

the finest and most tragic poets of the twentieth century. Born in 1905, he threw himself under a train in 1937. During the thirty-two years of his life he struggled with poverty, unrequited love, and mental instability; for a time a nihilist and anarchist, he turned later to communism and psychoanalysis, unable ever to find a spiritual home. In sum, his poetic legacy was purchased at great personal price.

Work on the life and work of Attila József has become something of an industry in his native land. Oddly enough, *The Selected Correspondence* is the first collection of letters to and from the poet to be published, although most of these letters have already appeared, scattered in various books and journals. The volume constitutes the eleventh in a series of documentary (literary) collections; it is well edited and supplied with detailed explanatory notes. A brief list of significant dates in József's life is appended. For scholars working on the poet's biography, it is indispensable.

I regret to say that I do not think the volume will be of much interest to the general reader. Discussions of a philosophic or literary nature are few; even those letters written from 1925 to 1927, years the poet spent largely in Vienna and Paris (where, as we know, his more mature thought took shape), are curiously mundane. Hence, there is here none of the kind of excitement generated by Thomas Mann's correspondence. To be sure, the correspondence of few writers can equal that of the German master (whom József much admired); but even if judged as expressions of József's own spiritual experience, the letters are disappointing. One comes away from them with a feeling of pity, rather than a sense of tragedy. Money—the lack of it—is, for example, a constant theme; surely the most pathetic letter in the collection is that to the distinguished poet-editor Mihály Babits (January 28, 1933). In it József asks Babits, whose work he had maligned, to use his good offices as codirector of a literary foundation to secure for him desperately needed financial aid.

Psychological problems form another pathetic theme; yet there is no heroic madness here (as with Nietzsche), but rather modern "mental illness." Indeed, knowing of József's great interest in Freud (there is in the collection a brief letter from the father of psychoanalysis thanking József for a poem written in honor of Freud's eightieth birthday), one is reminded of Karl Kraus's famous aphorism to the effect that psychoanalysis is the disease for which it pretends to be the cure (see, for example, the fantastic letter written to Edit Gyömrői, one of József's analysts, dated October 28, 1936).

Arthur Koestler once wrote of Attila József that "both his work and his personal fate were a terrifying symbol of our time." To understand that symbol, one must direct attention to the poetic achievement.

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SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE UNDER OTTOMAN RULE, 1354–1804. By *Peter F. Sugar*. A History of East Central Europe, vol. 5, edited by *Peter F. Sugar* and *Donald W. Treadgold*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1977. xviii, 365 pp. Maps. \$16.95.

Peter Sugar has written an interpretation of southeastern Europe under Ottoman rule from which few will fail to learn. As always, he brings a fresh view to familiar material, and fresh material to familiar issues.

In all three periods of Ottoman history, the origins of the empire, its maturity, and its decline, Sugar is both a master of data and a virtuoso of interpretation. His overall conclusion is that the empire's greatest strength was at the same time its greatest weakness. The early empire, "the divinely protected well-flourishing absolute domain of the House of Osman," was founded on the twin pillars of loyalty to the

sultan and belief in Islam. The former made it possible to organize a military and bureaucratic organization of great efficiency, and the latter gave the laws and customs of the realm definitive authority. But with time, efficiency and authority in theory led to chaos and rigidity in practice. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the initially successful principles actually prevented the empire from reacting to the European inflation in the more or less creative way several Western European states did. Reliance on the sultan left no regular mechanism for dealing with weakness at the center, and Islamic law prevented the evolution of a legal system suited to the modern world.

Sugar sees the mature empire as consisting of two sorts of regions: the core provinces in which the central government had or aspired to direct control, and tribute-paying vassal states, such as the Rumanian Principalities, Transylvania, and Dubrovnik. One of the author's soundest points is that the Ottoman Empire was not merely a conquering military state, dependent for survival on expansion and booty, but a sophisticated and well-organized economic system. He believes that the Ottomans, even during the period of greatest military success under Suleiman, fully recognized the importance of commerce to a "well-flourishing domain." His discussion of the core regions concentrates, therefore, on the social and economic structure of both the countryside *and* the city. He fully utilizes recent research showing that Ottoman Balkan cities, organized around guilds, religion, and class privilege, were effective economic communities. Whereas his discussion of the tribute-paying regions of necessity is concerned with internal politics (his insight into the grandiose visions of the Transylvanian kings is excellent, for example), here too he makes clear the Ottoman understanding of the long-range economic importance of those areas. To take one case, perhaps as significant as the monetary tribute and bribes paid by the Rumanian Principalities was the forced sale and delivery of agricultural goods to Istanbul, by which the Ottomans kept down both prices and unrest in the capital.

