

András Gerő, ed. *The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy Revisited*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009. 200 pp. \$40.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-88033-650-5.

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## The World of Dualism in Hungarian View

The first of a series of publications envisaged by the Institute of Habsburg History in Budapest, this book is the fruit of a conference organized by the institute and the Italian Cultural Institute in 2007, with the intent to allow “some leading Hungarian historians ... to offer their reassessment of the world of the [1967] Compromise according to the precepts of their specialty.” Had others been invited, the editor András Gerő notes, a “somewhat different picture” might have resulted, but he argues that the nine essays in the collection offer “a generally accurate picture” of contemporary Hungarian assessments of the dualist monarchy (p. vii). Though the volume indeed provides some interesting perspectives, the slightly tentative claim also seems fitting. While aspects of political, economic, and cultural history are covered, there is no contribution on social history, whether older themes of elite, peasant, and working-class experience or more recent concerns with emerging bourgeois and metropolitan lifestyles. Religious, foreign political, and military matters are also absent, as are press and communications, so important in the period. Some gaps are understandable in a relatively small book, but cumulatively these seem surprising.

Gerő’s introduction provides a characteristically lively perspective on the monarchy’s heritage in European context. On the one hand, he emphasizes its advance in the dualist period into the realm of a modern bourgeois civilization, at least in aspiration, and is open to recent claims that established negative views of its prospects underestimate integrationist tendencies

present in the sphere of mass society. Yet on the other hand, on the theme of the monarchy’s famed multinationalism, he stresses the antagonisms of its component peoples and somewhat ironically sees, in the present conjunction of European Union mindedness and mutually distrustful national interests, the clearest heritage of the Habsburg Monarchy and its mix of illusion and reality. His choice of Adolf Hitler, Béla Bartók, and Švejk to characterize the Habsburg cultural heritage illustrates his suggestive approach.

Contributions on the economy from László Katus and György Kovér also touch on the common monarchy, with a Hungarian emphasis, particularly in the latter case. Katus’s detailed study of the customs union confirms and refines the long-standing theme of relative Hungarian advance under its operation, albeit at the slower rate of the latest overall recalculation of the gross domestic product (GDP) for both countries by Max Stephan-Schulze. Katus stresses that while the common market rested on the willingness of both sides to make concessions to foster their respective strengths, Hungary actually derived benefits not only for agriculture but also for its weaker industry, which was not the case for Austrian agriculture. Kovér’s study has a less familiar historiographical emphasis. It shows how Marxist doctrine inhibited Hungarian economic historians from broaching issues of prices, growth, and quantification until the 1960s, when contacts with American academia and Walt Whitman Rostow’s theories made an impact; quantification enabled a breaking out from ideological approaches, like the conflation

of political events (1848 and 1867) with economic turning points, and the preoccupation with political and social structures at the expense of market ones. Like Gerő, Kovér draws comparison with the present, noting how east European historians elsewhere disliked the emerging Hungarian discourse of pre-1918 economic integration in a common market as it did not take place on a basis of equality. Both pieces repay reading but do not make it easy.

In their political contributions, Éva Somogyi and Dániel Szabó give their topics, the political system of dualism and the Hungarian political system respectively, a narrower slant than their titles suggest. Somogyi parallels the economic contributors in playing down one-time views of the 1867 Compromise itself as the cause of what followed; rather, it was the consequence of preconditions. She gives an interesting example of Hungarian bridling at possible use of the delegations to remove even a foreign minister they disliked, opposing anything that might savor empirewide decision making. The theme, however, is well known, as is the Hungarian view that the Compromise was with Franz Joseph, not the Austrians. Fresher is the reminder that the Austrian liberals who favored cooperation with Hungary in 1867 were few and unrepresentative of Austrian opinion. Szabó's chapter concentrates on the formal maintenance of elitist liberal views that Hungarian parliamentarians and parliamentary processes owed nothing to parties, and on the resulting clash between theory and reality in what appears to have been, in Western comparison, an archaic constitutionalism. In a necessarily short piece one might have hoped for less concern with rather technical issues that do not, after all, emerge clearly, as in the relation between debating sections, committees, and the general committee in Parliament. The point that political development came more in parliamentarians' growing specialization than their representativeness is interesting, though Szabó takes it rather far. Whether József Kristóffy was right in 1905 to blame the narrow franchise for political divisiveness is dismissed by him as a "what if question," to be "relegated to the non-scientific, fantastic fiction area," since "in the given system only this franchise was operative." But if Hungary, as he states here, had a "pseudo two-party system" in which only one party had a chance of winning, it does not seem unduly speculative to posit that a more representative franchise might have produced more meaningful contests (p. 167). The question is how far change was resisted from self-interest, lack of imagination, or a rational intuition that dualist Hungary might not be reformable.

