

The Hungarian Image of Benjamin Franklin

Anna Katona

"The impact of this new American man upon Europe," commented Henry Bamford Parkes on Franklin, "was of the greatest importance."¹ The Philadelphia printer, son of a Boston tallow-chandler, acted as the agent of the Pennsylvania Assembly in London during 1757–1762 and resided in Paris during 1776–1785. Between 1778 and 1784 he served as the rebellious American colonies' minister plenipotentiary at the French court. Because of his prolonged stay in Europe, Franklin became a symbol for all ideas and ideals associated with America. "If eighteenth-century America borrowed its theories from Europe," said Parkes, "it more than repaid the debt by the encouragement it offered, by its mere existence, to European liberalism."² His long sojourn in London and Paris made Franklin the most accessible representative of the Founding Fathers to Europeans. Besides his political role, his invention of the lightning conductor, this epochal discovery in the field of electricity, contributed to Franklin's early fame in Europe, and brought him honors in all parts of the continent.³ Franklin, the scientist and politician, was soon to capture the attention of Hungarians.

His European presence accounted for Franklin's early recognition in Hungary as an American patriot. Colonel Mihály Kováts (who was to die in the defence of Charleston, S.C. in 1779), volunteered to serve the American cause in a letter to Franklin in January 1777.⁴ János Zinner (later a professor of philosophy and mathematics in Kassa), "prefect of the Imperial and Royal Academy of Buda," as he signed his letter to Franklin of October 26, 1778,⁵ asked Franklin for material for two books he was planning to write in Latin on the American Revolution. In a second letter, dated September 23, 1783,⁶ Zinner offered his *Notitia Historica de Coloniis Federatis in America* to the thirteen states. Since the Latin works have not been found, it is believed that the results of those researches had been incorporated in his other writings.⁷ His German *Merkwürdige Briefe und Schriften der berühmtesten Generäle in America* [Noteworthy Letters and Writings of the Most Famous Generals in America] (1782),⁸ is a survey of the American Revolution's

major military figures, both patriot and loyalist. It also contains a few Franklin letters and a short biography of the American in which he is described as an exceptional philosopher and statesman. Considering the political situation in Habsburg-dominated Hungary at the time, it is not surprising that Zinner cautiously refrained from speculating on the revolutionary struggle's outcome. Zinner's 1778 letter to Franklin tells much about political attitudes in Hungary and illustrates the sympathies of her progressive-minded intellectuals. Zinner began with a tribute to the Habsburgs, a prudent caution lest his letter fell into the wrong hands. "I was born the subject of a great monarchy," he wrote, "and under a government whose rule is mild." But he soon revealed his true feelings about the War of Independence: ". . . I cannot tell you what joy I feel, when I hear or read of your progress in America. To speak the truth, I look upon you and all the chiefs of your new republic, as angels, sent by heaven to guide and comfort the human race." Zinner confessed that his reason for writing his book was the desire to spread the ideas of the American Revolution. "To give a public manifestation of this sentiment, I have composed a work in Latin." Commenting on this letter in Franklin's *Works*, Jared Sparks noted the "interest taken in American affairs even in the remote parts of Europe."⁹ Because of her unfortunate political status at the time, Hungary was a remote country indeed in more than one sense of the word.

At the same time when Hungary's political thinkers discovered Franklin the politician, her physicists realized his importance as a scientist. In 1776, the first lightning conductor was installed on the Royal Palace in Buda, and in his joy over the event, Lőrinc Orczy, a rather conservative, aristocratic poet, dedicated a poem to Franklin.¹⁰ If Zinner pioneered in making the versatile American known as a progressive statesman, a fellow-scholar in Buda, Pál Makó, was equally eager to acquaint his countrymen with Franklin's achievement in the field of electricity. His book on the subject appeared first in Latin, then in 1772 it was translated into German and finally in 1781 it also appeared in Hungarian.¹¹ In 1786, the periodical *Merkur von Ungarn* reported that another physicist, Elek Horányi was teaching Franklin's theories on electricity to two young noblemen, Antal Grassalkovich and Ignác Almássy.¹² As early as 1785–1788, Franklin's theory became an examination question at the College of Sárospatak, one of the country's most famous Protestant colleges.¹³

The Jacobin conspiracy of 1794–1795 in Hungary was inspired by French ideological influences, but there was also an impact of American political thought. The writings of the conspiracy's participants reveal an

acute awareness of the events in America, and Franklin's name is frequently mentioned. Two facts are noteworthy about these references. First, the conspirators were aware of Franklin's prominence both as a scientist and as a politician. In his pamphlet *Oratio ad Proceres et Nobiles Regni Hungariae*, the conspiracy's chief figure pointed to Franklin, the inventor, as a man eminent in "disciplinis physicis et mathematicis."¹⁴ At the trial of the conspirator Szecsenacz, the prosecution presented the lawyer Samuel Kohlmayer's letter, dated November 20, 1790, as evidence. Referring to the accused, Kohlmayer cited Turgot's famous remark on Franklin "non quidem coelo fulmen, sed tamen eripuit sceptrum tyrannis."¹⁵ The second point about the Hungarian Jacobins' Franklin image is even more important, because of its pertinence to István Széchenyi's fascination with the American statesman, namely Franklin's dedication to the common good. Eighteenth-century Hungarian intellectuals very much appreciated Franklin's sense of public service and respected his community-orientedness. In his funeral oration over the deceased Alajos Capuano, a friend and public figure, Ignác Martinovics cited Franklin as an example of a life's dedication to the common good.¹⁶

