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# FORSCHUNGSBERICHTE

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*László Péter, London*

## New Approaches to Modern Hungarian History

At a conference held six years ago in the Kossuth Club, Budapest, an important debate took place among Hungarian historians<sup>1</sup>. The conference was part of the preparation of the two volume „History of Hungary“ (second edition<sup>2</sup>) currently the standard history of Hungary. The debate sheds light on textual differences between the first and the second editions of the book; more important, it helps elucidate long standing differences among Hungarian scholars about basic questions of modern Hungarian history. It also reveals a great deal about their differing intellectual outlook. In retrospect the conference held in 1966 can be said to have marked an important juncture in a continuing debate that has divided Hungarian historians for over twelve years, during which sudden outbursts have alternated with simmering disagreement<sup>3</sup>. The Kossuth Club debate on the „History of Hungary“ can be followed from its minutes, (subsequently published in rotaprint with limited circulation) that have recently come to the notice of the present writer<sup>4</sup>.

The first edition of the „History of Hungary“, edited by the late academician Erik Molnár and written by a team of ‚younger‘ historians<sup>5</sup>, deserved the attention it received from the Hungarian public. It was a departure from the strongly ideologically oriented ‚dogmatic‘ manner as well as from that flat, impersonal style in which works had, until then, been invariably written. It was a good deal less constrained by ideological blinkers than its predecessors, it was full of data, and it was written in graphic prose. An attempt was also made to break away from a rather narrow ‚hungarocentric‘ approach of previous years and to set history in its wider East European context<sup>6</sup>. The book was warmly received by its reviewers and was praised by the Secretary General of the Academy in his Annual Report as the most significant contribution to historical scholarship in recent years<sup>7</sup>. The ‚educated gen-

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<sup>1</sup> The conference was organised by the Tudományos Ismeretterjesztő Társulat and chaired by its president, academician G. ORTUTAY, on 19 May 1966.

<sup>2</sup> MOLNÁR, ERIK (ed.) Magyarország története [The History of Hungary]. Vol. 1–2. Budapest 1964<sup>2</sup>. (cited hereafter as MT 2st).

<sup>3</sup> On other phases of the debate among Hungarian historians see the present writer's *A magyar nacionalizmus* and also *A Debate on the History of Hungary between 1790 and 1945*, pp. 442–444.

<sup>4</sup> *Ankét a Magyarország története című kétkötetes műről*, pp. 3–112. The texts of the written contributions had already been published in: *Századok* 100 (1966) pp. 511–513, 969–971, 1307–1310; 101 (1967) pp. 273–275, 696–699, and the debate had been summarised by STIER, pp. 74–84.

<sup>5</sup> MT 1st.

<sup>6</sup> MT 1st, pp. 5–6.

<sup>7</sup> *Az elnökség beszámolója* LXXIV. 6. p. 371.

eral reader' at whom the book was aimed, apparently liked it too. The 28.000 copies of the first edition sold out fast and a revised second edition of 20.000 copies was speedily provided<sup>8</sup>.

Both editions divide Hungarian history at 1849 where the first volume leaves off and the second starts, imposing a disparity on the subject which is highly unfavourable to the earlier centuries. In the second edition the chapters on Medieval and early Modern History are reprinted with only minor alterations in the text<sup>9</sup>. The chapters dealing with the twentieth century were enlarged, thus increasing even further the disparity between the earlier and the more recent periods: less than 300 pages for Hungarian history up to the end of the seventeenth century, more than 800 pages for the period from 1800 onwards. In the second edition the text dealing with Modern History before 1920 was altered only here and there, but the Horthy period was usefully expanded: party politics, the emergence of the radical Right in the 1930s and the Magyar Front of 1944 received more attention, as did economic, social and cultural matters. The section on the history of the People's Democracy was rewritten and works published between the two editions added separately to the comprehensive bibliography<sup>10</sup>.

Additions apart, the textual changes (including some of the minor ones) are significant. They reflect a clash of opinion over the course of Hungarian history from the late Middle Ages onwards between two articulate viewpoints opposed in a 'continuous dialogue' since the beginning of the 1960s. This was subsequently labelled the 'historians' debate on nationalism'. In its first phases the debate largely centered on topics concerning early Modern Hungarian history. The significance of the debate over the text of the 'History of Hungary' (first edition) is that it provided an opportunity for extending the debate to problems of the last 150 year's history in a systematic manner. This extension of the debate to new and more recent periods gave a new turn to the nationalism debate and, largely because of fortuitous circumstances, it considerably weakened the position of one of the two sides.