The most thought-provoking piece in the volume, despite some unclarity, is Attila Pók's appraisal of the radical democratic critique that was made by Oszkár Jászi, both of the Hungarian system and the Habsburg Monarchy. Speaking for Jászi's perspective in Pók's presentation was his insistence on the rule of law, personal freedom, and the inadequacy of independence without democracy. Yet he sees Jászi as using the same intemperate language against the regime as it did against its critics, and implies that his "uniformly negative" picture of the monarchy at a time when his group had "a noticeable effect on Hungarian public opinion" was not helpful (p. 119). There is the implication of the intellectual in politics, and of a group who realized their ideal solutions were unachievable but "did not want to employ the customary political tools in order to achieve their goals" (p. 127). One might wonder what "customary political tools" a party could use that had no members of Parliament in the gentry-dominated Parliament; Pók elsewhere appears to endorse Jászi's use of extraparliamentary mass pressure as a legitimate strategy relevant today. Similarly, there is some tension between the criticism of Jászi's harsh language and the final praise for him as, essentially, a moral (rather than political) beacon, when his language reflected his moral outrage. Again, the author implies that Jászi was unfair to the establishment, but does not directly face the question as to the accuracy of his criticisms of dualist Hungary's social and nationality policies. Zoltán Szász's essay, "The Nation-State in a Multinational Empire," is a well-informed and wide-ranging discussion, unusual in integrating both halves of Austria-Hungary. It understandably begins and concludes by recalling the potential of the monarchy as a multinational exemplar without disguising in the analysis the great practical problems. The failure of the Bohemian compromise of 1871 is rightly seen as an important factor in the eventual fate of the monarchy and a Hungarian role in this event rightly played down. Szász no doubt exaggerates István Tisza's substantive conciliatoriness to the Romanians before 1914, but the Hungarian nationality problem was probably insoluble, to which all sides contributed.

Cultural themes take up two chapters. Ernő Marosi writes lucidly on both the conceptual and the institutional problems involved in establishing national monuments and museums. Mihály-Szegedy-Maszák's concluding piece on the memory of the dual monarchy is a recondite study, centered on selected novels of Dezső Kosztolányi, Gyula Krúdy, and Sándor Márai, but with a level of minor detail at the expense of the broader role

and context of these writers which threatens to overshadow the treatment of the Habsburg theme.

Overall, non-Hungarian readers, particularly those not knowing Hungarian, will be grateful for the insights into Hungarian historiography offered in this volume. They reflect thinking unconstrained in theme and judgment by Communist orthodoxies, by which more condemnation of past nationalistic and neo-“feudal” sins was expected from Hungarians than from historians of the former “nationalities.” The generally quite positive appraisal of the monarchy represents a shift also from the old battle between pro- and anti-Habsburg camps that preceded communism, but it is no doubt too early to ex-

pect a full reevaluation of the tantalizingly complex dualist period in Hungary itself. Two points may be made. More concessions might be made for a presumably foreign readership, to avoid sentences like: “Only the most discerning reader would remember that it was in this paper [Egyetértés], on June 11, 1884, that Károly Eötvös nominated Lajos Kossuth as representative in the Nagyvárád electoral district” (p. 207). Second, rather too many verbal glitches have escaped detection in the English text. More attention in the future to these points should enhance the value of a very promising initiative whose further fruits Hungarianists and Central Europeanists will keenly anticipate.

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