gratitude to be included in society at long last, to then take up arms against that society, having only been recently admitted to it. I do not mean this literally — except in the case of Jewish anarchists. But figuratively speaking, this is exactly what Jewish social iconoclasts and political revolutionaries did in substantial numbers. This is the non-Jewish

perspective on Jewish assimilation, the perspective framing *Masked Ball at the White Cross Café*.

Apart from the fact that the very subject of assimilation has been taboo for the last sixty years, there are a number of barriers that make it terribly difficult to come to grips with this issue. In exchange for pointing out some of these barriers which come in the form of misconceptions, beliefs, and myths, I would like to offer the facts.

It is a popular assumption that the Enlightenment opened the doors wide to acceptance of the Jews. Although, there is the less well-known view about the Enlightenment which argues the opposite: that Voltaire and many other *philosophes* were 'anti-Semitic.' Neither of these views can hold up under scrutiny. What Voltaire and the other Enlightenment thinkers recognized were the profound difficulties inherent in incorporating this people that had *never* been part of Christian Europe: not in the political, cultural, or social sense; never on 'intimate' terms, in the sense of breaking bread with them or marrying them; and whose day-to-day rhythm was so at variance with the Christian rhythm. They recognized that certain aspects of Jewish religious practice would make it difficult — if not impossible — for Jews to become full participating members of the polity. But, with the burden of universal humanism resting heavily on their shoulders, Voltaire and other Enlightenment thinkers began to wrestle with the idea of incorporating the Jews into society. The outcome of this process was what I have termed *the Enlightenment ideals specific to the Jews*. These were a series of radical reforms targeted specifically at the Jews. Hopefully, accomplishing these reforms would culminate in the Jews' assimilation. Perhaps, *then*, Jews would find acceptance in the broader society.

However, it does appear that the laborious efforts of the Enlightenment thinkers were ignored, for there is no mention of reforms attached to any of the bills of emancipation that were passed in Central and Western Europe during the nineteenth century. There is a good reason for this. While the Enlightenment thinkers had been weighed down by one burden, liberals were weighed down by another: the liberal ethos, which dominated much of the nineteenth century, and was dictating 'freedom for all.' Emancipation was hotly debated in each country that eventually emancipated its Jews. Liberals were embroiled in this debate as wholeheartedly as everyone else and they believed that reform was indispensable. But liberals convinced themselves that being emancipated and living in a free society would be sufficient impetus for the Jews to make the needed reforms and assimilate. And they went ahead and passed bills of emancipation. After that, only heretical liberals talked about the need for Jews to assimilate. These facts have been conveniently dropped from the liberal canon.

It was a bit like the child who pointed out that the emperor was wearing no clothes when many people started pointing out to the liberals that

Jews were not assimilating, that the liberals' assurance that Jews would assimilate once they were emancipated was a crock. But liberals resolved this embarrassment by immediately appropriating and altering the meaning of a term to isolate these individuals and demean their views: anti-Semite.<sup>11</sup> Ever since, anti-Semites are those who are marginal, irrational, hateful people who distort everything about Jews. Or, as historian Robert Wistrich described the first batch of anti-Semites of the late nineteenth century: "semi-radicalized, frustrated intellectual misfits and some sensation-mongering journalists."<sup>12</sup> While there were undoubtedly some irrational Jew-haters, it was the respectable views of some very respectable people with which public opinion concurred. In Hungary, for example, Gyula Verhovay was a member of parliament representing the ultra-left Independence Party, a strong supporter of the workers, and the darling of Hungarians. Yet his newspaper, the *Függetlenség*, stereotypically would be called an anti-Semitic rag. Bishop Ottokár Prohászka was regarded by many as the outstanding figure and symbol of the cultural and intellectual renaissance that took place in Hungary in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. He worked ceaselessly for the poor, was a determined advocate of religious modernism, and three of his books were put on the Index by Rome because of his views on evolution. Yet a reading of his works on the Jews would place him at the forefront of the 'anti-Semitic' camp. We do not have to protect these liberals any longer, nor do we have to live with this dichotomy. These were reputable men whom we can respect. They were not suffering from a "disease of the mind," "damaging to reason," that afflicted "men and women of otherwise powerful and subtle thoughts,"<sup>13</sup> as historian Paul Johnson put it in an article published earlier this year.

