

Western Images and Stereotypes of the Hungarians

Introduction

Hugh Seton-Watson argues in his paper ‘What is Europe, Where is Europe?’ that the origins of Europe should be approached in terms of a dichotomy between the civilized world and the barbarians. According to Seton-Watson, this dichotomy is even more fundamental than the one between Christendom – a community of peoples, and a geographical area, as distinct from the religious faith – and the heathens.¹ The two dichotomies – civilization and barbarism, and true faith and infidel – were fused in the later Roman Empire and its successors, like the Europe of Charlemagne. Hence, the image or traditional stereotype of a civilized Europe geographically corresponding to the territory of the Roman Empire and anything outside this territory, as being of an uncivilized or barbarian culture.²

This dichotomy between civilized and barbarian has proven to be a fruitful paradigm for studying the problems of national stereotypes and images of exotic peoples and areas that are clearly located outside civilized Europe in this sense. The Western images of the barbarians, like China, Japan or Russia reveal the following hypotheses:³

1. the set of stereotypes and images is rather resistant;
2. they alternate between negative and positive variants;
3. Western political decisions and attitudes determine the choice between these variants.

It is my conviction that the Western images of the barbarians also offer an insightful, theoretical framework for studying the Western images and national stereotypes of the nations and peoples belonging to Central and Eastern Europe, a territory outside the domain of Seton-Watson’s civilized Europe corresponding to the other side of the *Limes* along the Danube. Central and Eastern Europe has been and still is very much ignored by the West and therefore it is still a *terra incognita*. This is strikingly illustrated by the statements of Great Britain’s Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain to justify his appeasement policy of Hitler at the 1938 Munich Conference that determined the fate of Czechoslovakia. He spoke of ‘far-away’ countries and of peoples ‘of whom we know nothing’.⁴ The Western images and stereotypes of the Poles insightfully outlined in Piotr Wandycz’ contribution to this volume fit neatly into the above framework as well. In this paper, I will demonstrate that the Western images and stereotypes of the Hungarians who have been the object of a good deal of Western stereotyping display

the hypotheses of the images of the barbarians as well. This supports the claim that deeper insights are to be gained if Western images and stereotypes of Central and Eastern Europe are studied within this framework.

We should point out that the Western attitude towards Central and Eastern Europe may be heterogeneous. There may be differences between individual countries like France, Great Britain or the United States depending on the national interests of these states, differences caused by the right and left political tradition in a given country, or differences due to religious denomination, etc. Although I am aware of these differences and they will be spelled out if relevant, I will continue to generalize in terms of *the West*. This reflects our opinion that there is some unified Western attitude concerning this area.

My line of argumentation runs as follows. First, I will present the set of traditional images and stereotypes of the Hungarians that occur in the West. A general account of this topic has not been thus far pursued. Only fragments related to a specific period or event in history have been examined. In my research, I will rely heavily on these fragments. Hence, the present overview will not be exhaustive and my conclusions will have a preliminary character only. Despite this, I will conclude that the set of Western images and stereotypes of the Hungarians is rather consistent throughout the ages; and that it displays positive and negative values. Secondly, I will demonstrate that the switch between positive and negative values is triggered by changing political decisions and attitudes in the West. In order to do so, I will concentrate on the stereotypes and images of the Western decision-making elites in the pre-war period, during the Great War and in the interwar years. These periods are highly relevant with regard to the question of the hypothesized relationship between Western political decisions and attitudes and the national images and stereotypes of Central and Eastern Europe, because of the transformation of geopolitical power in the area due to Western political and military interventions. The prevailing images and stereotypes of the Hungarians well illustrate this relationship. The images and stereotypes appearing in the post-1989 period will be discussed only briefly. We will consider the question as to why the Western image of Hungary turned negative in the years following the fall of communism in 1989. Finally, I will make some suggestions concerning further research.

Historical Western Images and Stereotypes of the Hungarians

A complete overview of the historical Western images and stereotypes of the Hungarians is a rather hopeless task. In this pilot study, I will limit the discussion to some selected cases while keeping in mind that new cases may cause a different interpretation of the same facts. However, even a superficial investigation makes clear that two sets of Western images and national stereotypes of the Hungarians can be distinguished.⁵ A set of negative images and stereotypes and a set including positive ones. Let us first discuss some instances of the negative variants.