Indeed, the main idea of *Tempefői* (1793), a drama by the greatest poet of the age, Mihály Csokonai Vitéz, displayed a similar concern. "Blessed endeavor," one of the characters exclaims, "which though prompted by self-interest, works for the public good." Csokonai admired Franklin, one of the creators of a free republic. In a letter to Sándor Bessenyei, probably written in 1795, Csokonai voiced his most personal feelings and convictions: "An exile in my own country," wrote the poet after his expulsion from the College of Debrecen, "I am dragging along my days in boredom. My only happiness consists in finding a new world for myself, where I can build a Republic and a Philadelphia and — at least there, like Franklin did — eripio fulmen coelo sceptrumque tyrannis."¹⁷

It is difficult to assess how widely Franklin was known in late eighteenth-century Hungary. There are a few safe guesses, though. Since the *Hadi és más Nevezetes Történetek* [Military and Other Famous Stories] as well as the *Bétsi Magyar Kurir* [Vienna Magyar Messenger] published obituaries on Franklin's death, it is fair to assume that newspaper readers were familiar with his name.¹⁸ The Sárospatak College examination requirement and Csokonai's comments on the American statesman suggest that Franklin's political activity was as well known among students as his scientific contribution. Recent assessments rate the popularity of some of Martinovics's pamphlets rather

high.¹⁹ The distribution of five-thousand copies within three days of publication was a considerable achievement. Franklin was certainly well-known among late eighteenth-century progressive Hungarian intellectuals. He failed to reach a wider audience, however, before well in the nineteenth.

II

The first attempt at introducing Franklin's ideas to a wider audience — with the twin purpose of entertaining and educating — was made in 1816. János Kis translated excerpts from Franklin's writings, probably from a German collection, without ever mentioning Franklin's name. The message was important, not the man behind the ideas! Kis translated a portion of Franklin's *The Way to Wealth* as *A szegény Jakab, kinek elegendője volt* [The Poor Jacob Who Had Enough]. He included it among other moralizing essays in part four of his *Iffjúság barátja vagy Hasznosan mulattató darabok a két nembeli iffjúság számára* [A Friend to the Young or Pieces Providing Useful Entertainment for Both Sexes].²⁰ The lengthy title clearly betrayed the intention of the translator and was quite characteristic of the development of Franklin's image in Hungary. From the very beginning of the nineteenth century, the "Poor Richard" image prevailed and Franklin came to be regarded as an exemplary, virtuous personality, whose private life and principles might have a beneficial influence on the youth. In contrast to eighteenth-century thought, which celebrated Franklin the statesman and the scientist, János Kis saw in Franklin the educator of the young. This feature was to dominate the image of the great American in Hungary. Slowly but effectively it pushed the image of the politician into the background, and later into oblivion.

A more complete selection of Franklin's writings was published in 1836,²¹ the work of an anonymous compiler and translator, identified as "S.J." A twenty-two-page introduction precedes eighty-one pages of a rather random collection, based probably on a German compilation. The preface emphasized Franklin's virtues. The extremely long title suggests that the translator wished to attract all segments of society: *Franklin arany kincses ládátskája vagy Útmutatás, mikép lehet az ember munkás, okos, kedves, jólmagabíró, rényes [sic] és boldog. Mint az élet minden viszonyaiban szerfelett hasznos, véneknek és ifjaknak, de különösen az elsőeknek, nélkülözhető tanácsadót, úgy ajánlja honfitársainak S. J. Kassán 1836* [Franklin's Little Treasury Chest or Guidelines How to Be Zealous, Wise, Kind, Healthy, Virtuous and Happy.

S. J. Recommends it in Kassa to All his Countrymen as a Useful Counsellor to All Ways of Life Both to the Old and the Young, but Especially to the Former]. The title honored the spirit of contemporary Hungarian popular literature and that of *Poor Richard's Almanack*. The thirty-eighth chapter, entitled: "A szegény, öreg Richárd vagy módok, mikép lehet meggazdagodni" [Poor Richard or Ways to get Rich] rendered a more complete translation of *The Way to Wealth* than Kis's, which did not include the frame-story, Father Abraham giving advice to a gathering of people.