What was the earlier debate on nationalism about and what were its origins?

Briefly, the debate originated in March 1960 when, at the Institute of Historical Research of the Academy in Budapest, a conference was held on the 'historical roots of nationalism'<sup>11</sup>. Its political background was the Hungarian upheaval of October 1956. It was precipitated by 'The Theses' issued by the Central Committee of the MSZMP (*Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt*) in the autumn of 1959 on the need to fight 'bourgeois nationalism'<sup>12</sup>. In 1960 the historians asked whether and to what extent 'bourgeois nationalism' had penetrated Marxist historical scholarship in the post-war of years. The tone of the contributions to the conference was mildly self critical: it was acknowledged in general terms that the historians had allowed

<sup>8</sup> MT 2nd.

<sup>9</sup> I am grateful to Professor J. BAK (University of British Columbia, Canada) for comparing the texts of the two editions and for comments on the mediaeval chapters of the work.

<sup>10</sup> See the Preface to MT 2nd, 1, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> A nacionalizmus történelmi gyökereiről pp. 310–360.

<sup>12</sup> A burzsoa nacionalizmusról és a szocialista hazafiságról (tézisek), pp. 11–39.

bourgeois nationalist thinking to influence their writing. But fundamental issues were not yet raised and the need for general revision was not yet felt<sup>13</sup>.

The debate that was to divide Hungarian historians into two camps was triggered off by academician Erik Molnár's articles that began to appear in the same year<sup>14</sup>. At first the debate was about the history of basic terms and concepts such as ,patria', ,nép', ,natio' and ,Magyar nemzet'<sup>15</sup>. Molnár, and subsequently others, argued along orthodox Marxist lines that as Hungarian society had been a class society, ,natio' and ,patria' had not reflected the objective interests of all classes but only those of the ruling class; they were ideological concepts in the proper Marxist sense: manifestations of ,false consciousness'<sup>16</sup>. This view was a challenge to ideas cherished by most Hungarian Marxist historians and Molnár did not mince his words. In the 1950s, he observed, the historians had tacitly assumed the existence of a ,Hungarian nation' throughout the country's history inspired by the country's political leaders and notably by Rákosi's speeches. In their view history primarily consisted of a continuous struggle for national independence in addition to class conflict<sup>17</sup>. Thus the concept of ,nation', Molnár argued, was divorced from social class and historical age — clearly a serious mistake. Moreover the fault led to absurd and historically untenable views: the serfs who had received little benefit from ,the country', were praised by historians for having stubbornly defended it against invading Turks and colonising Germans whereas the landlords who had reaped many of the spoils of the country were condemned for having frequently betrayed it<sup>18</sup>. All this was too contentious for general acceptance but those who were willing to follow up Molnár's questions were rewarded when they re-examined the documents with a fresh eye. Research in recent years has yielded excellent material and scholars have offered subtle analyses of how terms such as ,peasantry', ,lords', ,people', ,nation', ,patria', and ,independence' were used in Hungary between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries<sup>19</sup>.

Nevertheless, dismayed by Molnár's apparent iconoclasm over the independence movements of the early Modern periods, many historians challenged his arguments. Molnár's articles received at least as much criticism as praise. The counterattack was led by Professor Aladár Mód<sup>20</sup>, a veteran historian and publicist

<sup>13</sup> Although the discussions at the conference were regarded as somewhat unsatisfactory at the time, see footnote, 11, *op. cit.* p. 360.

<sup>14</sup> MOLNÁR's first article ›A nemzeti kérdés', appeared in the October issue of *Magyar Tudomány* in 1960, reprinted in: *Vita oszt. küzd.* pp. 1–28; see also *A. m. nac.*, p. 218.

<sup>15</sup> The most important debate on these subjects was held in a conference at the Historical Institute in June 1962. For a summary of the proceedings see *Nemzet, haza*, pp. 1–101.

<sup>16</sup> MOLNÁR *Történelemzseletünk nacionalista maradványairól*, in: *Új Írás* Vol. 2, 11 (1962) p. 1237 (repr. in: *Vita oszt. küzd.* pp. 76–93).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1236–1237; and also ,Az SZKP XXII. Kongresszusa és a szocialista patriotizmus', in: *Tört. Sz.*, Vol. 5, 1 (1962) p. 2. (repr. in: *Vita oszt. küzd.* pp. 60–71).