Negative Images and Stereotypes

The Hungarian tribes entered Central Europe from the east sometime before the ninth century. The Swiss historian Szabolcs de Vajay has convincingly demonstrated that the

final conquest of the Carpathian Basin by the Hungarians in 896 A.D. was part of an ingenious political, diplomatic and military strategy, covering in fact a much larger period than is standardly recognized, namely, the period between 822 and 1003.⁶ The seemingly uncoordinated and chaotic Hungarian military maneuvers deeply penetrating into Western Europe in that period functioned to maintain a balance of power, especially in the German Holy Roman Empire that neighbored on the Carpathian Basin.

Only the Holy Roman Emperor had the right to mobilize the Empire's army. Both the German tribes that did not constitute the basis of power of the Emperor and the Hungarians feared a strong, united imperial army that could be turned against them. Therefore, the doctrine of Hungarian foreign policy was to become aligned with those German tribes against the Emperor and his tribe. The most direct way of keeping these two factors in balance was by the use of preventive military force. Destructive military actions were directed against German tribes and their territories that served the Emperor in order to weaken his power basis. On the other hand, the Hungarians left the territories of allied tribes unaffected. The tribes that fell victim to these devastating actions changed frequently depending on from which tribe the Emperor came.

In Western historiography these preventive military operations crossing the *Limes* to control the balance of power in the German Holy Roman Empire have been described as 'plundering raids' by 'barbarians'. The alleged link between the Hungarians and other tribes coming from the east like the Scythians, Huns and the Avars that attacked the West centuries before the Hungarians established the image of Hungarians as barbarians even more directly. This image of plundering, barbarian Hungarians can be found in many Western, and even Hungarian, textbooks and encyclopaedia.⁷ To illustrate this, consider the following text on the 'Hungarian terror' in the *Larousse Encyclopaedia of Ancient and Medieval History*:⁸

The havoc wrought by the Hungarians can only be compared with that wrought earlier by the Huns. Harvests were burnt, cattle slaughtered, houses and churches left in cinders. All men were killed, the children mutilated, the women tied to what was left of the cattle, which was then driven off to the raiders' camp. From the year 900 Hungarian raids were pressed to the borders of Italy, then into Saxony and Bavaria. From 912 they advanced farther still to Swabia, Thuringia, Lorraine and even Burgundy. In the end the greatest attraction was Italy, a country in which petty princelings waged absurd, ferocious internecine wars. The Popes, quickly succeeding one another and often debauched, joined in the conflicts. The body of one was disinterred, tried in public and thrown into the Tiber. Accordingly, the Hungarians had little difficulty in crossing the Alps, and from 921 to 926 they were ravaging North Italy and Tuscany. A few ventured as far as Nîmes and even Narbonne. In these regions their bands were as daring as the corsairs. The latter were unremitting in their activity. From their mountain posts north of St. Tropez, they even arrived on one occasion in mid-winter at St. Gall in Switzerland.⁹

The memories of plundering, barbarian Hungarians supposedly eating raw meat and drinking the blood of their defeated enemies even serves to explain the etymology of the English and French word *ogre* 'monster, men-eater frightening children in fairy tales'. English and French linguists and historians explain the etymology of this word by relating it with *Hongre* the name of the Hungarians in old-French. The Hungarian linguist Eckhardt argues, however, that this etymology is on the wrong track because in French *Hongre* never had the form *Ogre*. According to him, *ogre* is rather a derivative

of Latin *orcus* 'the nether world'.¹⁰

Negative Western images and stereotypes of Hungarians also appeared during the Baroque and Enlightenment periods after the Ottoman Turks had been driven out of historic Hungary in 1699. More than 170 years of Turkish occupation and Hungary's function as a *cordon sanitaire* of the West against the Turkish attacks had turned the Hungarian Kingdom into a ruin. This also contributed to the fact that Hungary was unable to keep up with the technological advancements and the development of citizenry in the West. The negative images of the Hungarians involve in this period the 'inferior Asiatic barbarians, rapacious, wandering, horse-riding people that have no place among the cultivated Germans and Romans in Europe'. 'Hungarian backwardness' is embodied by the Hungarian aristocracy and gentry that is caricatured as being *lusta* 'lazy' and *gogos* 'arrogant'.