Lajos Szilágyi's partial translation of *The Way to Wealth, Franklin az öreg Rikárd neve alatt* [Franklin under the name of Old Richard], 1848,²² has a preface with some political implications. The translator was keenly aware of the need for a policy embodying compromise among Hungary's numerous ethnic minorities and different religions. He admired Franklin as the representative of a nation where ethnic groups lived in harmony and as a man of tolerance, and proposed to translate the *Autobiography* as well as other parts of the *Almanack*. The political overtones of the Franklin image did not disappear in nineteenth-century Hungary altogether. Intellectuals involved in political activity during the Reform Age recognized Franklin's achievements as a progressive statesman. The Transylvanian Ferenc Szilágyi, a future participant in the War of Independence of 1848-49 was busily engaged popularizing the image of Franklin. In 1818, he published a balanced Franklin biography in the periodical *Erdélyi Muzéum*.²³ It paid obeisance to the multiple activities of Franklin, and considered both the positive and negative features of his character. Another Transylvanian, the first Hungarian ever to write a travelogue on the U.S., Sándor Farkas Bölöni must be mentioned as a contributor to the Hungarian image of Franklin, the politician, with entries in the twelve-volume encyclopedia *Közhasznú Ismeretek Tára* [Encyclopedia of Useful Knowledge], and random but perceptive and informative remarks on Franklin's political activities in *Útazás Észak Amerikában* (1834) [A Journey in North America].²⁴

The climax of Franklin's impact in Hungary was Count István Széchenyi's fascination with the American statesman.²⁵ The compatibility of the two politicians' aims, ideas and achievements accounted for Széchenyi's interest in Franklin. The Hungarian Jacobins had been aware of Franklin's commitment to the public good. The same commitment attracted Széchenyi, whose father possessed a copy of Zinner's book, and the young Széchenyi may have gathered his first information about the American statesman from this work. His own library boasted

of three books on Franklin: a three-volume London edition of his works, a two-volume London edition of his correspondence, and a French collection.²⁶ He made the following entry in his *Diary* about the latter: “Ein Buch, welches auf mein ganzes Leben den größten Einfluß haben wird” [A book that will have the greatest influence on my whole life].²⁷ The book to which he alluded was only recently (1824) published in Paris by Ch. A. Renouard: *Mélanges de morale, d'économie et de politique, extraits des ouvrages de Benjamin Franklin et précédé d'une note sur sa vie* [A Moral, Economic and Political Miscellany, Excerpts from the Works of Benjamin Franklin prefaced with a note on his life]. The title with its references to morals, economics and politics, explains Széchenyi's interest. He was getting involved with Hungary's political and economic problems, and he believed that these had moral implications.

Széchenyi admired and imitated Franklin's method of exercising virtues and fighting vices.²⁸ When we ask why, we cannot overlook the fact that Franklin's success story was also that of Philadelphia and the young American Republic. Széchenyi had something similar in mind for himself and his beloved Hungary. Because he endeavored to serve his country and to play a leading public role very much like Franklin had, he must have been fascinated with the American's deliberate and conscious effort to discipline himself and to educate himself into the kind of person who could succeed in a public career. Two ideas from Széchenyi's epilogue to his *Hitel* [Credit] illustrate the compatibility of the two politicians. First Széchenyi emphasized his hatred of extremes of all sorts. He tried to describe himself as a peacemaker, a unifier searching for a middle of the road policy, Franklin's “golden mean,” if you like. Széchenyi's ideas were those of a practical, pragmatic, prudent, and cautious politician. Nobody could have been more compatible with Franklin's view of the useful public figure. Said Franklin: “I even forbid myself, — the use of every word or expression in the language that imported a fixed opinion, such as *certainly, undoubtedly, etc.*, and I adopted, instead of them, *I conceive, I apprehend, or I imagine* a thing to be so or so, — for the last fifty years no one has ever heard a dogmatical expression escape me.”²⁹ In his second important statement in the epilogue to *Hitel* Széchenyi tried to focus the attention of his countrymen on a future they might shape; he begged them to turn away from the unchangeable past. Dedicated as he was to public affairs, he tried to prepare people's minds in Hungary for changes by publicizing the issues. Széchenyi emulated Franklin's example: “I endeavored to prepare the minds of people by writing on the subject in the newspapers.”³⁰ They both fought for a better future by “proposing new institutions.”³¹

A comparison of the list of their respective major achievements displays amazing similarities. On Franklin's side: Fire Company, Subscription Library, Orphan House, Philosophical Society, University and Hospital. On Széchenyi's side: the National Casino, the regulation of the Danube, the Chain Bridge linking Buda and Pest, and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Széchenyi's dedicated service to regenerate his country was an achievement similar to that of the Philadelphian nation-builder. Though under very different circumstances, ultimately both statesmen were involved in building a nation, Franklin in the literal sense of the word, Széchenyi indirectly but not less intensively. He certainly had the vision of a regenerated Hungary, and had a lion's share in its creation. Notwithstanding Hungary's calamity of 1849, and Széchenyi's personal tragedy, Hungary became a better country, and the Count's contribution to its development cannot be denied.

