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Gyorgy Peteri. *Academia and State Socialism: Essays on the Political History of Academic Life in Post-1945 Hungary and Eastern Europe.* Highland Lakes, New Jersey: Atlantic Research and Publications, 1998. x + 296 pp. $35.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-88033-398-6.

Reviewed by Sylvia M. Meloche

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This work consists of eight essays on the history of the state socialist academic regime in Hungary and Eastern Europe. The essays examine the political behavior of the academic elite, in Hungary, between 1945 and 1949 as it reacts to political and societal change; consider the strategy of professionalization of the members of the academy in Hungary in order to extricate themselves from the guise of Party soldier; and reflect on the former Soviet bloc in Europe and the role of research and development therein.

In a fascinating description of the forces that compelled the reformation of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the author uses detailed accounts of the proceedings, including references to the documents. The divorce of teaching from research manifested itself first among scientists, who agitated for the separation of specialized professional training and scientific research within the university. Their ideas echoed the Communist point of view. There was much discussion and disagreement among the branches of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences as to representation on a newly reorganized board and in the Academy itself.

Albert Szent-Gyorgyi presented a break-away plan for the natural sciences, based on agreements between the scientists and Communist politicians. The minister of education proposed a compromise that would have allowed for an Academy of the Humanities and Social Sciences as well as an Academy of Natural Sciences, both under the aegis of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. This was summarily rejected by Szent-Gyorgyi, who requested intervention by the government to remove the academies from unqualified hands. Eventually, the Academy was reunited, but compromises with the government were made in vain, for the Communists were determined to undermine the institution and funds were not forthcoming.

By the end of 1949, Hungary had been transformed into a Communist entity characterized by uniformity and central planning. Marxist-Leninist philosophy was imposed on the whole academic community and academia was dominated by the centralized political administration. Many members of the Academy of Sciences were in the Politburo. In fifteen tables with data taken from archived documents and almanacs as well as contemporary publications, Peteri details the rejuvenation of the Academy membership, the exclusion of the fine arts, the decline of the humanities, the dissolution of sociology as a viable research and teaching subject, and the ascendancy of the natural and applied sciences. The data also reflects the transfer of 121 members of the old Academy to consultative membership, without voting rights or active participation, and the increasing presence of Communist Party members. Both the con-

servatives and the radical reformers knew that the Academy of Sciences had to be changed, as it had the reputation of having been part of the old pre-Communist regime. The conservatives, from the humanities and social sciences, claimed that an unyielding search for truth was necessary to maintain academic activity, while the radicals, the natural scientists, made gestures toward the social responsibility of science and an "increased role for politics in academic matters."(108)

The radicals, led by Szent-Gyorgyi, were willing to compromise with the government in order to obtain funding for much-needed technical equipment. Drawing on the works of other authors[1], Peteri details Szent-Gyorgyi's life in order to explain his "Faustian deal" with the Communists. Szent-Gyorgyi became an innovator in biochemistry, winning the Nobel prize in 1937 for his work based on the identification of vitamin C. He was known for his eccentric manners and his liberal-democratic views, especially on education. He was elected to the Academy of Sciences in 1935, and became president of the University of Szeged in 1940. During his work in Cambridge on a Rockefeller Foundation (RF) grant, 1926 to 1930, Szent-Gyorgyi was exposed to papers presented by Soviets that depicted scientists with "such high status that their outlook would be incorporated into national policies...and [science would] contribute to the solution of basic social and economic problems." (116) He also heard J. D. Bernal criticize the plodding honorific societies and say they must be proactive in undertaking research and directing scientific advance. These ideas returned with Szent-Gyorgyi to Hungary and were used in his arguments for reorganization.

Moscow devised ways to keep Szent-Gyorgyi out of circulation during the postwar reemergence of Hungary's political life, sensing that his strong personal ties with the West would be detrimental to Soviet policies. Peteri believes the Party offered him support in his reorganization of scientific enterprises in Hungary and promised to aid him in gaining a top position in the domain of science, although this is not documented. Later in Moscow, Szent-Gyorgyi met with Eric Ashby of Australia and asked Ashby to contact the RF because he feared that a self-initiated contact would be stopped by the Russians. In 1947, the representatives from the RF attempted to visit Hungary to assess the need for support of the natural sciences but the government refused them visas. Szent-Gyorgyi, convinced that his support from and contacts with the West would never be realized under the present government, vacationed in Switzerland and never returned, later ending his scientific research in the United States.

The first Hungarian statistical yearbook after the war was published in 1948 and covered the years 1943-46. Afterward, until 1957, no yearbook was published and the compilations were kept only as strictly confidential manuscripts by the Central Bureau of Statistics. The only people who received statistical information were the top economic and political leaders of the country. Finally, in the mid-1950s, the Central Committee admitted to the importance of economic research. However, change was very slow in coming, and barriers to acquiring economic data persisted. Ph.D. candidates were told that they should not undertake projects that relied on confidential data. Although the Politburo granted the director of the Institute of Economics, Istvan Friss, access to the data necessary for research work, he pointed out that Institute work could not be published because of the restrictions on the data. Economists agreed that economic science must include the study of everyday practice, but without access to the facts, such studies could not be undertaken. As an indication of change in 1957, an omnibus yearbook (covering the period between 1949 and 1955) and the first comprehensive volume of economic statistics were published and made available to the public. Thereafter, the regular publication of statistical yearbooks resumed.