The Habsburg Court in Vienna and the German citizenry in Hungary propagated these negative images of the Hungarians. According to them, Hungarians are uncivilized people that have no culture and all their cultural merits originate from the Germans. These negative Habsburg/German images are mainly due to political reasons. After the defeat of the Turks in Central Europe a power vacuum arises in that area. The Vienna Court sees the possibility of expanding the Habsburg Empire eastward, filling the vacuum left by the Turks. The only force that can hinder the Habsburgs in their aspiration to secure the Hungarian throne is the Hungarian aristocracy, the traditional bearer of Hungarian national identity. Hence, the cultivation of caricatures of the Hungarian aristocracy in order to prevent the regeneration and recovering of Hungarian national identity.

Positive Images and Stereotypes

According to St. Iotsaldus, the author of the biography on St. Odilo (996-1049), the head of the Cluny monastery, the two most important European rulers in the eleventh century – next to Pope Sylvester II and the Holy Roman Emperor Otto III – are the Hungarian king St. Stephen of Hungary (997-1038) and King Sancho of Spain (1005-1035). The reason for this has to do with the fact that these Catholic rulers play a prominent role in the 'making' of Europe as founders of the Hungarian and Castilian state. St. Odilo is not only the initiator of a spiritual reform movement, but he also elaborates on the concept of Europe. The head of Cluny wants to stabilize and secure Europe at the frontiers of the former Roman Empire – at the Carpathian mountains against the invasion of nomadic tribes from the east and at the Pyrenees against Arab expansion from the south. In this concept of Europe, Hungary and Castile are crucial for the security and safety of Christian Europe. Furthermore, these states allow the extension of the Catholic Church to these parts of Europe; they support the spiritual reforms of Cluny; and last but not least they allow the reopening of important tracks of pilgrims. St. Stephen's Hungary guarantees the road to Jerusalem. Hence, the head of the Catholic Church, Pope Sylvester II himself, supports the campaign depicting 'Hungary as the living rampart and the shield of Christian Europe'.¹¹ This positive Western image of Hungary reappears when the Hungarians set up a dam against the expansion of the Turks into Central Europe.

In the period of Romanticism a Western, exotic image of 'freedom-loving Hungary'

surfaces, accompanied by a related linguistic vocabulary, including the following expressions *csikosok* ‘horseherds’, *betyarok* ‘outlaws’, *huszarok* ‘hussars’, *ciganyok* ‘gypsies’, *puszta* ‘puszta’, *mulatsag* ‘amusement’, *csarda* ‘inn on the puszta’, and so on. German writers, like Lenau and Schiller, and composers, like Franz List, played an important role in the transmission of these exotic images of Hungary to the West. The romantic image of ‘freedom-loving Hungary’ also had a political counterpart, namely, ‘liberal Hungary’ resisting the centralism of Vienna. The National Renewal initiated by Count Istvan Szechenyi caused this positive image. The evolution of ignorance to a positive image was indeed striking after a long period of neglect by the West lasting from the defeat of the Rákóczi’s War of Independence in 1711 until the beginning of National Renewal in 1815.

The positive image of liberal Hungary was especially popular among Western liberals who saw the Hungarians as champions of liberalism in Central and Eastern Europe: ‘In 1848 there was strong popular feeling among us against the Austrian regime, and very lively sympathy for Hungary, and our Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerstone, fully shared both feelings...’.¹² The leader of the 1848/1849 Revolution and War of Independence, Lajos Kossuth, and his close collaborators who went into exile after the defeat of the Hungarians at Vilagos were celebrated as real heroes in the West, especially in Great Britain and the United States.¹³