In the second half of the nineteenth century more accurate, detailed, and authentic information about Franklin came to the attention of Hungarian scholars, mainly from German and French sources. More and more original Hungarian works appeared, dealing with United States history, and all of them paid tribute to Franklin's statesmanship. The most objective and informative biography reaching Hungary was F.A.A. Mignet's *Vie de Franklin*, translated in 1874 as *Franklin élete* [Franklin's Life].³² However, this objective evaluation of the free-thinker, cautious politician, and utilitarian businessman, seems to have had little or no impact on the Hungarian Franklin image. As Franklin's appeal reached a wider audience, his image lost its public and political features. The versatile real person came to be distorted into a one-dimensional figure, an exemplary religious and virtuous idol showing people the safe and sure way to a successful personal life. In trying to assess this development, we have to consider two facts. One was the political situation in Hungary. In 1867, a political compromise was reached with the Habsburgs. Under the radically different circumstances created by the *Ausgleich*, Hungarian politicians lost interest in the United States as a democratic model state. As a result, the ardent political involvement with the young republic, so characteristic of many outstanding public figures in the Reform Age, like Sándor Farkas Bölöni, Miklós Wesselényi, István Széchenyi and Lajos Kossuth, also declined. The other important fact to be considered was the change of the Franklin image in America. As the United States entered a new phase, Franklin, the successful businessman, overshadowed Franklin, the Founding Father, and he came more and more to be identified with Poor Richard who "made good." Also, all over Europe, Franklin came

to be regarded as the archetype of the successful American businessman.

The only Hungarian contribution on Franklin in the second half of the century with some political overtones came from István Türr, a former participant in the 1848–49 War of Independence. He returned to his homeland on a pardon arranged by Queen Victoria. Türr was a freemason, hence his interest in Franklin. On the Budapesti Iparoskör's [Budapest Craftsmen's Association] request, he delivered a lecture about Franklin on 16 November 1880 to an audience of craftsmen. Türr recognized the special interest of his audience, and he talked about Franklin, the self-made man. With the number of hopeful emigrants from Hungary increasing, the image of the self-made man came more and more to be associated with America. In the same year, Türr's lecture was published as *Franklin Benjámín élete és tanairól* [On Benjamin Franklin's Life and Teachings].³³

The dominant tone of the approach to Franklin in the second half of the nineteenth century was set by László Szalay's biography, published in the series, *Statusférfiak és szónokok könyve* [Book of Statesmen and Orators] in 1850. Szalay emphasized the success-story aspect of Franklin's life. He took extremely seriously the American's concern with being and appearing honest. Franklin had written in his *Autobiography*: "In order to secure my credit and character as a tradesman, I took care not only to be in *reality* industrious and frugal, but to avoid the appearance to the contrary."³⁴ Franklin, the tradesman and businessman, was to address himself to a wide audience in Hungary during this period.

It is certainly significant that in 1854, its first year, *Vasárnapi Újság* published a translation of Franklin's "Father Abraham's Speech."³⁵ *Vasárnapi Újság* was a popular magazine published for an unsophisticated audience. Its interest in Franklin testifies to the fact that his name was a household word in Hungary, and that his appeal had shifted from the intellectuals to a less educated public. In 1873, *Vasárnapi Újság* was acquired by the Franklin Társulat [Franklin Society], founded in the same year for the purpose of popularizing knowledge in Hungary. It could not have chosen a better symbol for such an enterprise than the name of the Philadelphian who had dedicated so much energy to "conveying instruction among the people," and who had tried to disseminate knowledge through his *Almanacks*.³⁶ The contributions of the Franklin Társulat during its many decades of existence were enormous. Not surprisingly, in 1873 *Vasárnapi Újság* published János Dömötör's "Franklin Benjámín élete" [The Life of Benjamin Franklin], a biography stressing industry, honesty and success.³⁷

Another popular publication, *Kis Nemzeti Múzeum*, also propagated Franklin's image as the exemplary, successful, virtuous businessman. In its fourth number in 1873, it included what was described as a second edition of an anonymous work, "Franklin Benjámín élete és bölcsessége" [Benjamin Franklin's Life and Wisdom], a writing vying with the others in its moralizing tone.³⁸ It is noteworthy that this piece followed another moralizing story in the same issue, Heinrich Zschokke's "Goldmacherdorf" [Goldmaking Village].

All these works featured much correct information, yet distorted the true and complex Franklin image by unduly emphasizing certain features in the character and life of this many-sided personality. Since Franklin was remarkably versatile, his figure lent itself easily to distortion by eager but well-intentioned interpreters who wanted to educate the unsophisticated public. A good example of this tendency was a book written by a Lutheran minister, Vilmos Győry, entitled *Egy igaz polgár élete* [The Life of a True Citizen] in 1869. The Lutheran Society republished it in 1927 in its series "Heroes of Christianity."³⁹ This time, the title was slightly altered to *Franklin Benjámín, egy igaz polgár élete*. In the preface, Győry claimed to have based the book on Franklin's *Autobiography*. His main point was to prove that one can be simultaneously honest and rich. Claiming to have followed the *Autobiography*, Győry presented Franklin as a religious person. He certainly disregarded some of Franklin's confessions about his religious beliefs. "My indiscreet disputations about religion," the American wrote at one point, "began to make me pointed at with horror by good people as an infidel atheist." Later Franklin confessed: "I soon became a thorough Deist."⁴⁰ To describe him as a hero of Christianity was to stretch the truth exceedingly.

