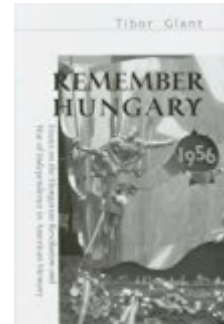


Tibor Glant. *Remember Hungary 1956: Essays on the Hungarian Revolution and Wars of Independence in American Memory*. Boulder: Eastern European Monographs, 2007. 250 pp. \$50.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-88033-616-1.

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The 1956 Hungarian Revolution Viewed from an American Perspective

Tibor Glant, professor of history at the University of Debrecen in Hungary, is the author of this historical examination of the reaction within the United States to the Hungarian Revolution of 1956—a topic extremely ambitious in scope, to which in great part he does justice. Glant introduces his topic in the preface by saying that the 1956 Hungarian Revolution is the single best-known Hungarian historical event in the United States. He is absolutely correct as the American public has had limited knowledge or interest in the history of Central and East Europe. In this regard Hungary has always been in the same situation as the surrounding countries. Because of the capitals of Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Romania (Belgrade, Budapest, and Bucharest), it has often been hard for the average person on the street in America to sort out in their minds the small nations of this region.

As an introduction to revolutionary movements in Hungary, István Deák, Seth Low Professor Emeritus at Columbia University, sets up the examination of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution from a historical perspective in his essay entitled “Revolutionary Traditions in Hungary,” a lively and thought-provoking piece in which he describes the revolutions of Hungary as being sparked “by the real or perceived grievances of the social elite” (p. xvii). In his conclusions, Deák makes the accurate observation that in 1956, as in the early 1700s through 1919, “armed intervention from abroad dissipated the dreams of the elite reformers while simultaneously securing the future of the elite to which the reformers belonged” (p. xxiii).

The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 sparked the interest of the American public as no other event during the period of the Cold War. It created an indelible impression on Western minds as they saw the revolution unfold in the new electronic media of their day. Many Americans remember the print and media images of the revolution; indeed, for Americans who saw the events unfold in 1956, it is still the most significant memory they have of Hungary. Therefore, it is not surprising that the fiftieth anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution spawned an unprecedented amount of literature in memory of the event in the West. In fact, it seems as if everyone who had even a peripheral connection with the revolution had been waiting to air their views—spawning a mini-industry of production with over forty books commemorating the event in English alone. A quick survey of booksellers lists over 140 books in print on the topic, although some date from immediately after the revolution, some from the period of regime change of 1989-91, and finally some from the fiftieth anniversary. This particular work by Glant is a result of a research project for the fiftieth anniversary of the revolution commissioned by the Los Angeles based “Remember Hungary 1956” Committee of the California Hungarians, the University of Debrecen, and its later partner, Montclair State University.

Within the existing body of literature on the Hungarian Revolution, however, Glant’s work is unique, as he has chosen to analyze how the revolution was viewed through American eyes. He tells us that he “chose to fo-

cus on what seems to be a neglected aspect of the revolution: the American (non-Hungarian) memories of the events” (p. xii). To accomplish his survey he selected five areas of analysis through which he examines the reaction and memory of the events of 1956 within the United States: first, media, using the preeminent daily newspaper in the United States, the *New York Times*; second, political memory, using the autobiographies of four American ambassadors to Hungary; third, academic memory, using thirty American history textbooks and their representation of 1956; fourth, literature, reviewing forty personal and journalistic recollections and works of fiction; and fifth, fine art, recounting the story of Vice President Richard Nixon’s trip to the Austrian-Hungarian border in 1956 and the painting in the Nixon Presidential Library by Ferenc Daday that resulted from his trip.