Positive and Negative Images and Stereotypes

In the period of the Ottoman Turkish occupation between the fifteenth and seventeenth century Germany showed a great interest in the ongoing war in Hungary. This was due to the fact that the Germans were quite close to the frontline in Hungary or even involved in the fighting against the Turks. Interestingly, different types of images and stereotypes of the Hungarians simultaneously appeared in the German texts and pamphlets of that time.¹⁴ One set of German images depicts Hungary as the ‘shield of Christianity’, recalling the metaphors of earlier mediaeval times. It is regretted that after the battle of Mohacs (1526) Hungary has become the victim of the plundering and murdering Turks. The Hungarians are praised for their *vitezseg* ‘heroism’, *batorsag* ‘bravery’, *harciassag* ‘fighting-spirit’ and *lovagiassag* ‘chivalry’. The hero of this camp is the Catholic Count Nicholas Zrinyi who is leading the Christian resistance against the Turks.

The other set of images depicts the Hungarians as ‘traitors, cowards, and unreliable’ ‘uncontrollable’ people that cooperate with the Turkish heathens in order to indulge their hate against the Germans.¹⁵ This image of the Hungarians bears upon the Protestants in Eastern Hungary and Transylvania who cooperated with the Turks and called for religious tolerance in order to restore independent Hungary. Especially, the personifications of these Hungarian national movements, the Transylvanian Princes Janos Zapolyai, Istvan Bocskai, Gabor Bethlen and Imre Thokoly, were demonized.¹⁶

These opposite images and stereotypes of the Hungarians simultaneously occurred in Catholic texts and pamphlets and were propagated by the Catholic German principalities. The positive and negative values of these images and stereotypes are reversed in the texts and pamphlets that appeared in the Protestant principalities along the Rhine and in Brandenburg. These principalities were pro-Turkish and anti-Emperor, sympa-

thizing with the Hungarian national movement in Eastern Hungary and Transylvania.

In sum, from the above examples two sets of Western images and stereotypes can be constructed, namely, the negative variant of Hungarians as inferior, backward, plundering Asiatic, barbarian intruders in Europe and the positive variant of Hungarians heroically fighting for the defense of Christian Europe and European liberal values. The images and stereotypes themselves are rather persistent. Throughout the particular stages of history the same kind of images or their variants reappear. The Western image of Hungary is, however, rather instable. It fluctuates between negative and positive values. The realization of these values is dependent on the political decisions and attitudes of the West in general, on a particular state; or of a particular political camp. Thus, if Hungarians act against the political interest of the West – or more precisely against the interest of a Western state or political camp involved – then the negative variant is triggered. On the other hand, if Hungarians defend Western interest – or more precisely those of a Western state or political camp involved – then the positive variant surfaces. Hence, I conclude that the Western images and stereotypes of the Hungarians reveal the hypotheses of the Western images of the barbarians.

Above I have discussed the case of German texts and pamphlets during the period of Turkish occupation involving both sets of images of the Hungarians simultaneously. Let me consider now in more detail a turning point of values and its trigger.

Hungarian Images and Stereotypes Before, During and After World War I

Let me first turn to the geopolitical situation in Europe in the second half of the last century and the position of Hungary in the European system of states.

The West, especially Great Britain and the United States, sympathized with the Hungarian, anti-Habsburg Revolution and the War of Independence of 1848/1849, although the West was reluctant to support the Hungarians. According to C.A. Macartney the reason for this was the traditional British policy of balance of power

that caused Britain also consistently to support the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, although there was much also in the structure of the Monarchy which British progressives disliked. In 1848 there was strong popular feeling among us against the Austrian regime, and very lively sympathy for Hungary, and our Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerstone, fully shared both feelings, but while willing, as he said, to do everything possible for the Hungarians, he refused to do anything for Hungary, because he held that Austria in the absence of Hungary would be too weak to fulfill her role of barrier against Russia and factor in the European balance of power, and that Hungary without Austria would be too weak to take her place.¹⁷

As a consequence of the Hungarian isolation in 1848/1849 and the disappointing experiences of the Hungarian exiles of the Kossuth camp in gaining support for the Hungarian cause among the Western powers, the program of complete independence from Austria was set aside. Instead after a period of passive resistance, the Hungarian political leadership was looking for a compromise with the House of Habsburg. The appropriate moment came in 1867 after Austria's defeat against Prussia in 1866. The *Ausgleich* between the Emperor Franz Joseph and the Hungarian aristocracy resulted in a dual structure of the Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy headed by Emperor and King Franz Joseph. With the *Ausgleich*, the Hungarians put their destiny in the

hands of Vienna which determined the foreign policy of the Dual Monarchy.