III

The twentieth century brought no dramatic change in Franklin's Hungarian image. Besides routine references in history and physics textbooks, he is still very much a writer for the young. The conclusion of the most recent article on Franklin in Hungary is relevant from this point of view. Katalin Halácsy ends her brief survey by saying: "That grandpa in his hexagonal specs can still teach the younger generation the way to live an honest life."⁴¹ Symbolically, the first Hungarian contribution on Franklin in the twentieth century came from an educator. On 16 May 1906 Ferenc Kemény delivered a lecture to the Magyar Tanítók Egyesülete [Hungarian Teachers' Association], titled "Frank-

lin Benjámín.” The lecture was later published in *Magyar Pedagógia*.⁴² Kemény drew a realistic image of Franklin the pedagogue, the self-educated man, a person concerned with universal education, including women. The Teachers’ Association’s special interests naturally limited Kemény’s approach to only one aspect of the versatile Franklin.

It was Franklin, the public figure, who got lost somewhere along the way. Consequently, it was refreshing to see Franklin linked with Washington in the most detailed twentieth-century analysis of his personality in Lajos Joób’s *Washington és Franklin*, published in 1910.⁴³ Being a free-mason, the author’s interest in Franklin was self-evident. The great merit of Joób’s 186-page biography lay in its emphasis on the many-sidedness of Franklin’s career. The author did not curtail the Franklin image to any particular endeavor, though he stressed the features most compatible with his own attitudes. Joób’s contribution was unique in Hungary.

The twentieth century has seen several editions of Franklin’s works and some biographies published, mainly for the young. Following a long line of more or less complete translations of *The Way to Wealth* (usually included in various compilations of moralizing pieces), a separate edition appeared in 1914, *A gazdagodás útja amint azt a szegény Richárd, egy pennsylvániai kalendáriumban világosan megmutatja* [The Way to Wealth as Clearly Shown by Poor Richard in a Pennsylvanian Almanac].⁴⁴ In his preface, Mihály Láng, the translator, quoted several pages from the *Autobiography* which referred to *Poor Richard’s Almanack*.

In spite of the many allusions to, and occasional quotations from the *Autobiography*, no Hungarian translation of Franklin’s work was published before 1921. Pál Pruzsinszky produced the first Hungarian version, *Franklin Benjámín önéletrajza* [Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography*], sponsored by the Franklin Society.⁴⁵ The book’s preface was a further contribution to the distorted image of an exemplary, virtuous man. Very soon after, Ödön Wildner published a second translation under the same title.⁴⁶ Neither of these translations was complete. The first full translation had to wait until 1961. In *Franklin Benjámín számadása életéről* [Benjamin Franklin’s *Account of His Life*], Tibor Bartos produced an excellent version of this early masterpiece of American literature.⁴⁷ The translation did not necessarily mean any increased interest in Franklin. It was due rather to the endeavor in the 1960’s and 1970’s to compensate for the serious neglect in making American masterpieces accessible to Hungarian readers. A Magyar version of the *Autobiography* certainly was long overdue.

Bartos’s translation of that work marked the climax. What remains

to be said is rather on the negative side. Early in the century, *Vasárnapi Újság* dutifully tried to revive interest in Franklin with a short biography, *Franklin Benjámín élete* [Benjamin Franklin's Life].⁴⁸ Later, fictional biographies by well-known German and French novelists were made available in translation. In 1948, the Franklin Society published *Franklin, egy optimista élete*, translated from André Maurois's *Franklin, la vie d'un optimiste* [Franklin, Life of an Optimist].⁴⁹ The book was intended for children. Lion Feuchtwanger's *Füchse im Weinberg* was translated three times,⁵⁰ in 1948 by Ferenc László as *Állanférfiak, cselszövők, bohémek* [Statesmen, Schemers, Bohemians], in 1953 by Győző Határ as *Rókák a szőlőskertben* [Foxes in the Vineyard], and in 1963 by Tibor Déry as *Rókák a szőlőben* [Foxes in the Vineyard]. The Franklin Society may have chosen Maurois's book because of its subject, but the interest in *Füchse im Weinberg* was evidently prompted by Feuchtwanger's fame rather than Franklin's.

The original Hungarian contributions to Franklin biographies were intended for children, thus for a limited audience. In 1957, Endre Sós presented an elderly Franklin narrating his life, in *Aki az égtől elragadta a villámot* [The Man Who Took the Lightning from Heaven].⁵¹ An abridged version of the same book appeared in 1970, co-authored with Magda Vámos, and with a new title, *Franklin vagyok Philadelphiából* [I am Franklin from Philadelphia].⁵² The book was rewritten in order to accommodate the series "Nagy emberek élete" [Lives of Great Men].

Though Hungary dutifully celebrates all the commemorations recommended by the International Peace Council, the 1956 Franklin Year produced nothing of any importance. An article by Antal Mátyás, "Franklin Benjámín közgazdasági nézetei" [Benjamin Franklin's Economic Views]⁵³ commands interest, because it attempted to establish Franklin among the forerunners of Marxism. His versatility may have lent itself to various interpretations and distortions, but it is difficult to see him as an early Marxist.

