

**Ferenc Glatz, ed.** *Hungarians and Their Neighbors in Modern Times, 1867-1950*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995. xx + 347 pp. \$42.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-88033-316-0.

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## An Unhappy Neighborhood

There could scarcely be a better moment than now for the editors of the series "Atlantic Studies on Society and Change" at Social Science Monographs to publish a work on the relationship between the Hungarians and their neighbors in modern times. Questions of the past and present treatment of Hungarian minorities in Slovakia, Romania, and the former Yugoslavia (and of Slovak, Romanian, Serb, and Croat minorities in Hungary) continue to bedevil relations between Hungary and its neighbors. A careful investigation of the history of Hungarian/non-Hungarian relations, especially one edited by the distinguished Hungarian historian Ferenc Glatz, is a welcome addition to the literature on this subject.

Professor Glatz, director of the Institute of History at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, is to be commended for compiling an impressive array of essays, thirty in all, from twenty scholars in Hungary and the United States. The contributors to this volume include ten current or former members or fellows of the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, as well as professors of history from the major educational institutions in Hungary, Senior Research Fellows from the Institute of Political History of the Hungarian Socialist party, and Professor Istvan Deak of Columbia University. Their contributions run the gamut from demographic studies heavy on hard

numbers, to conventional diplomatic and political history, to more interpretive essays. Many of the articles included in this anthology are quite good, especially those by Magda Adam, Istvan Deak, Janos Kende, and the late Gyorgy Ranki. For the reader unfamiliar with the details of Hungarian/non-Hungarian relations, Glatz's book provides a useful survey of events in which each topic is dealt with in a discrete and generally clear fashion.

Unfortunately, little is presented here that will not be familiar to specialists in the field and so not much is added to the debate among scholars. In contrast to the work of a new generation of scholars such as Laszlo Szarka's *Szlovak nemzeti fejlődés-magyar nemzetiségi politika 1867-1918* (reviewed on HABSBURG May 1996), much of the work presented here does not take into account new trends in historical analysis. Instead, Glatz's book (published originally in 1988 as *Magyarok a Kárpát-Medencében*, ie. *Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin*)[1] is an anthology of work by the generation that developed as historians during the Communist era. Despite the editor's desire to break new methodological ground, this work is more conventional in its approach to its subject matter.

Glatz's book offers an excellent opportunity to examine the complexities of the history of Hungarian/non-Hungarian relations, albeit from a

Hungarian perspective, in one brief volume. The essays provide relatively complete coverage of the period 1867-1950 (with exceptions noted below) and highlight some of the differences within the Hungarian historical profession over issues that remain important to both Hungarian and "neighbor" nationalists. For example, Glatz describes Hungarian nationalism in the last decades of the Habsburg Monarchy as "relatively tolerant" (p. xvi) when compared to nationalism in France, Germany, or Russia. This view might be popular with an audience that laments the dissolution of the Hungarian Kingdom, but hardly squares with the historical record. Zoltan Szasz's essay "Government Policy and the Nationalities" offers specific evidence, especially on the Lex Apponyi of 1907 (pp. 30-31), that contradicts Glatz's rosier version of events and helps to explain why majorities in the non-Hungarian nations were happy to leave the Kingdom in 1918.

If the current volume were typical of the genre, namely a collection of essays loosely grouped around a general topic, the inclusion of several fine articles and a bit of controversy between authors would be enough to pronounce the work a success. In this case, however, the editor attempts to achieve a higher goal and in reaching higher, ultimately fails to live up to the intentions expressed in his introductory essay. Glatz proposes that this volume should "provide the Hungarian public with a guide to a positive solution [to the problems posed by nationalist interpretations of the past] by means of a synthesis of the history of the coexistence of various ethnic groups within the Carpathian basin..." (p. xiii). His book fails to achieve this goal for several reasons.

First, Glatz argues that a different approach to the history of the Carpathian basin is necessary if the reader is to gain a clearer understanding of the issues involved. "It is imperative," he writes, "that we rid ourselves of the national bias in the historiography of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (p. xiv). If this is so, then why are there no con-

tributions in this volume from historians from the neighboring states? Anyone who has lived in East Central Europe or who works in this field knows just how difficult it is to raise the level of the historical debate above "national bias," and Glatz must surely know that many non-Hungarian readers in Slovakia, Romania, or the former Yugoslavia will be likely to dismiss this work right away as it includes contributions only from Hungarian (or expatriate Hungarian) scholars.