<sup>18</sup> See penultimate footnote, 11 *c. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> See the papers in: *Nemzet, haza*, (esp. L. BENCZÉDI, ,A „vitézlő rend“ és ideológiája etc. and R. A. VÁRKONYI, ,A „népi kurucság“ ideológiája'), pp. 33–55; BENCZÉDI pp. 152–181; VÁRKONYI *Jobbágyág* pp. 338–377; *idem* *A nemzet* pp. 9–18. *Szűcs Nemzet*.

<sup>20</sup> Mód's essays on the subject have appeared as: *Sors és felelősség*.

whose manual „Four Hundred Years' Struggle for Independent Hungary“ was widely used in many editions between 1945 and 1956<sup>21</sup>. Of course, argued Mód, historians should fight the remnants of nationalist thinking that crept into Marxist works. However, patriotism in the past ought not to be seen as an example of false consciousness<sup>22</sup>. After all, even under the feudal system the serfs, as much as anybody else, had an objective interest that the country should be independent when, say, the Turks attacked it. In his view the question was also political: the historian ought to help clarify ideas about the new patriotism of socialist Hungary; he should bear in mind that socialist Hungary could eventually overtake the capitalist West in its economy and culture only if „national sentiment is set free“ and channelled into the building of Socialism<sup>23</sup>. Mód and many others feared that national feeling might be devalued through the reassessment of the independence struggles of the past; they viewed sourly what they interpreted as an attempt (however inadvertently) to deprive the Hungarian people of „a part of their progressive heritage that inspires patriotism and the country's defence“<sup>24</sup>. The adherents to Molnár's new school retorted that the reasoning of their opponents confused the ‚subjective‘ and the ‚objective‘ sides of the historical process. Yet, it was of paramount importance that the historian should clearly distinguish men's ‚objective‘ actions — a basic force in history — from their accompanying and necessarily ‚subjective‘ motives, reasonings and illusions which came second<sup>25</sup>.

The first edition of the „History of Hungary“ appeared at this stage of the debate. Though its editor in chief, academician Molnár, was the protagonist of the polemics, the chapters had been mostly prepared before or during the earlier phases of the controversy by authors with differing views on the national questions<sup>26</sup>. The book represented only partially the ideas of the new school<sup>27</sup>. However, in a review article, Professor Mód took the authors to task for their ‚pessimistic view‘ of Hungarian history and for their treatment of the national problem particularly with regard to the 1848–49 and 1919 revolutions<sup>28</sup>. Mód thus moved the centre of the debate from the early Modern periods to more recent history. As his review made a great impact a conference of the authors and their critics was arranged at the Kossuth Club. In Mód's view the authors of the chapters on Modern History were far too preoccupied with the economy and the ‚objective conditions‘ and they inferred pessimistic conclusions regarding the course of political history. In seeing the defeat in the 1848–49 and the 1919 revolutions as inevitable (because of superior enemy

<sup>21</sup> MÓD 400 év. For references to the various editions and for a summary of the author's views see the present writer's Debate pp. 443–444 and nn. 8–12.

<sup>22</sup> Beszéljünk világosan, in: Új Irás, Vol. 3, 7, July 1963, pp. 844–845 (rep. in: Sors pp. 167–170).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 855.

<sup>24</sup> NAGY, L., see Nemzet, haza, p. 74.

<sup>25</sup> MOLNÁR see 16 footnote, Loc. cit., Idem, VÁLASZI p. 115 for interesting data in support of MOLNÁR's argument see L. BENCZÉDI p. 740.

<sup>26</sup> MT 1st, 1, p. 6. The manuscripts of most of the chapters were prepared between 1958 and 1960, see Ankét, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 7, 10.

<sup>28</sup> MÓD Optimizmus, pp. 91–97; it was in a revised and enlarged form included in: Sors (under the title of ‚Gondolatok a „Magyarország története“ című munkáról‘), pp. 239–275.

forces), they grossly underrated the importance of the 'subjective' factors — the faulty policies pursued by the revolutionary leaders. Had the leaders avoided mistakes these revolutions might have succeeded. The historian should not justify the course history took at a particular time by attributing inevitability to what actually happened. He is on the side of progress and his creative task is to draw lessons benefitting the present from past mistakes and failures. This is where the function of the 'subjective' factors should be recognized as crucial. For with the right kind of policies better, i. e. the progressive, historical possibilities can be achieved<sup>29</sup>.