In the twentieth century, Franklin's image underwent great changes in America. The contradictions and ambiguities in his personality were exposed, and explored, and consequently, a complex, sometimes controversial figure emerged. What makes the present Hungarian image so inadequate is the lack of any honest attempt to construct a complex image of a truly great historical personality. Marxists could hardly be expected to appreciate Franklin, the successful businessman, but Franklin, the participant in the American War of Independence, should still command their interest, even if he was not a revolutionary. The

contradictions and paradoxes in his character lend themselves easily to a dialectical interpretation and his negative views on religion must endear him to all Marxists. Indeed, it is surprising that no Hungarian Marxist has taken up the challenge to present a Marxist view of Benjamin Franklin.

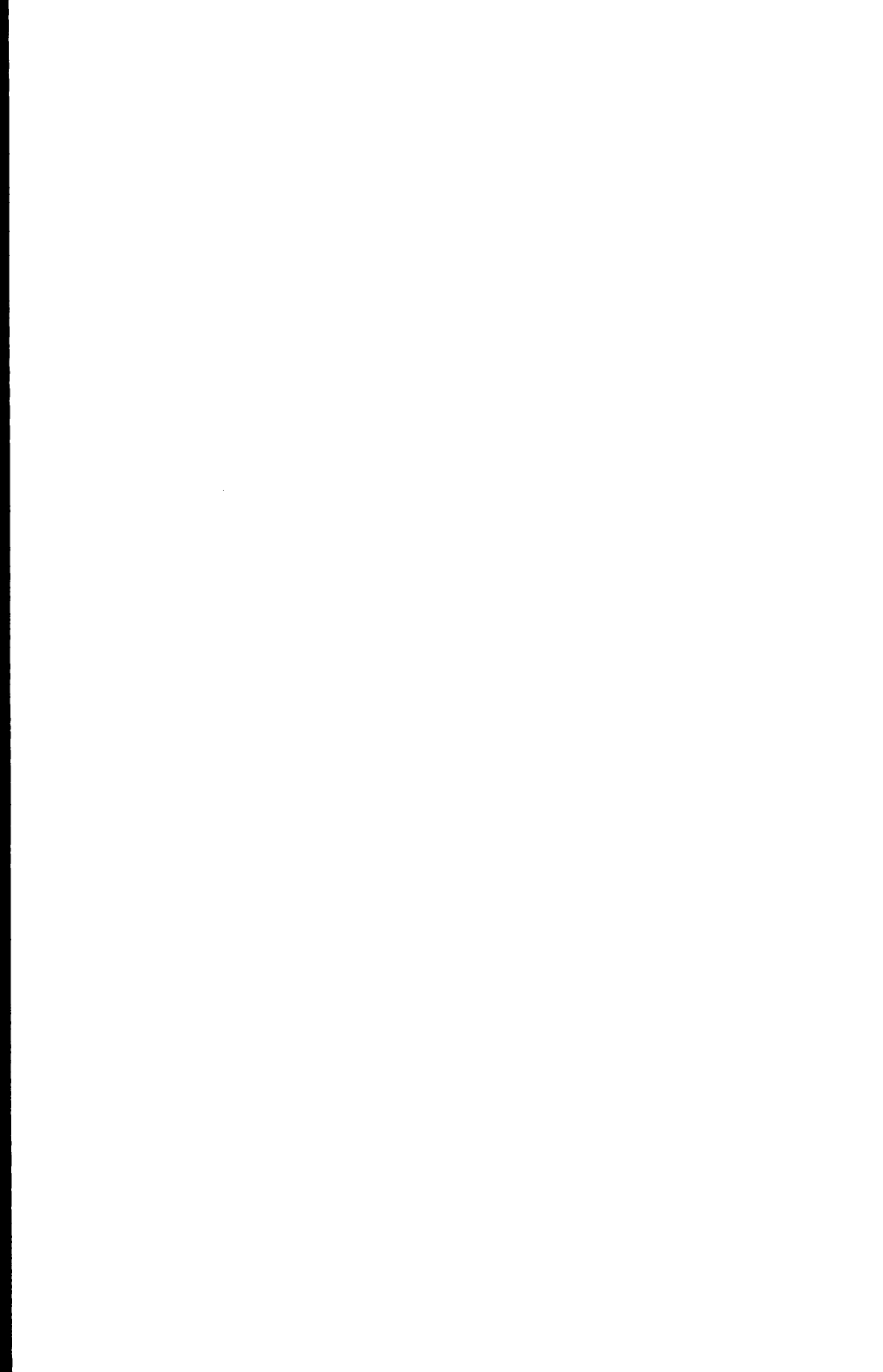
To sum up, in the Hungarian reception of Franklin we can discern a pattern of a changing image matching a changing audience. Franklin's extreme versatility has enabled different ages and different audiences to choose those aspects in his character which most closely corresponded with their needs. At no time has Franklin been presented to Hungarians in his full complexity. In the eighteenth century he attracted only members of the intellectual élite. They respected and admired him as an outstanding scientist and as an exceptional public figure who devoted his life to the public weal. This image survived in the nineteenth century among some of the greatest Hungarian patriots, such as Bölöni, and Széchenyi. But the nineteenth century also witnessed the broadening of Franklin's appeal on the social scale. Hand in hand with this development came a definite change in emphasis in the evaluation of Franklin. The scientist and the politician were replaced by the Poor Richard image. His personal success story overshadowed his contribution to the public good. Those trying to popularize the exemplary, virtuous Franklin cited *The Way to Wealth* rather than the entire *Poor Richard's Almanack*. This is a pity. Whereas Father Abraham's Speech championed only the prudent and sober virtues of hard work and thrift, the *Almanack* covered much wider ground. Besides disseminating knowledge and encouraging private virtues, Franklin also tried to educate people to be good citizens: "Nature expects Mankind whould share/ The Duties of the publick Care."⁵⁴ In nineteenth century Hungary, the colorful, many-sided, flesh-and-blood Franklin was whittled down and distorted into a symbol of bourgeois virtues. No attempt was made in the twentieth century either to revitalize or rectify the Franklin image. Though Franklin would never have denied those virtues, they were only a part of his many-sided character. After all, he spent twenty years in establishing himself as a businessman, and forty in serving the public good. It is this combination and this proportion which make Franklin an uncomfortable figure and an unlikely idol in today's Communist Hungary.