We come up against the same problem every time we use the term anti-Semitism. While the belief is that anti-Semitism is prejudice, discrimination, racism, false accusations, and an irrational hatred against Jews, the reality is, that between emancipation and the Holocaust, what is called anti-Semitism was the public discourse on the failure of the Jews to assimilate, and the negative effects that this failure was having on society. It cannot be emphasized enough how much the persistent use of the term anti-Semitism is one of the greatest barriers to exploring and understanding this period.

There is another barrier, and it is far more emotionally charged. For the most part, as much as we care to envision the ancestors of modern Jews, or, if you are Jewish, your forebears, Hollywood has helped us along by giving us very benign stereotypes. Fathers were fiddlers on the roof and mothers were *meine Yiddishe Mamas*. It is time to face some unpleasant truths. These Jews, who had been marginalized for centuries, repeatedly expelled, boarded up in ghettos, held in the lowest possible esteem by the host society, taxed beyond endurance, and forced into quasi-legal or outright illegal acts simply to survive, were probably, on the whole, most unappetizing



people. The well-worn descriptions of Jews as money-grabbing; immoral; of Jewish men lusting after Christian women; honourable only to their own kind; are not too far from the truth. Whether or not these unflattering characteristics were due to the marginalization and isolation of Jews over the centuries — which many Europeans from the Enlightenment period on did believe? the fact remains that they did not want these influences infiltrating their society. After emancipation, new issues arose and eroded this sympathetic explanation for negative Jewish traits. The development of a positive relationship to the state was *not* going well, and led to descriptions of Jews as unpatriotic. Many emancipated Jews remained strongly traditional and were in fact opposed to the very idea of assimilation. Others were 'modern' Jews, but they were displaying new 'unassimilated' tendencies: they were edgy, uneasy, iconoclastic, and spearheaded many of the revolutionary movements. They were so disproportionately prominent in certain endeavours that they monopolized them. They were socially cohesive; and they still stood out from mainstream society. These charges were also pretty well correct. The Hollywood image of fiddlers on the roof and *Yiddishe Mamas* is just a myth.

How strongly did Europeans really feel about this non-assimilation? Well, if we believe the myth that after the emancipation of Jews in Western and Central Europe, life for Jews was essentially good, and that the good times lasted until the advent of the Nazis in 1933, then we would have to conclude that Europeans were not really upset about the unassimilated behaviour of Jews. But this is another myth. There were some good times after emancipation, of course. However, by 1920, most assuredly, the good times were over. By 1920, many people were not only looking for a solution to the Jewish Question, they were demanding one. Not only this. By 1920, the status of the Jews had already been internationally renegotiated — a fact that historians have virtually ignored — and a grievous oversight. With one stroke of the pen, the Balfour Declaration, which laid the groundwork for a Jewish state; the *Numerus Clausus* law in Hungary, which reclassified Jews as a nationality or race; the Minorities Treaties forged at the Paris Peace Conference, which counted Jews among the minorities in the newly established states; and, the decision of the Bolsheviks to classify Jews as an ethnic group, erased the entire body of Enlightenment and liberal thought as it pertained to the Jews, along with their two-pronged program for the Jews' emancipation: wholesale reform, and the classification of Jews as citizens of the Mosaic faith. Jews were once again identified as a separate entity, distinct from the majority society. Why did this occur? Well, emancipation had been based on the expectation that Jews would make the appropriate reforms and assimilate. This expectation had not been fulfilled.