The authors of the book denied that they had written anything implying the inevitable defeat of the two revolutions<sup>30</sup>. But they themselves differed on the subject of pessimism. Dr. Hanák frankly admitted that he was a pessimist („I can't see Hungarian history giving much ground for optimism"<sup>31</sup>). Professor Berend, who brought this whole question to the centre of the discussion at the conference treated the demand for an optimistic outlook with derision.

According to him, what Mód had said on the 'subjective' factors was 'mystical and not even properly formulated'<sup>32</sup>. Other authors were rather defensive and disclaimed any pessimism. However, all authors agreed that in their chapters they had aimed at realistic assessments of the turning points of Hungarian history. They also asserted that unless history was grounded in the objective economic-social conditions it was 'unscientific' and 'romantic'<sup>33</sup>; speculations on unrealistic possibilities (in the case of the defeated revolutions) were undesirable. Dr Varga — author of the chapter on the 1848–49 revolution who persuasively argued against the charge of being a pessimist — insisted that the neglect of general 'objective' conditions or overemphasis of the 'subjective' factors was not optimism but illusionism.

„I believe that Hungarian historians ought not to take this path and if they do they would take their claim to scholarship too lightly and would feed illusions into this nation instead of increasing its knowledge about itself, though in the past it has paid dearly for its daydreaming<sup>34</sup>."

Patriotism in the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919 was another subject on which opinions clashed at the conference. In the first edition of the „History of Hungary" Dr. Siklós listed the policy mistakes of the leadership in 1919 and analysed the errors in the economic management (land was not redistributed among the landless, etc.). Then he continued:

„Besides mistakes in the economy it was also undoubtedly injurious that [the people] were not made sufficiently conscious of the patriotic [hónvédő] character of the Soviet Republic's armed struggle. The leaders rightly emphasised that the war of the Red Army was a revolutionary war, inseparable from the revolutionary movements of other countries, that the struggles of the Hungarian workers were an important part of the Russian and West Euro-

<sup>29</sup> Optimizmus, esp. pp. 92–93; Ankét, p. 105; Sors esp. pp. 247–248 and 250.

<sup>30</sup> VARGA (the author of the chapter on the 1848/49 period), Ankét, pp. 82–83; SIKLÓS (the author of the chapter on 1919), *ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 60–61.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 61, 103.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89; and see also PÉTER, Debate, p. 444.

pean proletariat's fights, but they did not sufficiently emphasise that the Red Army fought the war for Hungarian national self-determination, too."

And further down:

„In its cultural propaganda the Hungarian Soviet Republic drew only on the revolutionary traditions of the Hungarian past and did not utilise the mass mobilising power of the freedom fighting democratic traditions of [18]48. Consequently the dictatorship of the proletariat failed to pay attention to the outward manifestations of national feeling [and] it omitted the use of the national flag<sup>35</sup>.“

All this was true but the significance of the subject went far beyond utilising certain traditions — launched out MÓD against the author. For the CP in 1919 — even without using national slogans — was the rightful heir of the 1848 radicals<sup>36</sup>. The trouble with the chapter on 1919 was that it neglected the national aspect of the revolution<sup>37</sup>. It did not make clear that the crucial difference between the Russian revolution of 1917 and that of the Hungarians in 1919 was that „in Hungary not only the working class but the majority of the nation clashed with imperialism“<sup>38</sup>. The author did not ask the crucial question: „to what extent was the revolution of the proletariat at the same time the revolution of the whole people<sup>39</sup>?“

The chapter on the Soviet Republic was also criticised at the conference by a scholar from Molnár's camp. According to Dr. Tilkovszky the leaders of the Soviet Republic were, quite rightly, committed to „proletarian internationalist“ principles rather than to „the slogan of national selfdetermination“. For that „had been appropriated by Hungarian bourgeois nationalism in that it attempted, with reference to this right, to prevent the secession of territories inhabited mostly by the [non Magyar] nationalities<sup>40</sup>“. Therefore the leaders of 1919 did not deserve SIKLÓS's criticism of onesidedness when emphasising the „revolutionary character“ of the war only. Nor could they have been expected to draw on „the 1848 tradition“ — for that had, again, been exploited for decades by bourgeois nationalists — and the same applied even to the use of the national flag<sup>41</sup>.