Dualism favored a long period of stability and economic prosperity but it also preserved the conservative, semi-feudal structures within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, such as the lack of universal suffrage, that had been criticized by the Hungarian liberals of 1848. Further, it hampered the equal treatment of the different nationalities living in the Empire. The nationality question turned more and more into a factor of disintegration.

The Hungarians looked to Tsarist Russia with suspicion and fear. They had several reasons for this. First, the Hungarian War of Independence of 1849 was crushed with the help of the Tsarist army. Second, Russia became the driving force of pan-Slavism in the last part of the nineteenth century. The Russians turned pan-Slavism into an effective vehicle to gain more influence in the Balkans among the newly nationally awakened Slavic groups. The Hungarians were afraid that this would attract the Slavic-speaking nationalities in the southern part of the country threatening Hungary's territorial integrity.

In European relations the enlarged Germany of 1871 became a central focus of attention. Germany quickly developed into a serious rival of the established powers Great Britain and France in the race for European hegemony. With the establishment of the *DreiKaiserBund* of 1872, Germany relied on the Habsburg Empire and Tsarist Russia, the other two continental powers, in this race. The question arises as to how the Hungarians viewed Bismarck's Germany.

My interpretation of events counters the claim that Hungary was a willing ally of Prussian Hohenzollerism and militarism in the second half of the last century.¹⁸ Hungarian public opinion regarded Bismarck's rise to power in 1862 with concern. Hungary rejected both Prussia's interior politics because they were considered anti-liberal and its foreign policy because Hungary considered Prussia too aggressive. The Hungarian newspapers condemned the Prussian war against Denmark in 1864 in order to annex Schleswig-Holstein. Hungary supported Austria during the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, contrary to the fact that Hungary was in conflict with the Austrians. The Hungarians regarded a Prussian victory as the ultimate defeat for liberalism and constitutionalism in Germany. Hungary rejected Bismarck's offer to restore the Hungarian constitution after the 1866 war to avoid dependence on Germany. For a similar reason, the Hungarian Prime Minister Gyula Andrassy turned down the advances of Bismarck towards Hungary following the *Ausgleich* of 1867. Hungarian public opinion took a similar stance with respect to the Franco-Prussian war of 1870/1871 as in the case of the Austro-Prussian conflict, that is, it was anti-Prussian. The liberal statesman Jozsef Eötvös noted that the fall of Metz was received in Pest as if Hungary had suffered another catastrophe of Mohacs. Even Prime Minister Kalman Tisza, who was probably the most pro-German Hungarian politician, wrote in the autumn of 1870 that Bismarckism all over Europe is not in the interest of Hungary. To recapitulate, the leading Hungarian politicians of the *Ausgleich* generation treated Bismarckism with scepticism, because they considered themselves to be liberal, they were afraid of the Prussian conquests, and because they looked upon the Junker politician as a protégé of Russian Tsarism.

In sum, the Western Great Powers, Great Britain and France, did not support Hungarian independence in the period preceding World War I. The Hungarians alone were too

weak to defend themselves against pan-Germanism or pan-Slavism. Hence, the Hungarian dilemma consisted of the choice between them. The Hungarians chose the lesser evil, that is, Germany although they did not have many illusions on that score. Their mood was reflected in the witticism which made the rounds in Budapest on the eve of World War I: 'If Germany loses, we lose: if she wins, we are lost'.¹⁹