Glant provides a valuable addition to the scholarship on the Hungarian Revolution, yet one could perhaps quibble about two of his choices. The inclusion of the views of the revolution through fine art is really the history of Nixon’s fact-finding trip to the Austrian border after the revolution and the forty personal and journalistic recollections of the event are not entirely from an American point of view. Rather than providing an American perspective, as Glant intended, his choices under the topic of literature include mostly works by émigré Hungarian writers living not just in America but in Canada, New Zealand, and Britain. The theme of the book itself is rather large and unwieldy, and when he reaches beyond his stated research parameters, the essays lose their focus. However, the essays on media coverage, diplomatic memoirs, and academic memory are comprehensive overviews and show Glant’s thoughtful and thorough approach to both his research and the general topic at hand.

The first chapter deals with media reaction to the Hungarian Revolution and reviews the coverage that the *New York Times* gave Hungary from the outbreak of the revolution until the regime changes of 1989. While acknowledging that the *Times* took a more liberal slant toward the Cold War and Communism than perhaps other newspapers with national circulation, such as the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*, Glant chose the *Times* for his research as it published more articles on the topic than the other major papers combined. Glant reviewed 1,944 hits in the *Times* database related to Hungary and 1956 and ultimately narrowed it down to 500 that were relevant to his topic. However, he wisely notes, and this is a key point in evaluating all of the material provided in this book, “that we are not dealing with sim-

ply memory, but with strategies of remembering,” stating that the *Times* had devoted more than 1,500 articles to the revolution and related subjects for the first thirty-two years after the revolution and then only 300 in the next sixteen years (p. 2). The *Times* shifted its emphasis first from an anti-Communist stance during the height of the Cold War and the period of the Hungarian Revolution, to that of tolerance and then support for the János Kádár regime, and lastly to support of the thaw in relations between the Soviet satellites and the United States. By 1977 Hungary had become such a Western favorite among the Soviet satellites that the *Times* published a one-page tourist guide to the country. Glant discusses the terms used to describe the revolution (“revolt,” “uprising,” “counterrevolution,” and “armed insurrection”), and why to some it was not a revolution at all—a theme that he carries through to the essay on academic memory as well.

Glant categorizes ten types of articles in the *Times* relating to the revolution and to its many memories, and takes a close look at the different types of articles in each category: memory, country profiles of Hungary, political coverage, editorial comments, letters to the editor, Mindszenty articles, human interest stories, obituaries, book reviews, plays, movies, TV programs, and political advertisements. His thorough and insightful evaluation of the news articles within these categories is exceedingly valuable and provides vivid evidence of the dual approach that was being taken in regard to Hungary by the West—on the one hand, seeking rapprochement, on the other hand, continuing to rattle the sabers of the Cold War.

The second chapter deals with views of Hungary and the revolution through the memoirs of four American ambassadors to Hungary: Martin J. Hillebrand, who served from 1967 to 1969; Alfred Puhán who took over from Hillebrand in 1969 and served until 1973; Philip M. Kaiser, who served from 1977 until 1980; and Robie Marcus Hooker (Mark) Palmer, who served from 1986 to 1990. All four memoirs were published after 1989, although Puhán’s book was already in print and he was able to only insert comments on the change of regime. Each ambassador had a distinct view and thus a different account of their tenure. For each, the 1956 revolution had a different meaning, although Hillebrand and Puhán, being closest in service to 1956, had a strong emotional attachment to the revolution and its legacy. Kaiser was pro-Kádár and a supporter of the postrevolutionary Kádár regime, and Palmer, whose book while not a memoir in the true sense as it deals with democracy and

ousting dictators, ties into his experiences in Hungary. The greatest contrast in the ambassadors and their views appears to be between the pro-Communist Kaiser and Palmer, who marched with the opposition on March 15, 1989, the national holiday that honors the Hungarian uprising against the Austrians in 1848. Glant presents each ambassador's view of his tenure and his reminiscences of the Hungarian Revolution concisely and with insightful analysis.