Thus, by 1920 a watershed was reached, at which time Europeans served the Jews notice that they were in the process of settling the Jewish Question. It is that loose cannon — contingency — that determined the Jews'

precise fate. Yet the popular belief is that the Holocaust occurred because of the demented fanatical ideology of Adolf Hitler and the Nazis, discrimination, prejudice, racism, ignorance... modernity. There is no mention in this list of the failure of Jews to assimilate, but I hardly see how it can be excluded. My original germ of an idea — that emancipation was the cause of the Holocaust — has remained the underlying thesis of *Masked Ball at the White Cross Café*. No one had ever entertained the idea of living with the Jew as Jew in their midst. Theological objections to the Jew as Jew had been overcome by the offer of conversion to Christianity. Later, secular objections to the Jew as Jew were overcome by a program of reform which would culminate in assimilation. Emancipation ruptured a 1500-year-old continuum and placed in society Jews whose ways and behaviours were at odds with it.

About the Holocaust itself, there are two beliefs that I would like to highlight. One is that we can derive the benefit of a lesson from it. That the Holocaust contains lessons for humankind, warning each of us of the lethal dangers of prejudice and discrimination. This year, Auschwitz is the messenger of this lesson, and we have been saturated with the lessons that we must learn. If prejudice and discrimination and so on were the genuine reasons for the Holocaust, it might make sense to speak of educating people as to how to overcome these pernicious biases. But these cannot be considered the fundamental reasons, and therefore there is no lesson to be learned. The other belief is that the Holocaust is manifest proof of the need for a Jewish state. With the phrase 'never again' ringing in our ears, Israel is seen as the protector of Jews and as a place that can provide a safe haven for Jews. This is actually a very late version of the Jewish perspective on why the creation of the state of Israel was necessary. Since 1798, at any rate, there are records showing that Jews were quite desperate to re-establish a homeland.<sup>14</sup> There is also the non-Jewish perspective on this matter. Very succinctly put, the creation of the state of Israel was a very good way to get rid of the remaining Jews left in Europe after 1945. This is also a very late version. The idea of ridding Europe of its Jews by establishing a state for them had already been articulated in 1793.<sup>15</sup> Since the seventeenth century, certain Christian groups have been advocating that Jews be restored to what was then Palestine. This was for religious reasons. Then, there have also been political reasons. Britain, since the mid-nineteenth century, and America, for the last several decades, have both had an interest in maintaining a bulwark in the Middle East. Exactly who has been most served by the creation of the state of Israel? In the grand scheme of things, the Holocaust figures only in a small way in the establishment of the state. Other factors have played a much larger role in its creation, and will continue to exert an influence over its existence.

These are only some of the many tentacles adhering to this book. *Masked Ball* inadvertently challenges a number of historical and current notions pertaining to the Jews. These notions persist because the importance

of assimilation has not been acknowledged and will persist as long as it is not acknowledged.

Carnival season, the prelude to Lent, was a popular time in Hungary and was ushered in annually in January; the year 1896 was no exception. In this particular year, an article appeared in a local newspaper announcing that the Israelite Women's Association would start the carnival season with their ball to be held at the White Cross Coffeehouse (*Fehér Kereszt Kávéház*) on the 11<sup>th</sup> of January. In considering this pre-Lenten event, the name of the venue only adds emphasis to a faultily constructed syllogism: 'Everyone goes to a pre-Lenten ball in Hungarian society. I (the Jew) am part of society. Therefore, I too, will go to a ball.' Missing in this syllogism is that crucial piece of information that Hungarian society was a Christian society, a fact that Lajos Hatvany, a prominent publisher and 'man of letters,' and baptized Jew, was keenly aware of. He, too, wrote about Jews attending balls, twenty-five years after this announcement appeared. 'My dear Jews,' he wrote, 'you must put on frock coats if you want to go to the ball.' (In the context of Hatvany's comments, 'frock coats' stood for conversion.) In sponsoring this ball which was, after all, only the social aspect of a profoundly religious period, Christian society might easily have understood that in religious matters, these Jewish women's apprehension of the dictum that the Jews should 'become just like us' extended as far as, but no further than participating in the customs that appertained to the Christian religion.<sup>16</sup>

For Jews, many parts of this book will make for very painful reading. For those who consider themselves liberals, this book may be disconcerting, to say the least. And for some non-Jews, the book may be an articulation of what they always knew, and they may feel vindicated.