The proposal to establish the Institute of Economics was approved by the Politburo in November 1954. The Institute was organized in order to expand economic research and to study the "concrete events of economic development and the connections between them, and...draw ...theoretical conclusions from them." (p. 159) In the study of economics, empiricism replaced an epistemology based on contemporary beliefs. In the preface to the Institute's first yearbook, Friss wrote that the Institute did not invent principles, but used scientific research. He further stated that for years questions from Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, had been substituted for scientific work and that the Institute had abandoned such pseudoscience and had striven "conscientiously to gather facts, ...and to exhaustively study these....But we have never regarded anyone's statements as sacred....to the best of our capabilities, we have worked scientifically." (p. 163). This "New Course" or reform communist economics gave foundation to the separation of science and politics. In order to remain impervious to interference from the agitprop (agitation and propaganda) apparatus, economics had to be "practice-oriented" and free from "bourgeois theories." However, this disinclination toward theoretical knowledge impeded the realignment of Hungarian thought with international economic scholarship. Indeed, New Course economics research was undertaken in an anthropological manner and was preoccupied with fact-finding and description.

Although the leaders of the Institute of Economics of the Academy were mediators between Hungarian political leadership and the field of economics research, the young research associates were very important to its success. In a series of tables, Peteri compares the social background and party membership of the Institute members to those of scientific staff in all of higher education. The results show that the research associates of the Institute were Communists from intellectual or lower middle class backgrounds, and were well-educated. Many of the leaders as well as the young researchers had undergone conflicts with the Party, and Peteri details the circumstances surrounding some of the incidents.

The young researchers at the Economics Institute were a cohesive group, held together by their political beliefs, their discussions, and their interest in studying and using the top-secret economics documents. They called their corridor the *Gyepsor*, the name for the unproductive land inhabited by the poorest members of a village. Like the recurring waves of radical agrarian revolt that began in the village *Gyepsor*, the *Gyepsor* corridor was also a "nest of revolt." Increasingly, the researchers sided with Imre Nagy against Rakosi and, along with concurring visitors from other government offices, became critical of the Party leadership. It was here that the economic theory behind the 1956 revolution was prepared. These economists can be represented by the ideas of Zoltan Szabo, a sociographer who described the relationship between his field and politics as approaching problems from the base of reality rather than from a "biased theoretical point of view," and as acquainting themselves "with the country" rather than with the "teachings of the leader."(203)

In a sensitive aside, Peteri describes the crisis within the Party (1953-55) that resulted in the release of some of Matyas Rakosi's victims and how their unimprisoned compatriots dealt with feelings of betrayal in agreeing, albeit silently, to the victims' incarceration in the first place.

A study of the candidates (equivalent to a Ph.D.) and doctors of science in economics leads to observations concerning the reputation of the field. Using a series of tables, Peteri outlines the backgrounds of the economists who acquired degrees and of their assessors between 1953 and 1976. A majority of the students had a rural background and took advantage of social mobility through education offered by the new political regime; three-quarters of the group were members of the Communist Party. The assessors were

also members of the Party and of the state apparatus and were leaders in the universities and the Academy. The Institute of Economics was investigated in 1958 as a result of the defeated revolution of 1956, and talented scholars were removed from the Institute. Eventually, university departments of economics overtook the Institutes in strength and reputation.

Just a few years ago, state socialism "covered a fourth of the earth's surface and organized the everyday life of every third human being." It was a challenge to the capitalist world and offered the Third World an alternative to a market economy. (228) In the process of transformation, more was affected than the economy. Academies of Science have either disappeared or have lost power in East Central Europe. Universities have regained the right to confer degrees and an increasing share of governmental financial research support. During the state-socialist mode of modernity, all areas of social life had been subjugated to bureaucratic and political coordination and autonomy was gone from most institutions. Annual plans had delineated the output of science, education, and even the themes of literary output.

Today, patrons for the institutes have disappeared along with the branch ministries, and the institutes themselves are viewed warily as remnants of the old social order. The number of research workers in post-Soviet countries has dropped dramatically since 1989 -- between 25 and 54 percent. Global scientific standards now prevail, making certain branches of research unnecessary, e.g. "scientific socialism, "political economy of socialism," and those designed only to copy the West, e.g. computer research. Because the standard for research is set by entities having the most advanced equipment, certain areas of research in East Central Europe cannot compete. The brain drain of science researchers to the West or to more lucrative positions in industry contributes to the fall in the number of researchers. Those who emigrate are usually younger, and thus the growth and development of the affected fields of research is vastly impeded. When the United States increased science funding in the mid 1970s, it encouraged the faster growth of the material and technological base of Research and Development compared to numbers of personnel. This was not done by the Soviet Union, and today that area has the "lowest level of specific Research and Development expenditures per science worker among the industrially advanced countries." (252). In the future, in order to realize their potential, academic establishments in East Central Europe must introduce reforms and agree to share the limited resources.

The essays are stand-alone works, they are somewhat repetitious when considered as a whole, and they are rather disjointed in their makeup. The readers' knowledge of certain events is often assumed, e.g. the Rajk and "show" trials are often mentioned, but few details are given about the circumstances or the personnel involved. The book would be enhanced if the biographical glossary were supplemented by an annotated timeline. The footnotes are excellent in their depth of explanation and recommendations for further reading. Some grammatical inconsistencies and spelling (or typographical) errors are minor irritants throughout the book.

Despite its shortcomings, Peteri's book is useful because it puts forth much well-documented information that is not readily available in English. This reviewer also appreciated the author's tendency to write of unpleasantness without being unnecessarily graphic.

Note

[1]. See Ralph W. Moss, *Free Radical: Albert Szent-Gyorgyi and the Battle over Vitamin C* (New York: Paragon House, 1988); and Laszlo Csernay, ed. *In Commemoration of Albert Szent-Gyorgyi: In Memoriam Albert Szent-Gyorgyi* (Szeged: np, 1987).

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