The positive Western images of Hungary turned negative in the years preceding World War I. The images of 'liberal and constitutional Hungary' were replaced by the images of 'Hungarians as brutal oppressors of Hungary's nationalities' and 'Hungarians threatening European peace' and 'being an obstacle for European progress' on account of Austria-Hungary's alliance with Germany. It is true that from the 1870s dualist Hungary embarked on an ambitious policy of Magyarization. But it was neither of the kind nor duration that is often claimed.²⁰ After 1878 dualist Austria-Hungary was an ally of Imperial Germany. Anti-Hungarian views, however, also gave an equally unfounded interpretation of the Hungarian alliance with Germany preceding the First World War. They turned a few decades of Hungarian reliance on German power which originated from Hungary's vulnerable geopolitical position into another millennial crime.²¹ This was a true distortion in view of centuries of Hungarian struggle against the Habsburg variety of the German *Drang nach Osten*.²²

According to the Hungarian historian Geza Jeszenszky, the book of the British historian R.W. Seton-Watson entitled *Racial Problems in Hungary* (1908) was responsible for the shift in the Western images of Hungary:

this book is practically a history of Hungary with special reference to the development of the nationality problem, and to the Slovaks in particular. For most British observers this book was the decisive argument against the Hungarians, and it was the mortal blow on the traditional British image of Liberal, Constitutional Hungary.²³

Seton-Watson's book was a sharp reaction to the so-called 'Kossuth-myth' that had been cultivated in the Anglo-Saxon world after the Hungarian, anti-Habsburg Revolution and War of Independence of 1848-49.²⁴ The leader of the Revolution, Lajos Kossuth, found refuge in Great Britain after the defeat of the Hungarian army. His stay in Great Britain contributed much to the stereotype of Hungarians as champions of liberalism and independence. Kossuth himself was, however, a rather authoritarian personality with an intolerant attitude towards the non-Magyar nationalities of Hungary. Furthermore, the revolutionary Kossuth also preferred radical political solutions, as in the question of total independence from Austria and the House of Habsburg. With this attitude he provoked moderate Hungarian politicians, like Count Szechenyi. Under the influence of the positive stereotype of the Hungarians in this period, R.W. Seton-Watson first took a pro-Hungarian stance before his first trip to Austria-Hungary in 1906, as his son Hugh Seton-Watson notes: 'In the Hungarians he saw a nation which had made great sacrifices for the cause of liberty, and also had traditional links with Britain. Hungarian liberalism, whose parliamentary style seemed to resemble the British, and Hungarian Calvinism, which had much in common with the Presbyterian culture of his native Scotland, attracted him'.²⁵ Finding out during his travels in the years 1906-1908 that Hungary's political system was not as liberal as he thought, R.W. Seton-Watson's sympathy for Hungary turned into a virulent antipathy.

After the appearance of *Racial Problems* R. W. Seton-Watson fanatically propagated the negative images and stereotypes of Hungary. During his visit to Romania in 1915, for example, he declared in an interview given to the daily paper *Adevarul*:

What Prussian militarism is for us, Magyar hegemony is for you: these are the principal obstacles to European progress. We together with our French and Russian allies must fight the German danger; but you with the Serbs must put an end to the brutal and artificial domination of the Magyar race over all its neighbors.²⁶

The turning point in the Western images of Hungary, the appearance of *Racial Problems in Hungary* in 1908 was, however, no coincidence. The reason for the wide reception of this book was related to the fact that Great Britain had concluded anti-German treaties with two other rivals – Russia and France – in 1907. Due to this Hungary, as a member of the *Central Powers* – the alliance led by Germany – became a member of the enemy's camp. In France, the turning point probably took place earlier than in Great Britain. After 1878 when Austro-Hungary became an ally of Imperial Germany, France no longer relied on the Hungarians in its rivalry with Germany, as it had done in earlier centuries supporting the Hungarian anti-German/Habsburg uprisings in order to weaken the Germans.²⁷ The changing image of Hungary in France is reflected in the following quote from the study of the French historian Bertrand Auerbach entitled *Les races et les nationalités en Autriche-Hongrie* that appeared in 1898: '...les Magyars commettent un anachronisme lorsqu'ils tentent de fonder une nation une et vivante sur les cadavres de nationalités...'²⁸ Hence, political and military strategy determined Hungary's changing image in the West.

