

these details together. His achievement is all the greater, as he has no real predecessors. Except for slight articles and occasional references in studies dealing with Anglo-Hungarian relations, no one has dealt with this topic as yet. We can only wish and hope that someone will do a similar study on the reception of Hungarian literature in North America. Dr. Czigány's work should also appear in English. In that case it may be advisable to bring it up to date by including the scholarly publications since 1965, which is the date of the completion of his manuscript.

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*People in the Tobacco Belt: Four Lives.* By Linda Dégh. Ottawa: National Museum of Man, Mercury Series, Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies, Paper No. 13, 1975. xx, 277. 10 plates. \$3.50.

This volume is of compelling interest for two reasons. First, as a restatement of the author's theory of folklore studies as applied to an interpretation of immigrant life in North America. As here developed, this conception not only defines the viewpoint of the folklorist, but suggests a holistic perspective for historians, ethnologists and in fact for all students of North American cultures. Secondly, the volume makes available four fascinating life histories of Hungarian immigrants to Canada, enriched by the discriminating notes and comments of the internationally known folklore scholar. These documents constitute valuable primary sources of Hungarian immigrant life and of Canadian social reality. But beyond that they demonstrate how the approach proposed by Linda Dégh can result in a refined interpretation of the immigrant experience. Not only students of Hungarian immigrant life, but all scholars interested in the interaction of cultures can benefit from the reading of this volume. For this reason, this publication of the National Museum of Man can be considered a landmark discussion of North American immigrant and ethnic studies.

The author outlines her conception of folklore research in the introduction. The first point discussed is the interpretation of life histories as sources of folklore and cultural expression. A refined and accurate interpretation of these documents requires, in the view of the author, the consideration of three essential criteria. In the first place, the integrity of these testimonies as original, personal and reflective statements of a life experience must be safeguarded. Secondly, in recording statements, maximum freedom of expression must be assured to the re-

spondent and the role of the interviewer must be minimized. Thirdly, care should be taken to arrange a natural setting for the interview, primarily by encouraging a spontaneous conversational tone and interaction with family members.

Another indispensable rule is to interpret the personal life of the respondent in the context of the cultural environment in which he lives and acts. This requires the scholar to realize the relationships and images between the individual ethnic culture and the larger society. The author suggests that in the Canadian case this would require an awareness that "people are conscious of their ethnicity and are as proud of their ethnic adherence as they are of their Canadian citizenship . . . there is lively communication between them without causing a merger and general discoloration of ethnic features." (p. xiii.)

Interpretations of life histories must also be attentive both to the general patterns and deeply personal elements communicated. Obviously, life histories provide us with information on the process of immigration. Yet, as the author reminds us, "the biased interpretation of factual events reveals both human creativity and the diversity of aspects of the dry facts recorded by historians." (p. xi.)

Finally, Linda Dégh defines the specific immediate context in which immigrant life can be studied most fruitfully. That is the interaction between region and ethnic community, a concept she has discussed in an earlier work.\* Region is seen as the particular occupational, economic, social, historical, and geographical context of the host country in which the social existence of the immigrant has evolved. An examination of the regional context is particularly important in interpreting the life rhythm of immigrant groups and their adaptation to the new society. In previous investigations, Linda Dégh has related the life of Hungarian immigrants to the Calumet region of Northern Indiana. In this study she interprets four Hungarian immigrants in the context of the tobacco farming district of Ontario. Her attempt to relate personal experiences to this particular environment explains to a large extent the vitality and realism of the source materials recorded.

The main body of the volume presents the text of the four life histories with the author's notations. Each personal statement provides the full text of the interview as translated by the author. In addition, each statement is accompanied by an introduction to the present environment of the respondent, an ethnographic description of the narration, and an analytical appraisal of the folklore, language and personality of the narrator.

It appears most useful to comment on the personal statements by

reviewing their contributions to several key issues of Canadian immigrant life. It should be added that these comments reflect not so much the viewpoint of the folklorist, but that of the historian of immigrant settlements. Such a viewpoint will suggest that these documents should be of interest to all students of the immigrant experience.

The first obvious value of these personal statements is their confirmation of the general process of immigrant life, illustrating a specific sequential pattern. Three of the statements reflect the generally familiar pattern of immigrants who arrived in Canada in the 1920's. They inform us that they settled in the western provinces as agricultural laborers. Then followed a period of transition, characterized by search for satisfactory employment, marriage, adjustment to the new society, migration, and in many cases acute dissatisfaction. Finally all three immigrants settled in the Ontario tobacco belt. They entered the stage of retirement there at the time of the interviews. Within this common pattern, however, an infinite number of personal, occupational, temporal, and locational variations appeared. These variations constitute the crucial explanation of the motives, lives and meanings of immigrant life as reflected in these personal histories.

