

Preface:

Perceptions of Hungary and Hungarians Throughout the Centuries

Nándor Dreisziger

2006 is a special year in the evolution of the Hungarian communities of North America, and especially, Canada. It marks the fiftieth anniversary of the coming of the refugees of the 1956 anti-Soviet revolution in Hungary. With the arrival of those refugees, the writer of these lines included, the life of Canada's Magyar colonies was revitalized. With over 38,000 additional Hungarians settling in Canada, a new era began in the Magyar neighbourhoods of metropolitan centres such as Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, as well as smaller settlements. With this event commenced what has been called the "golden age" of the Hungarian ethnic group in this country.¹

To celebrate this anniversary we plan to publish two volumes of our journal, both of them bulkier than has been our tradition in the past. For the first of our "1956" commemorative issues we present a volume of essays that, on first impression, contains a selection of articles on an assortment of subjects with no manifest correlation to each other. Nevertheless, the papers have one over-riding theme, since to a greater or lesser degree all of them deal with the image Hungary and/or Hungarians at home or abroad projected to the outside world. For this reason we feel entitled to call the volume "The Image of Hungary and Hungarians."

The very first essay in the collection, by George Bisztray, our journal's former co-editor, treats the subject of what impression Hungary made on foreign visitors from late medieval times to the middle of the nineteenth century. The following paper, that of Zoltán Fejős, the C.E.O. of Hungary's Museum of Ethnography, examines the evolution of "mother tongue" education in early Hungarian-American communities and concludes that, among other things, the ethnic schools Magyar immigrants established at the turn of the last century, bolstered above all their self-image — and by doing so contributed to the preservation of their ethnic consciousness.

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The next study, by Canadian literary historian Kenneth McRobbie, tells the story that post-1914 Hungary's most prominent female revolutionary figure, Ilona Duczynska never managed to narrate in a comprehensive auto-biography. The article explains how this rebellious young woman of noble background managed to form an image of Hungary's Prime Minister István Tisza as war-mongering anti-democrat, insensitive to the sufferings of his people — an image that many inside and outside of Hungary shared at the time. She convinced herself that only the elimination of Tisza would free her nation from its torments and tormentors. She was ready to sacrifice herself for her cause, but fate intervened at the last moment and the planned assassination became unnecessary.

The next paper, by University of Sherbrooke political scientist Dany Deschênes, deals directly with the evolving image of Austria-Hungary — and within it, the historic Kingdom of Hungary — in the decades before (and also during) the First World War. He explains how the erosion of the largely positive image that Hungary had in France from 1848 to the 1870s contributed to the rise of a political atmosphere in which Hungary's dismemberment in the post-World War I peace settlement became possible and, in fact, a probable development.

The following essay, by the Canadian-trained historian Béla Bodó, explains how the maraudings of the “White” officers' detachments during the chaos after a lost war, two unsuccessful revolutions, and foreign occupation, were perceived by Hungary's rulers as impacting negatively on the country's image, and — after many delays and some difficulties — reined them in. The next two papers, by American scholars Thomas Sakmyster and Marguerite DeHuszar Allen respectively, also touch on the issue of the image Hungarian right-wing leaders projected, for Hungary and for her politics, during the interwar and the World War II years. Finally, in her essay, Emese Ivan of the University of Western Ontario deals with the image people in charge of Hungary's sports policies project for their country and its sports establishment in the post-communist era.

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We hope to mark the 50th anniversary of 1956 further by publishing in a supplemental 2006 volume a collection of essays pertaining directly to some of the antecedents as well as the aftermath of that important event in Hungarian history. We also plan to include papers as well as documents in this anthology that deal with the coming of the 1956 refugees to Canada, their reception here and their adjustment to Canadian life.

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Our 2006 output represents a departure from our traditions not only in the publication of two bulky volumes in a single year but also in the authorship of their contents. Unlike other volumes over the years whose articles were produced by a combination of American, Hungarian, and Canadian authors, these volumes, in particular the first one, have been written mainly by Canadian academics. The fact that several scholars in Canada are active in the field of Hungarian studies is to some extent an indication of the continued vitality of Hungarian culture in Canada, a vitality that had been reinvigorated as a result of the coming of the refugees of 1956 to this country in that year and in 1957 — and to a lesser degree even thereafter in the case of refugees whose first destination had been a country other than Canada.

Our present volume, the 2006 “official” double-issue, represents a departure from our traditions in one other way as well. Some academic journals occasionally publish essays by graduate students. Our journal has resisted this idea. This time we made an exception and we included a paper by Dany Deschênes in our collection. Although Dr. Deschênes is a full-time academic now, at the time he wrote his paper and presented it at the annual meeting of the Hungarian Studies Association of Canada that was held at Laval University in Quebec City in 2001, he was a graduate student. His paper, explaining some of the background to the dismemberment of the historic Kingdom of Hungary in the wake of World War I, will no doubt interest Hungarians and Hungarian specialists in Canada and elsewhere.² Furthermore, we have not published an article dealing with French attitudes to Hungary for decades, and we have never published a work by a French-Canadian author. Because of problems and delays with the translation of this work from French into English, it sat on my editorial desk for several years. I apologize for this and also for the fact that by now the paper is missing references to some pertinent new research.³

In 2007 we'll return to our time-honoured practice of publishing “only” about 150 pages per year, usually in one combined volume. We already have a volume waiting to be finalized on a subject of art history, and another one on the planning board, on the theme of Transylvania in the 20th century. Of course, we also hope to produce at least one “regular” issue or volume of our journal during the last few years of this decade.

NOTES

¹ N. F. Dreisziger *et al.*, *Struggle and Hope: The Hungarian-Canadian Experience* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1982), see the Chapter entitled

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“Towards a Golden Age: The 1950s” especially pp. 203-219, as well as the book's conclusions, pp. 220-31 *in passim*.

² About the decline of Hungary's reputation in the years before 1914 in Great 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] (Budapest: Magvető, 1986); as well as Tibor Frank's recent book, *Picturing Austria-Hungary: The British Perception of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Wayne, N.J.: Center for Hungarian Studies and Publications, 2005; distributed by Columbia University Press, New York).

³ Such as the article of Lajos Kövér, “A 18. századi Franciaország magyarsággépének gyökerei” [The origins of the image of Hungary in 18th century France], *AETAS*, 20, 3 (fall, 2005): 69-86. (Incidentally, this study also comments on the image Hungary presented to French travellers in the country [pp. 77-81]). Another work that Professor Deschênes might have mentioned had his paper been written more recently is the biography of Leopold I of Austria by the noted French student of Habsburg history Jean Bérenger: *Leopold 1er (1640-1705): fondateur de la puissance autrichienne* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2004).