The way the conference was going was indicated by SIKLÓS' rejoinder to his critics. He did not move an inch towards MÓD's points<sup>42</sup>. On the other hand he promised that he would consider Tilkovszky's objections and emphasised that in the passage

<sup>35</sup> MT 1st Vol. 2, p. 351.

<sup>36</sup> Optimizmus, p. 96; and more clearly in: Sors p. 260.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 262.

<sup>38</sup> Ankét, p. 106.

<sup>39</sup> Optimizmus, p. 96; Sors, p. 262; see also MÓD Az. opt. vitája p. 90.

<sup>40</sup> Ankét, p. 49. As regards the war in Slovakia TILKOVSKY argued that the Hungarian Soviet Republic only defended itself and in its counterattack it did not reconquer lost territories in the name of national defence but by repelling the external counterrevolutionary attack it created the opportunity for the setting up of a Slovak Soviet Republic.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 48–50. HORVÁTH already before the conference criticised SIKLÓS along similar lines, see „Magyarország története“, in: Kritika 3, 7, July 1965, p. 43. (reproduced, though the text has been tempered with in: HORVÁTH pp. 233–252).

<sup>42</sup> Ankét, pp. 93–97.

about the attitude of the leadership towards patriotism he had only reiterated criticisms made in the 1930s and generally accepted since<sup>43</sup>.

And indeed after the conference the author revised his position. He accepted Tilkovszky's views and sharply criticised MÓD's<sup>44</sup>. From the text of the „History of Hungary“ (second edition) the two passages quoted above (regarding attitudes of the 1919 leadership to patriotism, to 1848 and to the national flag) were deleted<sup>45</sup>. In other words, on a hotly contested point the second edition of the book moved even further away from MÓD's views than did the first. Nor did MÓD fare better on other points. On the question of the right relationship between the ‚objective‘ and the ‚subjective‘ factors in historical interpretations and on the ‚inevitability‘ of defeat in the 1849 and in 1919 revolutions the authors stuck to their guns and no textual changes were made to meet MÓD's criticism<sup>46</sup>. The same applies to some minor points, too. The amount of ground lost by the ‚revolutionary progress‘ school associated with Professor MÓD during the conference and afterwards can easily be gathered from the changes in the text of the second edition<sup>47</sup>.

The routing of MÓD's views is perplexing: it is true that the editor in chief was the leader of MÓD's opponents; that in the two years preceding the conference the objective social factors' school had been in the ascendance and that in the conference room MÓD's group was below strength. But these still do not explain, why even those authors of the book who did not at all share Molnár's attitude to modern Hungarian history all argued against MÓD's views. Basic disagreement among co-authors is not, of course, without precedent – in Hungary or elsewhere. The team for the book had been picked in 1957, two years before the rift among the historians emerged. The chapters themselves showed significant differences in intellectual outlook<sup>48</sup> (some of the manuscripts were accepted before the debate got seriously under way). MÓD himself appreciated this and even relished the fact, at the beginning of the conference,

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 96–97.

<sup>44</sup> SIKLÓS Megjegyzések, pp. 1260–1261.

<sup>45</sup> MT 2nd, Vol. 2, p. 351, cf. MT 1st, Vol. 2, p. 351.

<sup>46</sup> The text was not changed as regards the passages concerning the defeat of the 1848/49 revolution, see Vol. 1, pp. 542, 550 in both editions of MT. As regards the fall of the Soviet Republic the text was altered without satisfying MÓD's points, see Vol. 2, p. 359, in both editions of MT.

<sup>47</sup> Most of the changes in the text involved points of contention between the two groups of historians. The advantages secured by the *Ausgleich*, described as ‚relative‘ in the first became ‚considerable‘ in the second edition (Vol. 2, p. 278, in both editions). In order to meet HORVÁTHS criticisms (*Irodalom*, p. 247) the author deleted the passage that the working classes „could have done away with“ the class parliament in 1905 (Vol. 2, p. 209, in both editions of MT. and the assessment of two bourgeois radicals (JÁSZI and SZENDE) became more sympathetic (Vol. 2, p. 226, in both editions of MT.)