The essay on academic memory, the third chapter, evaluating American college history textbooks on the Hungarian Revolution is an extremely valuable contribution not just to the history of the revolution but also to the analysis of history textbooks of our day. Glant provides us with a leitmotif (the revolution) with which to examine the objectivity and accuracy of current history textbooks. Sadly, according to Glant's analysis, most fall short. In his research, Glant attempts to represent as many major textbook publishers as possible, not only to analyze texts that are used throughout the United States but also to evaluate different editions of some of these texts, particularly if they displayed an attitude shift in evaluating the Hungarian Revolution. He notes that clearly the revolution is the focal point in all histories of Hungary. Furthermore, he found that if Hungary is mentioned in history books at all it is "always in connection with the 1956 Revolution" and that the revolution is considered a formative event of the twentieth century (p. 88). Glant's survey included Western civilization textbooks, textbooks on twentieth-century world history, textbooks on European history in the twentieth century, Russian and Soviet history textbooks, textbooks on American foreign policy in the Cold War, and Eastern European history textbooks.

The essay on academic memory is fascinating as it provides insight into a key event and allows us to see how educators and writers of textbooks recount a single event in a variety of history textbooks, survey as well as more specialized books. They illustrate how a powerful memory of an event can linger in public consciousness. Glant's analysis is comprehensive and wide ranging, and he shows that the recounting of the event in history texts has been altered to suit the domestic political perspective within the United States. He makes the valid observation that "unconditional support for the Revolution rarely goes hand in hand with balanced historical accounts" (p. xiii).

In the fourth chapter, on how the revolution is viewed in English prose, Glant deviates from his stated goal of

presenting views of the Hungarian Revolution through American eyes by including accounts by Hungarian freedom fighters and American journalists in Hungary, personal narratives, family histories, novels, crime fiction, and juvenile literature. All of these works are available in English and many are by writers of Hungarian origin or background. It is understandable that he wanted to include many works of merit that were written by Hungarians, but by doing so, he does not adhere to the stated premise of the book, which makes the chapter, while interesting reading, off the point.

The last chapter deals with then Vice President Nixon's fact-finding trip to Germany and Austria between December 18 and 24, 1956, which Glant uses to recount a history of American involvement in and its relationship to the revolution as well as the American Refugee Relief. He recounts Nixon's brief part in the cause and finally the history of the Daday painting in the Nixon Presidential Library. This chapter as well seems to veer from the original premise of the book. Rather than researching the American programs that were initiated through various religious and philanthropic organizations that wanted to help with the resettlement of the some twenty-one thousand refugees who were admitted to the United States, Glant gives a history of the U.S. government's response and humanitarian aid provided to the refugees. One major omission is that while he mentions First Aid for Hungary, he does not mention that it was an organization initiated by Dr. Tibor Eckhardt and American Hungarians or that it was the first private initiative started by the American Hungarian émigré community to help their fellow Hungarian refugees. First Aid for Hungary was the first responder to the revolution setting up aid stations on the Austrian-Hungarian border for the refugees before the major multinational aid agencies arrived. Not only was First Aid for Hungary initiated by Eckhardt, one of the cofounders of the Smallholders Party, the largest opposition party in Hungarian parliament during the interwar and immediate postwar years, it was through C. D. Jackson at Dwight D. Eisenhower's request that former President Herbert Hoover was asked to serve as honorary chairman of the organization. While Glant tells us that Hoover may have been miffed that he was not the honorary chair of the aid organization established by the U.S. government which was headed by Tracy Voorhees, the fact is that Hoover actually opted for the honorary chairmanship of First Aid for Hungary, a private not for profit, over a role in the government aid organization.

Completing the book, a comprehensive range of com-

memorations related to the fiftieth anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution are listed in the appendix including governmental proclamations from the U.S. Congress and the White House, academic activities, and activities sponsored by Hungarian American communities. All of these will be valuable to researchers who want an in-depth examination of the Hungarian Revolution and its consequences. The sources cited in the book are extensive and well selected. This reviewer bemoans a lack of a bibliography, but acknowledges the wide range of

sources cited.

Although his broad choice for areas of analysis clearly posed a challenge, we must be grateful to Glant as he has taken a complex subject and fit into these categories a great deal of relevant research, thereby providing perspective on the Hungarian Revolution from the American point of view. In that he achieves his stated purpose and makes a real contribution to scholarship. This book is a valuable tool that can serve as a comprehensive guide to scholars of the period.

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