Thus, there is much at risk here in publishing this book. And so I understand how tempting, even compelling it is to perpetuate the current versions of this period of history. But I should like to think that the time has finally come when we can put the issue of Jewish assimilation back on the table again.

## NOTES

My project started as a doctoral dissertation at the University of Toronto. In this undertaking I had the unconditional support of Professor David Levine. I am also indebted to my husband, Sándor Kerekes, who took many months out of his life to translate much of the primary source material.

<sup>1</sup> Arnold White, *The Modern Jew* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1899), 273-75.

<sup>2</sup> Péter Ágoston, *A zsidók útja* [The Way of the Jews] (Nagyvárad: A Nagyváradai Társadalomtudományi Társaság, 1917), 290-95.

<sup>3</sup> Ford Madox Hueffer (Ford), *Mr. Flight* (London: H. Latimer, 1913), 221.

<sup>4</sup> István Lendvai, "Szép Ernő, Patika és egyebek," [Ernő Szép, English Pharmacy, and Others] *Új Nemzedék*, 21 March 1920; Lendvai, *A Harmadik Magyarországon – Jóslatok és tanulságok* (Budapest: Pallas, 1921), 145-53. Lendvai was a prominent journalist, publicist and poet who later joined the Christian National Party.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Booth, quoted in Stephen Aris, *The Jews in Business* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, Reprint, 1971), 37-38.

<sup>6</sup> István Szabó, quoted in János Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon* [The Jewish Question in Hungary] (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2001), 18-19.

<sup>7</sup> Barry Rubin, *Assimilation and its Discontents* (New York: Times Books, 1995), xiv.

<sup>8</sup> Ágoston, *A zsidók útja*, 287-90; Ottokár Prohászka, "Pro juventate 'catholica,'" *Alkotmány*, 26 May 1918, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Julia Bush, *Behind the Lines: East London Labour* (London: Merlin Press, 1984), 167, 172, 173.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>11</sup> See Moshe Zimmermann, *Wilhelm Marr: The Patriarch of Anti-Semitism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 89-92.

<sup>12</sup> Robert S. Wistrich, *Between Redemption and Perdition: Modern Anti-Semitism and Jewish Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 38.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Johnson, "The Anti-Semitic Disease," *Commentary*, June 2005, 33-34.

<sup>14</sup> Franz Kobler, *Napoleon and the Jews* (New York: Schocken Books Inc., 1976), 30-32.

<sup>15</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte, quoted in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz eds., *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 2nd ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 309.

<sup>16</sup> Janet Kerekes, *Masked Ball at the White Cross Café: The Failure of Jewish Assimilation* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Oxford: University Press of America, Inc., 2005), 140-41.

## Another Look at the Early Moholy-Nagy

Edit Toth

Olivér Botár. *Természet és technika: az Újraértelmezett Moholy-Nagy, 1916-1923*. Budapest: Vince Kiadó and Pécs: Janus Pannonius Múzeum, 2007. Pp. 223. 3995 Ft, ISBN 978-963-9731-35-6.

**The exhibition** *Természet és technika: az Újraértelmezett Moholy-Nagy*, organized by Olivér Botár at the Janus Pannonius Museum Pécs, Hungary (2007 December 20 – 2008 March 31) presents the early career of László Moholy-Nagy in the context of the 1917-1923 period of revolutionary upheavals. Its accompanying book is a variation of the 2006 City University of New York Graduate Center exhibition catalogue *Technical Detours: The Early Moholy-Nagy Reconsidered*, and the author's most extensive publication to date. We may characterize Botár's work as biographical writing, since one of its main preoccupations is establishing a detailed chronological account of the young Moholy-Nagy's activities and intellectual development leading up to his 1923 employment at the Bauhaus. His story drives the point that this prestigious teaching post was the consequence of the artist's intensive and diverse activity he had been engaged in during the previous years.

