

A HUNGARIAN COUNT IN THE REVOLUTION OF 1848. By György Spira.
Translated by Thomas Land. Translation revised by Richard E. Allen. Budapest:
Akadémiai Kiadó, 1974. 346 pp. \$14.00.

Among the talented representatives of Hungary's post-World War II generation of historians, György Spira stands out as the leading expert on the Louis Kossuth-led, anti-Habsburg struggle for Magyar national independence. A nondogmatic Marxist, Spira's major contributions include a study on the Hungarian revolution in 1848–49 (*A magyar forradalom 1848–49-ben*, 1959) and a book on Count Stephen Széchenyi in the revolutionary period (*1848 Széchenyije és Széchenyi 1848-a*, 1964) which is the most important, and controversial, Hungarian work since 1945 on "the greatest among the Magyar." The study under review is the English translation of the somewhat revised earlier Hungarian text supplemented, in an appendix, by an Academy Lecture, given in 1966, which contains the author's reflections on some of the criticisms provoked by his book at the time of its first publication.

In recent years, there has been a revival of public interest in Széchenyi's enigmatic personality in Hungary. Especially the last phase of the great reformer's life, spent in an asylum near Vienna, and his suicide, "engineered" according to some contemporary rumors by the Austrian secret police, have been the subject of dramas shown on television and in the theater amidst heated debates of publicists, historians, and men of letters. In 1973, a Széchenyi Memorial Museum was inaugurated in the presence of high-ranking party and government officials in a restored wing of the Széchenyi family's palace at Nagycenk (Zinkendorf). A year earlier, a study focusing on the crystallization of Széchenyi's world of ideas (*Széchenyi eszmerendszerének kialakulása*), written by a young historian, András Gergely, appeared in print. Essay contests for high school students again encourage research on Széchenyi's manifold activities.

Hungarian Marxist historians, preoccupied with Kossuth and the revolutionary heritage of 1848, were less relaxed in the fifteen years following World War II. Perhaps understandably, the "Széchenyi cult," which stressed the antiliberal, Christian-conservative, and ethnocentric elements of Széchenyi's nationalism and dominated Hungarian historical writings between the two world wars, was replaced by a likewise politically motivated cult of the long neglected leader of the Hungarian revolution of 1848 to the detriment of research on his opponent, regarded as a reactionary great landowner and ideological forerunner of Hungary's racially oriented counterrevolutionary regime of the interwar era. A change in the official party line began to appear after the death of Stalin. By 1960, the centennial of Széchenyi's suicide, essays by both older and younger scholars such as Domokos Kosáry, István Orosz, Márton Sarlós, and Lóránt Tilkovszky conveyed new information about Széchenyi's views on Hungary's international situation after 1849, on agrarian reforms, on their legal implications, and on his relationship with the director of his estates and his erstwhile tutor, János Lunkányi (Liebenberg). Yet, as shown by the mid-1961 discussion of the completed manuscript (which preceded its publication by three years), Spira's work was the first comprehensive Széchenyi monograph which challenged the post-1945 norms of Marxist historiography. It took nearly five years before a commemorative article entitled "Széchenyi's Tragic Course," also written by Spira, found its way to the printer: but the main thing is that it *was* published at the time of the appearance of the book.

Spira's study deals with six most dramatic months of Széchenyi's political career—from the March revolution of 1848 to his spiritual collapse in September, when Hungary was on the threshold of civil war. While the analysis is deeply embedded in the political, social, economic, and international conflicts of the period, Széchenyi's personality remains in the foreground throughout. The author knows how to do justice to the brilliant but tortured complex man who "as a public figure . . . was opposed not

only by backwardness and by critics of backwardness more consistent than he, not only by his enemies and by his friends, not only by his well and ill wishers, but finally and most consistently by himself" (p. 322).

Aside from carrying out the first commandment of any biographer worth his salt, namely, to present a credible human portrait, Spira gives us a panoramic view of the Hungarian scene woven of minute, meticulously researched day-to-day details, many of which are drawn from archival sources scattered all over Hungary and hitherto unpublished or unused. His book thus becomes a treasure house of information not only for any future work on Széchenyi or Kossuth but also for the researcher of the Hungarian Age of Reforms. Whether or not Széchenyi, who for almost a decade had been Kossuth's most bitter opponent because of the revolutionary dangers anticipated in the latter's policies, succeeded in overcoming his fears to the degree claimed by Spira, and whether he joined the revolution to the extent indicated by the author, are questions on which honest students of history may disagree. But there can be no doubt about the author's sincerity of beliefs, his mastery of contemporary materials, and the virtuosity of his intellectual achievement. The Anglo-Saxon reader is in the debt of the Hungarian Academy for making available a difficult yet indispensable work in a nearly faultless translation by engaging the editorial services of Dr. Richard E. Allen, a native American connoisseur of Hungarian history as well as of the intricacies of both English and Magyar.

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BRITISH POLICY IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR. By *Elisabeth Barker*. Studies in Russian and East European History. New York: Barnes & Noble, Harper & Row. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1976. viii, 320 pp. Maps. \$27.50.

No one interested in the Balkans, Britain, or international politics during World War II can afford to ignore this lucid, densely-packed, and informative analytical narrative. Elisabeth Barker, an accomplished journalist-historian already respected for her earlier books on Europe, has produced the best short account, to date, of the British wartime role in southeast Europe as a whole.

Neither a history of southeast Europe during the war nor a comprehensive account of British wartime policies there, it "aims rather to provide the essential materials and pointers for an understanding of British dealings" with the region and its basic criterion in allocating space to the six states that comprise the region is current historiographical need rather than their substantive importance to Britain at the time. Greece and Yugoslavia, about which more has been written, therefore receive less attention than Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Rumania, on which new light is shed, and the comparative dimension is heightened by grouping the six states into defeated ones with mass resistance movements and those which became German (then Soviet) satellites. Turkey, though not treated as part of the region, receives considerable attention because of its bearing on British relations with the region.

The book has two parts, each consisting of ten chapters. Part 1 deals with the war from its outbreak to the Balkan military campaign of 1941. Part 2 covers the longer period that ensued but, except in broad terms of British-Soviet rivalry until the end of the war, stops with the region's liberation by the end of 1944. In each part, initial chapters treat the entire region from the standpoint of British war strategy and British-Soviet relations; subsequent ones deal with individual states. In part 2, however, the Macedonian issue receives separate treatment and a chapter on the German satellites as a whole precedes chapters on each one individually.