Second, if Glatz wished for this volume to increase the Hungarian public's understanding of the contentious aspects of the history of Hungary's relationship with its neighbors, why would one of the most contentious aspects of all—the Hungarian state's treatment of its national minorities in the territories reacquired after 1939—be mentioned only briefly in one essay (pp. 166-168)? Many Slovaks and Romanians still harbor grievances, real or imagined, against Hungary (and the Hungarian minorities in Slovakia and Romania) that hark back to the period 1939-1945. While these grievances may be no more or less justified than those of Hungarians who were expelled from their homes following the Second World War, any volume attempting to promote positive discussion of the larger question of Hungary's relations with its neighbors should deal with both topics in detail. One example of how this issue needs careful attention by scholars is a recently published book on the Slovak-Hungarian relationship that is on display (in its Slovak language version) in bookstore windows across Slovakia at the moment. In this book Hungarian actions in South Slovakia during the war are described in a lurid fashion not calculated to elevate the terms of the debate on this period in Slovak-Hungarian relations. [2]

One other area where Glatz's book fails to live up to the editor's stated goals is in its methodological approach. Glatz expresses a desire to dispense with the national approach to history, emphasizing instead the history of the Carpathian basin as a history of "labor markets and organiza-

tions common to the various social and ethnic elements" (p. xiv). As we have seen in the recent review of Szarka's book and the subsequent discussion on HABSBURG, there are a number of attempts underway to examine the history of this region in new ways. In this volume only a handful of the contributions concern themselves with transnational matters. These include Deak's "Homeless Defenders of the Homeland: The Officers of the Habsburg Monarchy" and Glatz's "Bourgeois Transformation, Assimilation, and Nationalism." The entire second half of the book "Independent Hungary--Independent Small States," with one or two exceptions, is entirely devoted to traditional diplomatic history without any pretense to new methodological approaches. Notable by its absence is consideration of organizations common to all the national groups of the region (other than political parties and the Habsburg officer corps) that brought the various social and ethnic elements together--religious groups or international voluntary organizations, for example. Finally, most of the essays in this volume take too simplistic an approach to the political realities of the nations in question, preferring instead to discuss relations between "Hungarians" and "Slovaks" or "Romanians," thereby minimizing the complications posed by the often deep differences between and among the members of the nations of the Carpathian basin.

Despite these weaknesses, students and scholars of East Central Europe can find much of value in this book, especially those contributions dealing with diplomatic aspects of Hungary's relationship with its neighbors. Taken together, Adam's several essays (especially "Complete Encirclement: The Establishment of the Little Entente") and Ranki's essay on Hitler's manipulation of the Hungarian-Romanian relationship ("Divide and Rule!") comprise a relatively complete introduction to the diplomatic history of Hungary's relations with its neighbors from 1918 to 1945. In particular, these articles demonstrate how frustrating it was for Hungarian diplomats to pursue the interests of their state in

the face of national animosities on both sides of the border and the interference of the larger European powers. Even Sandor Balogh's defensive discussion of Hungary's treatment by the victorious powers in 1945 ("The Paris Peace Conference") is useful in that it provides the reader with a good introduction to the school of thought that attempts to make Hungary seem a victim at the end of the Second World War despite its willing participation in the Axis war effort. Balogh is especially critical of the way that the transfer of Hungarian populations after 1945 was handled, making it seem as though Hungarians suffered to a greater degree than others in the region (pp. 212-218).[3]

I would add three final comments, two positive and one negative. The translation of this book from the original Hungarian is excellent, and the editors of the series are to be commended for taking the time to bring such a readable manuscript to their English-speaking audience. Second, the chronology at the end of the book is a boon to all, especially students unfamiliar with the specific details of modern Hungarian history. On the negative side, the absence of either footnotes or bibliography makes it all but impossible for the reader to either validate or expand upon any of the research or conclusions offered here without starting from scratch. It is obvious that the essays in this volume are the result of significant and careful research by their authors. However, without any footnotes or bibliography, the reader is asked to accept on faith the authors' conclusions, something that Western scholars or students will be unlikely to do, especially when many of the events discussed in this volume are subject to often wildly different interpretations. Too often scholars err in the opposite direction, freighting their work with mountains of footnotes, but a reasonable middle ground is available and should have been insisted upon for this work.

It is always difficult to encapsulate all the good and bad points of a collection of essays in one brief review. From the aspects of this book touched

on here one can see that Glatz's book was quite an undertaking and the editor is to be commended for exposing us to so many members of the historical profession in Hungary and for bringing us a number of thought-provoking essays. Although I found much to argue with in this work, I am also pleased to have it to argue about. Now we must look forward to future works that will fill the gaps left by this book.

CONTRIBUTORS (in the order of their articles' appearance in the book):

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#### NOTES

1. *Magyarok a Kárpát-Medenceben* ([Budapest]: Pallas Lap- és Könyvkiadó Vállalat, 1988). 2. Augustin Marko and Pavol Martinický, *Slovak-Magyar Relations. History and Present Day Figures* (Bratislava: Slovak Society for Protection of Democracy and Humanity, Bratislava: 1995. See especially pages 17-27. 3. On the topic of population transfers, a useful brief counter-point to Balogh is Dagmar Cierna-Lantayova, "Vzájomne súvislosti postavenia menšín v Maďarsku a na Slovensku po roku 1945", in Jana Plichtová, ed., *Minority v politike: kultúrne a jazykové práva* (Bratislava: Česko-slovenský výbor Európskej kultúrnej nadácie, 1992) pp. 75-81. This volume is also available in English.

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