But an assessment given of the poet ADY was not changed (Vol. 2, p. 233), although MÓD repeatedly criticised the book for it (*Optimizmus*, p. 95; *Ankét*, p. 15; *Történelemszemléletünk ideológiai kérdéseihöz*, in: *Társadalmi Szemle* 21 9 (1966) p. 108 and see *Sors* pp. 255, 308). MÓD thought that the book dwelt too much on economic subjects and on the politics of the ruling class in the interwar period (*Sors* p. 266). Yet, as has already been mentioned above, the new edition enlarged the treatment of these subjects, see footnote 10.

<sup>48</sup> Some of the manuscript chapters had been accepted before the debate got seriously under way, see 25. footnote.

that some of the authors did not share Molnár's views, without anybody contradicting him<sup>49</sup>. Yet Mód became isolated in the debate. Even the author of the chapters on 1849–1890, who could not, by any stretch of imagination, be considered a Molnár adherent<sup>50</sup> somewhat reluctantly confessed that he was „rather in agreement“ with Molnár's side<sup>51</sup>. Mód's attack on the book was so sharp, his position so uncompromising that he inadvertently compelled his potential associates to move over to the other camp<sup>52</sup>.

Undeniably, two distinct general interpretations of modern Hungarian history confronted each other at the conference. Each represented a set of intellectual attitudes and ideas that were applied to subjects (of which only a few were discussed here) sufficiently wide-ranging to amount to a distinct general view of modern Hungarian history. To label them as ‚sociological‘ and ‚romantic‘ would perhaps be an oversimplification. Although it was in the name of a need for a critical inquiry into the structure of society that Molnár's school challenged ‚emotional‘ thinking about the past, their opponents are not enemies of intellectual inquiry and have themselves gone through an intellectual development. Most of them are not incurable romantics and some are excellent scholars. If this was not apparent in the debate over the „History of Hungary“ it was because the best found themselves on their opponents' side owing to the intransigence of Professor Mód. He and his associates keep a sensitive eye on things quite extraneous to historical scholarship. Political considerations, that obviously influence the adherents of the ‚objective factor‘ school too, lie more heavily with them. But neither group's politics is ‚conservative‘ and both are very critical of the Stalinist past. The views academician Molnár challenged in the early 1960s he associated with the politics of Rákosi. On the other hand, few historians have been as critical of the politics of the Rákosi period and of ‚sectarian‘ and ‚dogmatic‘ attitudes as Professor Mód himself<sup>53</sup>.

Neither side can be labelled as intellectually conservative, either. It appears that ‚the objective factors‘ school has been the challenger with Molnár as spearhead and their opponents have defended old positions. Indeed Mód, with a soft spot for József Révai's ideas (the chief ideologue of the Rákosi period<sup>54</sup> appears to be a defender of an intellectual heritage. But in fact he is doing more: Mód has made explicit

<sup>49</sup> Ankét, p. 10.

<sup>50</sup> Dr. G. SZABAD Forradalom, for instance (author of the most important study on the period 1860–61) reviewed in: Times Lit. suppl. of 14. November, 1968.

<sup>51</sup> SZABAD Ankét, pp. 98–99.

<sup>52</sup> MÓD attacked VARGA (the author of the chapter about 1848/49) in his Optimizmus, pp. 92–93. Then at the conference he agreed with what VARGA said about the problems of his chapter, Ankét, p. 106, cf. pp. 79–89. (VARGA's contribution was one of the high points of the conference). However, after the conference MÓD again took issue with VARGA's chapter which led to a rejoinder; see MÓD, Az opt. vitája p. 89, (in which MÓD, among other things, criticised VARGA for getting far too close to the Slovak historian RAPANT), and in: Sors p. 296. VARGA answered MÓD in his Peszimizmus pp. 64–72. Through these exchanges MÓD possibly alienated a potential associate.

<sup>53</sup> In the conference debate MÓD asked for a more generous treatment of the home Communists' and less praise for the work done in the Hungarian CP by RÁKOSI in the 1920s; see Ankét, pp. 16–17.

<sup>54</sup> J. RÉVAI's works in this respect are listed in the present writer's Debate, p. 443, n 9.

what was only implicit in Révai's writing. By drawing out the implications of Révai's ideas he has made statements Révai would never have thought of, let alone agree to. The salient point in the differences between the two schools is their attitude to nationalism. They would both (and undoubtedly in good faith) disclaim nationalism. But Mód is immensely concerned with 'patriotism' and he frequently wants to subordinate historical questions to what one might term 'socialist nation building' whereas the main concern of Molnár's school is to remove from Hungarian history what they regard as so many nationalist mythologies. This is why the adherents of Molnár's 'objective social factors' school have sometimes disparagingly referred to their opponents as 'dogmatic nationalists' and the believers in Mód's concept of 'revolutionary progress' have labelled their opponents as 'denationalisers' (both labels exaggerate).

