

KORMÁNYZATI POLITIKA ÉS PARLAMENTI ELLENZÉK, 1910–1914.

By *Ferenc Pölöskei*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1970. 258 pp. 52 Ft.

Ferenc Pölöskei's book is a detailed account of the most recent Marxist interpretation of Hungarian politics immediately preceding World War I. I find credible the author's assumption that his work is stimulated by a much freer creative spirit than the ideological hyperboles of the Stalinist dogmatists in the 1950s. The book is the product of scholarly and meticulous research which was carried out in several Hungarian archives with no surprising results but which provides a fair assessment of the struggle between a triumphant conservative liberal majority and a confused, divided, and largely ineffectual opposition, ranging from clerical obscurantists and gentry chauvinists to democratic reformers. Pölöskei also maintains scrupulously a symmetry between his discussion of internal conditions and foreign affairs, a treatment which acquaints the reader with both of these significant aspects in even measure.

The picture of the majority leader, Count István Tisza, is much more balanced than the one that emerged in previous Marxist writings. He is portrayed as a foe of venerable qualities rather than the devil incarnate. Yet to some extent even this more balanced view misunderstands Tisza. His repressive measures, above all the suppression of parliamentary filibuster, were designed to create a political climate in Hungary favorable to war preparedness, but also to institute certain changes in the condition of Hungary's ethnic minorities and working class. These latter plans by Tisza were not tactical maneuvers or manifestations of a "sham-liberalism" (p. 219) but a sincere desire on his part to allow a modest form of ethnic pluralism within the framework of Hungarian statehood and to promote the rise of the Hungarian working class to national respectability. Tisza's error lay in his incorrect judgment on how much ground these changes should cover, in his blatant neglect of certain other issues, such as the peasants' land hunger, and in his adamant refusal to introduce universal suffrage.

In his discussion of Tisza's liberalism, the author believes in a transformation of Hungarian liberalism from an ally of democracy around the turn of the century into an enemy of progress in the 1910s and 1920s (p. 231). In reality, Tisza's brand of liberalism had always kept democracy at a distance; it had faith in liberty but never in equality, and it fused with conservatism almost imperceptibly. Tisza was unique because his liberal conservatism contained more of an element of social consciousness and a sense of fair play than was true of most of his fellow politicians in the Parliament.

The vacillation and inner contradictions of the opposition are well described in the book, but their dilemma is somewhat distorted. Even for the Justh Party on the extreme left of the parliamentary political spectrum, the choice was not between reliance on extraparliamentary mass movements and parliamentary action but strictly between different modes of parliamentary behavior and policy. The author's lament (pp. 94 and 160) that the Justh Party failed to embark upon a more radical extraparliamentary activity is purely academic. The petty bourgeois and gentry constituency of the Justh Party was definitely not susceptible to an exhibition of force in the streets. Even its occasional ally, the Social Democratic Party, was eager to become part of the system; and their well-timed, periodic mass demonstrations for universal suffrage were meant precisely to accentuate that point.

These twists of Marxist partisanship notwithstanding, Pölöskei's book is a

useful contribution to our knowledge of a period which might be characterized as the twilight of tradition-bound Hungary in the emotionally charged atmosphere of the prewar years.

GABOR VERMES

University of California, Los Angeles

IMRÉDY BÉLA ÉS A MAGYAR MEGÚJULÁS PÁRTJA. By Péter Sipos.
Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1970. 261 pp. 56 Ft.

During the past five to six years the historians of Eastern Europe have undertaken a more detailed study of the popular and bourgeois fascist movements. Nowhere is this process more advanced than in Hungary, as this book by Professor Sipos illustrates. Although it contains little that is new about Imrédy and his political activity, the book is significant for its objective treatment of the subject. The Horthy regime is not dealt with as a single entity—a “counterrevolutionary, fascist system”—and is not labeled categorically as “fascist.” Clear distinctions are made between the archconservatives (Horthy and Bethlen and their followers) and the déclassé malcontents of the “middle-class Hungarian gentlemen” (the followers of Gömbös and later Imrédy) who proposed a fascist solution. Another important line is drawn between the bourgeois fascists and the proletarian fascist movement of the Arrow-Cross under Szálasi.

Unfortunately the use of the term “demagoguery” to refer to any quest for social justice other than a Communist one, and “Lumpenelements” as the definition of those proletarians who answer such an incongruent appeal, still persists, even though this would make the mass appeal of the Arrow-Cross incomprehensible. There is little reference to Szálasi’s (until 1944) intransigent Hungarian patriotism, which foiled his cooperation with the Germans. Sipos dwells rather on the accommodating attitude of Hubay, who was thrown out of the Arrow-Cross because of it.

On the positive side, the social analysis of Imrédy’s supporters, though not radically new, is well documented and detailed for the first time. Another amply documented, if not edifying, revelation is that Imrédy’s main support came not so much from Trianon Hungary as from the Hungarian bourgeoisie of the territories “regained” from Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia, and above all from the opportunistic Hungarian bourgeoisie of Transylvania, indeed the mainstay of Imrédy’s support.

A great drawback of Sipos’s work is that it ends essentially with the year 1941 and does not treat in detail the unfolding of Imrédist activities during the decisive years 1942, 1943, and 1944. Imrédy’s party cooperated with the Germans through E. Veessenmayer more than any other political group; they practically invited the German occupation of March 1944; they were the essence of the collaborationist government which was formed later; the Imrédist bear the bulk of responsibility for the anti-Jewish horrors and for the treasonable information furnished the Germans about any attempt to extricate Hungary from the Holocaust; they closed ranks with Szálasi in October 1944. In these efforts they were generously supported by the large number of opportunistic “fellow travelers” of Imrédy’s brand of fascism in the Government Party—who only because of expediency did not join Imrédy openly. Reményi-Schneller) together with Horthy or Kállay or Bethlen as “Government Not to point this out clearly, and to lump these people (such as L. Szász and L.