Botár's intention, stated in the subtitle of the book, is to reconsider the young Moholy-Nagy's motivations underlying his works and thinking at a critical juncture of his artistic formation. Considering the wide range of media and influences the artist had contact with around this time, it is not an easy task to pin down his early work. Botár manages to handle the complex history and shows that a somewhat vague search through artistic styles leads Moholy-Nagy to develop towards his mature Constructivism. The author goes through the various components of Moholy's art: Hungarian activism, the Hungarian Communist movement, the German Youth (*Jugendbewegung*) and life reform (*Lebensreform*) movements, biocentrism, Ostwaldian "energetics," Bogdanovian "tektology," German reform pedagogy, Raoul Hausmann's Optophonetics, and "elementarist abstraction" (p. 15-16).

The first part sets the stage for the book's central feature in the second chapter: Botár's discovery of a canvas covered with two different-style paintings. Moholy-Nagy during the 1918-19 Hungarian revolutions is described in a subtle way as a quickly-made "revolutionary without a role,"

constantly searching for opportunities and artistic advancement. This picture of the painter especially comes across in the English version of the catalogue, while the Hungarian one suggests a man with firmer Communist conviction. In both, however, the figure of the artist emerges through his extensive, but often brief relationships and interactions with prominent Hungarian painters and literary men of the time, while his art develops in reaction to them.

In the second chapter Botár draws attention to Moholy-Nagy's 1920-21 *Ackerfeld* pictures and their connection to the organicist ideas of the German *Lebensreform* movement. In part, this attention serves the purpose of disclaiming the accepted view of the artist (popular especially in the United States) as the representative of technocratic ideas. The author instead explains these paintings as attempts at reconciling nature and technology. The *Ackerfeld* works also provide the context for Botár's discovery of a similar painting on the back of *Architektur I* (1922, Salgo Trust for Education), to which he accords distinguished attention. The canvas appears as the midpoint both in Moholy-Nagy's early career and in the book itself. Given the artistic weaknesses of the newly discovered work, its importance may at first be overlooked. Botár's careful stylistic analysis, however, convinces us that on the one hand, the formerly over-painted *Eisenbahnbild mit Ackerfelder und 3* documents the transition between the series of field paintings and machine Dada compositions. On the other hand, *Architektur I* on the front side of the canvas shows the transitional stage between "glass architecture" and "transparency" paintings. Thus the two artworks together, Botár argues, exemplify the transformation of Moholy-Nagy's art from Dada to international Constructivism (p. 129). Here, for the first time, the artist reacts against his own work instead of against the ideas of others. This suggests that he has developed his own voice, a new form of artistic expression.

At the same time, the *Ackerfeld* pictures' marriage of the organic with the technological parallels the amateur photographs of plants created at the Loheland *Lebensreform* community, which in turn Botár establishes as the source of the artist's own practice of the medium. The importance of *Természet és technika*, in my view, lays in mapping out Moholy-Nagy's connections with the German reform pedagogy movement through his wife Lucia and her involvement in the Loheland community (p. 188). With this background in mind Moholy-Nagy's affinities with the activity of the Bauhaus become clear. Indeed, in 1923 his art offered the best transition for the materialization of Gropius's new slogan, the unity of art and technology, without losing all connections with the romantic organicist roots of the Weimar artistic establishment. Moholy's relation to Herwarth Walden's *Sturm* gallery, which provided an exhibition forum for the Bauhaus professors, points to further shared interests rather than radical differences.