In conclusion, the Molnár school undeniably emerged stronger from the debate over the text of the „History of Hungary“ than it had been before. Far from containing a series of compromises the new edition of the book bore a stronger stamp of the 'objective social factors' school than the first. Although the sudden death of academician Molnár in August 1966 left an unfilled gap, the increasing strength of the school he had brought into existence was displayed on future occasions, notably in the debate over an outline of the 'ten volume' — „History of Hungary“'s modern chapters held at the Historical Institute in Budapest in October 1968<sup>55</sup>. In that debate the Molnár school once more carried the day<sup>56</sup>.

The 1966 debate also made an impact on non-professional historians. After the conference the debate continued in the periodicals<sup>57</sup>. But it now focused on the historical problems raised in the debate over the „History of Hungary“ rather than on the book itself. Then the debate gradually turned away from history and became an overtly political one in the weeklies and the dailies about the problems of 'socialist patriotism' and the 'remnants of nationalism'<sup>58</sup>.

The debate stopped when no one, temporarily, had anything to add to what had already been expressed; it was not 'closed' by anybody and in this sense it was an open-ended discussion which could be — and was — resumed by the historians when they found new topics. This shows that the cleavage among them involves basic principles unlikely to be 'resolved' through argument. The MSZMP did and does not claim that it is a final repository of truth on historical subjects and does not appear to wish to arbitrate<sup>59</sup>. There have occasionally been signs of intolerance among the participants of the debate against opponents. But no group of historians is today in a position in Hungary to impose 'the right views' on disagreeing colleagues even if it

<sup>55</sup> The contributions appeared as *Vita Magyarország kapitalizmuskori fejlődéséről* (Értekezések 55, Budapest 1971).

<sup>56</sup> See the present writer's Debate.

<sup>57</sup> See footnotes 44 and 51 and the periodical debate in: *Társadalmi Szemle* 21, 7 — 10, 12 (1966) where P. Z. PACH, I. T. BEREND, A. MÓD and I. PÁNDI carried on the debate.

<sup>58</sup> The most well known debate among those was the 'Kicsi ország' ('Small country') debate in the early months of 1967.

<sup>59</sup> An unsigned editorial article in the MSZMP's theoretical monthly *Társadalmi Szemle* (21, 12 [1966] pp. 87—89), with which the debate carried on in that periodical came to an end (see footnote 57), expressed cautious opinions on various subjects and went out of its way to emphasize that the debate could not be closed, see *Ibid.* 21, 12 (1966) p. 89.

so wished. Those involved in the heated arguments against their opponents would possibly not all see it this way but the continuing stalemate in the debate is in the interest of all: it is this stalemate which is an important source of their growing intellectual freedom.

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### *Abbreviations*

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|------------------|--|
| A m. nac.        | = A magyar nacionalizmus.  |
| Ankét            | = Ankét a „Magyarország története” című kétkötetes műről.  |
| Az. opt. vitája  | = MÓD, ALADÁR Az optimizmus vagy pesszimizmus vitájához.   |
| Debate           | = A Debate on the History of Hungary between 1790 and 1945.  |
| Értekezések      | = Értekezések a történeti tudományok köréből.  |
| MSZMP            | = Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt.   |
| MT 1st           | = MOLNÁR, ERIK (ed.) Magyarország története. Vol. 1–2. Budapest 1964. <sup>1</sup>                             |
| MT 2nd           | = MOLNÁR, ERIK (ed.) Magyarország története. Vol. 1–2. Budapest 1967. <sup>2</sup>                             |
| Nemzet, haza,    | = Nemzet, haza, honvédelem a parasztság és a nem nemesi katonáskodó réteg gondolkodásában (XV.–XVIII. század). |
| Optimizmus       | = MÓD, ALADÁR Optimizmus vagy pesszimizmus történelemszemléletünkben.  |
| Sors             | = MÓD, ALADÁR Sors és felelősség.  |
| SZKP             | = Szovjetunio Kommunista Pártja.   |
| Tört. Sz.        | = Történelmi Szemle.   |
| Vita oszt. küzd. | = Vita a magyarországi osztályküzdelmekről és függetlenségi harcokról.   |