One of the highly significant variations is that of motivation to emigrate to Canada. These personal testimonies tell us a great deal about this issue. The three testimonies suggest that the generally familiar motive of East European peasant migration was involved: to earn money for the payment of debts and for the purchase of landholdings in their native land. Two cases, however, reveal an additional, highly prevalent motive that became important as a result of World War I. The annexation of formerly Hungarian territory to Rumania forced many Hungarians, particularly of military conscription age, to leave Transylvania and to emigrate to Canada. One respondent explained:

You were asking: why did we come here from Transylvania? Because the Romanians treated us abominably. And they ran away so that they could dodge the draft. There were many of us here from Transylvania, only fifty were my friends from the neighbor communities and none of them served in the Romanian army. All were about eighteen or twenty years old . . . There were 320 of us on the same boat. . . None of them were over twenty. . . They mistreated us in the Romanian army and of those who came to our village after discharge, one became deaf, they broke the nose of the other. (p. 235.)

Another theme reported in these personal testimonies is the critical period of the transition stage between arrival in Canada and permanent settlement. For some, this period was brief and merciful, as in the case

of the respondent who purchased his tobacco farm ten years after arrival. Others spent decades migrating and working in the western provinces. The second respondent spent more than thirty years in the agrarian areas of Saskatchewan and Alberta, experiencing numerous hardships, disappointments and constant discouragement before finally settling down in the tobacco belt in 1958 at the age of 60. Obviously these two immigrant lives are vastly different. While the former rightly considered his transitional phase a prelude to successful tobacco farming, the second informant spent virtually his whole life in a series of occupational misadventures. Still another case is that of an intelligent and clever Székely immigrant. Assisted by an extensive network of Transylvanian kinsfolk, he found urban employment near Montreal throughout the 1930's, enabling him to purchase a tobacco farm in 1941. He remembered his period of transition as a period of deep personal and economic satisfaction. Such an experience played a role in his success as a tobacco farmer and entrepreneur.

The most complex issue raised in these personal histories is the question how success and failure as an immigrant can be explained. Stated more specifically, what elements are responsible for determining the fulfilment or failure of immigrant hopes for a better life? At least three elements or circumstances appear to be decisive. First is the crucial role of family-kinship networks. They assist arriving immigrants in adjustment to Canadian life, but also provide vital information, advice, personal companionship, and economic support. John Kósa, the most perceptive student of Hungarian immigration to Canada, has documented the unquestioned importance of this process.\*\* The personal life histories recorded by Linda Dégh confirm the key role of these networks in the success of immigrants. The most convincing example is that of the Székely immigrant noted earlier: throughout his Canadian life strategically placed relatives or villagers assisted him in Alberta, Montreal and Delhi.

Second, it is vital for the immigrant to relate to the regional socio-economic environment. The tobacco belt offered favorable opportunities to immigrants capable of disciplined work and entrepreneurship, particularly if they entered the area in the 1930's or 1940's. A combination of circumstances related to the characteristics of the region explain these opportunities. Economic conditions, land prices, social ties among those who settled earlier, good advice received, length of land tenure determined in significant ways success or failure.

Thirdly, as the author emphasizes, the social ethic of the immigrant played a role. The fourth respondent in her collection, a peasant family

who came to Canada after 1956, had great difficulties adjusting to the commercial, profit-centered, non-supportive economic and social scene in Canada. Throughout their life they had preserved the puritan, village-oriented, non-commercial ethic of the impoverished proud peasant. In Communist Hungary, they had lived a community-centered life in a Budapest industrial district. After several misadventures, they obtained a share-tenancy in the tobacco belt. Their deeply held social views, forbidding commercial speculation and profit-centeredness, coupled with their social and psychological isolation in Canadian society, produced a sense of failure and discouragement, which persisted even fifteen years after their arrival in Canada.

We have commented on only some of the most visible issues raised in these immigrant life histories. They demonstrate the rich informational and conceptual contributions of this form of immigrant source material to an understanding of Canadian and North American immigrant experience. They suggest also that the proposed theory of research outlined by Linda Dégh presents a viable and refined avenue of exploring the interaction between immigrant and North American cultures.

\*Linda Dégh, "Approaches to Folklore Research Among Immigrant Groups," *Journal of American Folklore*, 79 (1966): 551-556.

\*\* John Kósa, *Land of Choice: The Hungarians in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957.

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*En is voltam jávorfácska. . .* \* By Sári Megyery. Paris: Magyar Műhely, 1975. Pp. 383. \$8.00.

Ours is the golden age of memoirs, but Sári Megyery's autobiography is more than mere reminiscence of yet another immigrant. It is a thorough exploration of a tantalizingly exciting life, an authentic mirror of an equally fascinating era and a valuable document about several outstanding figures of the Hungarian literary renaissance between 1920 and 1938. The writer, like Puck, hops from lover to lover, from country to country, mesmerizing the reader who dizzily follows the meteoric career of this extraordinary woman. Ambivalence in her attitude is apparent throughout the book: she alternates between yearning nostalgia and sharp criticism of her social class. She delivers her chronicle with scathing sincerity; thus her story becomes a moving human credo as well as reliable literary source material.