Sugar's discussion of the breakdown of two basic Ottoman institutions, the timar and the millet, is especially worthwhile. Rejecting the widely held view that the celebrated decline from timar to chiftlik was causally related to the end of expansion, he explains the process in terms of the more general and complex phenomenon of ossification in an aging state. In such a state, the change to chiftlik actually benefited the Balkan peoples, since it allowed indigenous leaders to enter public life and thereby laid a necessary native foundation for the rise of national units in the nineteenth century. Sugar suggests that the millet system, which has been considered an eminently successful idea, was actually founded on two false premises: that the Orthodox were relatively homogeneous, and that the millet would insure loyalty to the sultan. These assumptions appeared to be true during the period when strong sultans maintained peace in the Balkans, but it was peace that secured loyalty, not the millet system. When the center began to disintegrate, the mosaic nature of Orthodoxy began to assert itself, as it had done in medieval times.

Sugar writes well, if not brilliantly, but at times the book is heavy going. Since he has written it for practicing historians, he does not hesitate to use technical terms or to assume wide geographical knowledge. Once the reader gets past the Turkish words and gathers his atlases around him, however, he will find this rich fare indeed. As the marvelous bibliographic essay shows, the many archival holdings and extensive secondary literature concerning the Ottoman Empire are written almost entirely in the languages of Eastern Europe, from Hungarian through Turkish. It is fortunate enough when a historian possesses the linguistic skills to be able to survey this literature, but almost too much to hope that he should at the same time have an original

mind. Sugar has both. Consequently, his book is far more than simply a "welcome addition to the field." It is a unique interpretation of the entire Ottoman experience in the Balkans.

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LJUDEVIT GAJ: NJEGOV ŽIVOT, NJEGOVO DOBA. By *Josip Horvat*. Zagreb: Sveučilišna naklada "Liber," 1975. viii, 399 pp.

This biography was completed in 1959, only a few years before Josip Horvat's death. It has long deserved to be published. Josip Horvat, a journalist by profession, was the author of many works on Croatian cultural and political history, but he was not a historian's historian. He would be the first to admit that what interested him most was to "tell the story." He was unsystematic about source citations (most of the quotes in the Gaj biography are not footnoted), sometimes careless about details, and did not always exhaust the available sources, particularly recent secondary studies. Horvat wrote popular rather than scholarly history, but his works were based upon a close reading of primary sources and a grasp of the larger issues.

Ljudevit Gaj (1809–72) is a controversial historical figure. Leader of the Illyrian Movement, owner of the nationalist newspaper and press, founder of the Illyrian Party, and one of the most important men in Croatia in the first months of 1848, Gaj's image is blurred by his ambiguous "secret politics," his constant need for money, and the financial scandal which cast him from power in June 1848. Horvat draws a vivid portrait of Ljudevit Gaj, the man, against the background of Croatian political and cultural life. The story he tells is a dramatic one. He attempts to explain why this man, who gave his energy and modest inheritance to the national awakening, and seemed to go from success to success while in his twenties, was later ignored and scorned. Horvat lays the blame on Austria's ambivalence toward Gaj and the Movement, the self-interest and arrogance of the nationalist nobles, the lack of real support among Zagreb citizens, family pressures, and Gaj's own lack of business sense.

This biography is the product of more than a decade of work with the Gaj papers. After World War II, Josip Horvat and Jakša Ravlić organized and catalogued the Gaj papers and prepared Gaj's collected works for publication. Only their carefully edited volume of the Gaj correspondence was published (1956). Josip Horvat was already in ill health when he finished the biography of Gaj, and, because it was without a publisher, he condensed his findings in a short popular study (1960) which aroused both interest and criticism. The Gaj manuscript sat on an editor's desk for many years. A critical edition of the manuscript, one with the necessary footnotes and comments, would have been a long undertaking. The editors finally decided to publish the manuscript just as it was. They added a fine essay by Jaroslav Šidak on "Ljudevit Gaj as a Historical Problem," which helps to put Horvat's biography in perspective.

I have retraced much of Josip Horvat's work as I did my own research on Gaj, and I found his book to be essentially sound. It is based primarily on the Gaj correspondence, on published and unpublished letters of Gaj's contemporaries, and on standard published works. It is weakest on Gaj's "secret politics," his Yugoslavism, and the development of his ideas. It is strongest on describing his effect on others, the limits within which he could operate, and his financial problems. This book does contain some inaccuracies and does ignore some of the more recent (post-World War II) scholarship on Gaj and the Movement, but nowhere can you find a more sharply drawn portrait of Gaj. This is a work which should be read critically, but which should be read by all people interested in modern Croatian history.

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