NOTES

1. Henry Bamford Parkes, *The American Experience* (New York: Random House, 1959), p. 62.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 62–63.
3. Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography* (New York: Lancer Books, 1968), pp. 237–238.
4. The original, dated January 13, 1777, is among the Benjamin Franklin Papers in the American Philosophical Society's Library.
5. Jared Sparks (ed.), *The Works of Benjamin Franklin* (Boston: Tappan and Whittemore, 1836) 8: 303–304. The "Royal Academy" may be a reference to the university founded in Nagyszombat by Cardinal Péter Pázmány in 1635 and operating between 1777 and 1790 in Buda.
6. Franklin Papers, no. 2616, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
7. István Gál, "Zinner János kassai professzor, Benjámin Franklin barátja és amerikai függetlenségi dokumentum-gyűjteménye 1782-ből" [John Zinner, Professor in Kassa, Benjamin Franklin's Friend and His Collection of Documents about the American War of Independence from 1782], *Irodalmi Szemle* 13 (1970): 638–644.
8. Johann Zinner, *Merkwürdige Briefe und Schriften der berühmtesten Generäle in America, nebst derselben beygefügeten Lebensbeschreibungen* (Augsburg, 1782).
9. *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*, 8: 303–304.
10. Oszkár Szimán, "Az első magyar nyelvű könyv az elektromosságról" [The First Hungarian Book on Electricity], *Fizikai Szemle* 10 (Aug. 1960): 252–255.
11. *A Mennykőnek mivoltáról s eltávozásáról való böltelkedés melyet deák nyelven írt, és most jeles másolásokkal és toldalékokkal megjobbitott Makó Pál, magyarázta pedig Révai Miklós.* [Consideration on the nature and departure of lightning, written in Latin, and now improved with excellent illustrations and supplements, by Pál Makó and translated by Miklós Révai]. Pozsony and Kassa: Mihály Landerer, 1781. See Francis S. Wagner, "The Start of Cultural Exchanges between the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the American Philosophical Society," *The Hungarian Quarterly* 5 (April–June, 1965): 91.
12. *Mercur von Ungarn* (1786), p. 977.
13. Jolán Zemplén, *A magyarországi fizika története a XVIII. században* [History of Physics in Eighteenth-Century Hungary] (Budapest, 1964), p. 47.
14. Kálmán Benda (ed.), *A magyar jakobinusok iratai: Naplók, följegyzések, röpiratok* [The Hungarian Jacobins' Documents: Diaries, Notes, Leaflets] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1952–1957) 1: 139. On this subject see also Denis Silagi, *Jakobiner in der Habsburger Monarchie: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des aufgeklärten Absolutismus* (Vienna: Herold, 1962), and Paul Bódy, "The Hungarian Jacobin Conspiracy of 1794–95," *Journal of Central European Affairs* 22 (1962): 3–26.
15. Benda, *op. cit.*, 2: 359.
16. *Ibid.*, 1: 354.
17. Csokonai Vitéz Mihály, *Minden munkája* [Complete Works], ed. Balázs Vargha, 2 vols. (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1973), 2: 809–810.
18. *Hadí és más Nevezetes Történetek*, December 10, 1790; *Bétsi Magyar Kurir*, July 29, 1790.