The last part of *Természet és technika* gives a more theoretical interpretation of Moholy-Nagy's two works related to the 1922 *Construc-*

*tiveDynamic Entergy System* manifesto, which the artist published in the *Sturm* periodical in collaboration with the art critic Alfred Kemény. The important document had relevance both for the ongoing leftist artistic debates and for Moholy-Nagy's later art culminating in his famous *Light Modulator*. Through a 1928 drawing (*Kinetic-Constructive System: Movement Track for Play and Conveyance*) Botár explains the idea of the *Constructive-Dynamic Energy System* as an entertainment construction — similar to those found in Luna parks — which invite us for an active experience while extending the limits of our sensations. He attributes the idea and theoretical basis of the manifesto to Alfred Kemény who visited Moscow in 1921 where he may have come into contact with Bogdanov's concept of "tektology," which defined reality as composed of force relations. By connecting Bogdanov's biologically rooted system to Moholy-Nagy's art and thinking, the author gives their organicist aspects a firmer Marxist grounding. At the same time, Botár rightly points out the privileged attention accorded to questions of sensation and optics by Moholy-Nagy and other German Dadaists-Constructivists. I would propose that we should recognize in this distinctive preoccupation an important difference from Russian Constructivism and its materialist approach. Maybe it would be even possible to set the two movements apart along these lines.

Botár's *Természet és technika* gives an engaging and nuanced account of the early Moholy-Nagy's art, tastefully presented and complemented with high-quality colour reproductions. By following along the different steps and places of his development, both scholars and the general reader can find interesting material about the artist and the historical period in which he matured.





## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

CHRISTOPHER ADAM is a doctoral candidate in history at the University of Ottawa. His fields are Central European history and social history in twentieth century North America. He teaches part-time at Ottawa' Carleton University.

LEE CONGDON has recently retired from James Madison University's Department of History. He has published extensively among other subjects Hungarian intellectuals in Western exile. His most recent book deals with American diplomat George Kennan: *George Kennan: A Writing Life* (ISI Books, 2008).

NÁNDOR DREISZIGER recently retired from the Royal Military College of Canada. One of his several research subjects is Canadian political history in the mid-20th century. His most recent book in the Hungarian field is *Hungarians: From Ancient Times to 1956* (Legas, 2007).

EMESE IVAN completed her MBA at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana and her doctorate at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario. Next, she taught at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. The late DEZSŐ IVÁN, Emese's father, was a sports historian in Hungary.

JANET KERKES is an independent scholar who lives in Toronto, Ontario. Her doctoral thesis was based on research in primary sources that revealed some of the myths and misconceptions surrounding Jewish assimilation in Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

MÁRTA MIHÁLY came to Canada in 1956 with the Sopron School of Forestry. After completing her university education she married fellow Soproner László Orlóci who became a professor at the University of Western Ontario — where she became an instructor/demonstrator.

Professor emeritus KÁROLY NAGY has been involved in Hungarian studies programs and Hungarian causes for much of his adult life. Since his retirement from Middlesex County College (Edison N.J.) he has been teaching, on an occasional basis, at various universities in Hungary.

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS (cont'd.)

Professor JUDITH SZAPOR has taught history and women's studies at various post-secondary institutions in Ontario. Presently she is teaching at Montreal's McGill University. She is the author of a biography of Laura Polányi as well as numerous scholarly articles.

For a great many years ÉVA TÖMÖRY had been associated with the University of Toronto's Hungarian Studies program. In recent years she has been working toward her doctoral degree at the University of Pécs, in her native city of Pécs, Hungary.

EDIT TOTH is a doctoral candidate in art history at Pennsylvania State University. Her research focuses on aspects of modern art (the MA circle's "New Man-Image") in Central Europe between 1918 and 1923.

After completing the study a part of which is reproduced in our volume AUDREY WIPPER finished her university education, earned a doctorate, and became a professor in the University of Waterloo's Department of Anthropology. She now lives in retirement.

SÁNDOR ZSÍROS is a retired teacher, author and editor who lives near Miskolc, Hungary. He has published several histories of his home town. One of these appeared also in English: *On the Front. Soviet Military Conquest and Sack of a Small Town, Felsőzsolca, in Hungary...* (2006).



