

HUNGARY IN EARLY 1848: THE CONSTITUTIONAL STRUGGLE AGAINST ABSOLUTISM IN CONTEMPORARY EYES. By *Edsel Walter Stroup*. Foreword by *Steven Béla Várdy*. State University of New York at Buffalo, Program in East European and Slavic Studies Publication Number 11. Buffalo and Atlanta: Hungarian Cultural Foundation, 1977. 261 pp. \$8.80, paper.

Formerly a marine and now a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Akron, Mr. Stroup is a fine writer. His work proves that there are enough sources available in English, both primary and secondary, on the Hungarian events of 1848 for a non-Hungarian to write a comprehensive analysis, and that ignorance of the exotic Hungarian language is no excuse for the European historian's traditionally cavalier treatment of the most important and longest lasting revolution of that year. Mr. Stroup uses little Hungarian material, relying primarily on such English-language sources as British agent Blackwell's reports from Pressburg to Ambassador Lord Ponsonby in Vienna, later printed, and Laszlo Deme's valuable book, *The Radical Left in the Hungarian Revolution of 1848* (Boulder, Colo., 1976). But Mr. Stroup's failure to consult such Hungarian material as Louis Kossuth's "Complete Works," published in Budapest over the last several decades, results in anomalies. The parliamentary speeches and other statements which he quotes are either from Mr. Blackwell's spirited translation or from secondary sources; consequently, although the essence is always there, the lengthy citations often bear only a vague resemblance to the real text.

Mr. Stroup's intention, brilliantly executed, is to show that there was far more to the Hungarian 1848 revolution than the breakdown of the feudal economic system; that the main motivation of the famous April Laws was the Hungarian noblemen's desire to restore the country's traditional liberties and to modernize Hungary; that Hungarian history is characterized by constitutional continuity, from time to time rudely disrupted but never destroyed by Austrian absolutism; that the Hungarian reform movement well preceded the events of 1848; and that, therefore, the April Laws were not an offspring of the European turmoil of that year. As the author puts it on pages 14–15: "The fundamental issue of the early Hungarian 1848 is . . . the nation's constitutional struggle with Habsburg absolutism. At stake was the establishment of an equitable relationship of a Hungary modernized by the April Laws with the Crown, and through it, with the rest of the Monarchy." Thus Hungary would have gladly stayed within a rejuvenated Monarchy, Mr. Stroup argues, had the camarilla behind the feeble-minded Emperor-King Ferdinand not incited the national minorities against the constitutional Hungarian government and prepared for revenge against Kossuth and his friends.

All this necessitates a few words of caution, however. The nobles' genuine idealism was inextricably mixed with an equally genuine fear of a peasant jacquerie. The revolt of the national minorities was not only national but also social. The new Hungarian government, and especially Kossuth, prepared for both the continued existence of the Monarchy, with Hungary as its pivot, and the Monarchy's eventual dissolution, with Hungary somehow surviving the dissolution. The April Laws were indeed founded on Hungary's ancient rights, but they nevertheless turned the Monarchy into an unmanageable double-headed monster. Finally, it was not the camarilla that forced Hungary to pursue an independent course in the fall of 1848—the camarilla had ceased to exist by then—but the centralistic and liberal Vienna government, itself a child of the revolution. There are also a few factual errors, none of which detracts from the great value of this work.

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