19. Béla Dezsényi and György Nemes, *A magyar sajtó 250 éve* [Two Hundred and Fifty Years of the Hungarian Press] (Budapest: Művelt Nép Könyvkiadó, 1954), p. 30.
20. Published in Pest by Trattner, 1816.
21. Published in Pest in 1836.
22. Published by Lajos Tichy in Nagyvárad in 1848.
23. *Erdélyi Muzéum* (1818), pp. 20–78.
24. Sándor Farkas Bölöni, *Utazás Észak Amerikában* (Kolozsvár, 1834).
25. On this subject see George Barany, *Stephen Széchenyi and the Awakening of Hungarian Nationalism, 1791–1841* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968); István Gál, “Széchenyi and the U.S.A.,” *Hungarian Studies in English* 5 (1971): 95–119.
26. László Szabó Bártfa (ed.), *Gróf Széchenyi István könyvtára* [Count István Széchenyi’s Library] (Budapest: 1873).
27. *Széchenyi Naplói* [Diaries], ed. Gyula Vizsota, 2 vols. (Budapest: 1926–1939) 2: 537.
28. *Ibid.*, 2: 716–721.
29. Franklin, *Autobiography*, pp. 135–136.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 185.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
32. F. A. Mignet, *Franklin élete*, trans. Attila De Gerando (Budapest: Kis Nemzeti Múzeum, 1874).
33. István Türr, *Franklin Benjámín élete és tanairól* (Budapest: Légrády testvérek, 1880).
34. Franklin, *Autobiography*, p. 107.
35. *Vasárnapi Újság* (1854): 238.
36. Franklin, *Autobiography*, p. 142.
37. *Vasárnapi Újság*, April 16, 1873.
38. *Franklin Benjámín élete és hőlcessége* (Budapest: Kis Nemzeti Múzeum, No. 4, 1873).
39. Vilmos Györy, *Egy igaz polgár élete* (Pest: Corvina Könyvkiadó Társulat, 1869); *Franklin Benjámín, egy igaz polgár élete* (Budapest: Luther Társaság, 1927).
40. Franklin, *Autobiography*, pp. 36 and 92.
41. Katalin Halácsy, “Benjamin Franklin’s Image in Hungary,” *The New Hungarian Quarterly* 17 (Winter, 1976): 121–25.
42. Ferenc Kemény, “Franklin Benjámín,” *Magyar Pedagógia*, 1906.
43. Lajos Joób, *Washington és Franklin* (Budapest: Kilián, 1910).
44. *A gazdagodás útja, amint azt a szegény Richárd egy pennsylvániai kalendáriumában világosan megmutatja*, trans. Mihály Láng (Budapest: 1914).
45. *Franklin Benjámín önéletrajza*, trans. Pál Pruzsinszky (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1921).
46. *Franklin Benjámín önéletrajza*, trans. Ödön Wildner (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa, 1927).
47. *Franklin Benjámín számadása életéről*, trans. Tibor Bartos (Budapest: Európa, 1961).
48. The biography appeared in the series “Vasárnapi könyv könyvtára” [Sunday Books’ Library] in 1921.
49. André Maurois, *Egy optimista élete*, trans. Mária Várady (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1948).
50. Lion Feuchtwanger, *Államférfiak, cselszövők, bohémek*, trans. Ferenc László (Budapest: Nova, 1948); *Róák a szőlőskertben*, trans. Győző Határ (Budapest: Új Múza Kiadó, 1953, reprinted 1956, 1958); *Róák a szőlőben*, trans.

- Tibor Déry (Budapest: Európa, 1963, reprinted, 1967). Some of the reprints appeared under a title originally used by another translator.
51. Endre Sós, *Aki az égtől elragadta a villámot: Franklin Benjámín életregénye* (Budapest: Móra Kiadó, 1957).
 52. Endre Sós and Magda Vámos, *Franklin vagyok Philadelphiából* (Budapest: Móra Kiadó, 1970).
 53. Antal Mátyás, "Franklin Benjámín közgazdasági nézetei," *Közgazdasági Szemle* 3 (1956): 453–460.
 54. Benjamin Franklin (publ.), *The Complete Poor Richard Almanacks*, reproduced in facsimile (Barre, Mass.: The Imprint Society, 1970), p. 205.



REVIEW ARTICLES

A Traditional Historian's View of Hungarian History

S. B. Vardy

Küldetés. A magyarság története [Mission. The History of the Magyars]. By Ferenc Somogyi. (A magyar öntudat forrásai/The Sources of Hungarian Consciousness I.) Cleveland, Ohio: Karpat Publishing Company, 1973. 656 pp. Numerous maps, illustrations, tables, \$12.00.

To write a brief factual account of an institution's history is not an insurmountable task for a trained historian. Many of them can also produce respectable monographs on limited topics — be these biographies of historical figures, or detailed studies on limited problems in history. To produce a major and complex synthesis of a nation's history, however, is quite another matter. Usually, only mature scholars can tackle such undertakings with a reasonable hope of success. Not that others have not made such attempts. But the results were usually feeble chronological summaries, with little or no understanding of the forces and major trends of the nation's history.

If we look back in the history of Hungarian historical studies, starting with the emergence of "scientific" historiography in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, we note that only a handful of major (mostly multivolumed) syntheses of Hungarian historical developments have appeared. These were written either by such exceptionally gifted historians as L. Szalay (1813–1864), M. Horváth (1809–1878), I. Acsády (1845–1906), H. Marczali (1856–1940), B. Hóman (1885–1951) and G. [J.] Szekfű (1883–1955), or by a group of outstanding scholars under the direction of a gifted organizer, such as S. Szilágyi (1827–1899).¹ The most exceptional among these summaries was undoubtedly Hóman's and Szekfű's joint eight-volume (later five-volume) *Magyar History* (1928–1934),² which is still to be surpassed in its sheer brilliance as a synthesis of Hungarian historical developments.