The negative Western attitudes toward Hungary were more generally shared among the decision-makers in the camp of the victorious *Entente Powers*. This is reflected, for example, in the statements of Harold Nicolson, a young British diplomat negotiator at the Peace talks in Paris:

My feelings towards Hungary were less detached. I confess that I regarded, and still regard, that Turanian tribe with acute distaste. Like their cousins the Turks, they had destroyed much and created nothing. Buda Pest was a false city devoid of any autochthonous reality.²⁹ For centuries the Magyars had oppressed their subject nationalities. The hour of liberation and of retribution was at hand.³⁰

These negative images and stereotypes had a decisive impact on the Treaty of Trianon (1920). They served as the prime justification for the partitioning of historic Hungary.

Count Carlo Sforza, the Italian diplomat and foreign minister in the years 1920-1921, provides us in his book *Makers of Modern Europe* with another typical instance of these negative images and stereotypes. The book portrays the statesmen and diplomats that played a prominent role in the establishment of the New Europe after World War I.³¹ The portraits are based on the personal impressions and recollections of Count Sforza himself. He also devotes a chapter entitled *Tisza, The Magyar* to Count Stephen Tisza, Hungary's Prime Minister from 1910 to 1917. In the summer of 1914, Count Tisza tried to play a moderating role during the debates in the Austro-Hungarian crown council in order to prevent the outbreak of the First World War.³²

The term *The Magyar*, referring to his nationality, already suggests that Count Tisza is not regarded as an individual but as a representative of the entire Hungarian nation. This is also evident from Sforza's statement: 'Count Stephen Tisza, as I knew him in Hungary and Austria during the years preceding the World War, has always seemed to me the most typical embodiment of that Hungarian state of mind'.³³ The title further suggests a relation with another dreaded enemy of the West, namely, the barbarian king *Attila the Hun*. The linguistic structure of the phrase *Tisza the Magyar* corresponds to the one of the phrase *Attila the Hun*. Here Sforza subtly employs a linguistic means to establish a link between the Hungarians and the barbarians.

Sforza's chapter on Tisza includes almost all the negative Hungarian images and stereotypes of that period. The image of Hungary as a backward country with a selfish political elite, the Hungarian aristocracy, oppressing Hungary's 'commoners':

In the long spirited history, the Magyar aristocracy, and the Magyar gentry as well, never so much as suspected that it was fair, or might be politic, to exercise a little justice toward the subject races of St. Stephen's Crown, or to treat them with some degree of equality. Their Thousand-Year-Old Constitution has always been, is still today, a framework to keep up the rights of a feudal country, against the Crown when there is need, against the nameless people always.³⁴

The image of the provincial Hungarians:

...he made him forget his Calvinism as soon as he found himself among his thoroughbred provincial Magyars. There he felt his heart beat in unison with theirs; there he threw off his mask, and the master of Hungary indulged in dancing *csardas* till dawn, flourishing handkerchief, doing in fact all those things that the other aristocrats spoke of with fondness to us strangers, but that they no longer knew how to do.³⁵

The stereotype of the chauvinist Hungarians oppressing Hungary's non-Magyar nationalities: 'Tisza always struck me as being more Hungarian than feudal, and that he so whole-heartedly favored the privilege system which he seemed to personify, because, unimaginative as he was, he never succeeded in seeing any other way of securing the life of his Magyarized Hungary'.³⁶ The image of the Hungarian aristocracy and the Hungarians as aggressive, hot-headed and inferior: 'Violent as all the other Magyars, and blind as they are to all that runs counter to them...'³⁷ and '...he could when he thought it necessary, curb the white heat of his Magyars'.³⁸ The stereotype of the Hungarians as the unconditional supporters of German imperialism and militarism in Europe: '...admirers of Germany, or better, of what was worst in Germany: Hohenzollernism, oppression of the Poles, the Hungarians were of all the people, the most naïve and ardent supporters of Pangermanism'.³⁹

To recapitulate, the traditional negative Western images and stereotypes of Hungarians as inferior, backward, aggressive Asiatic oppressors reoccur in the years preceding the First World War and remain vivid during and after the War. In this period, new variants, like the Hungarians as 'chauvinists', 'Magyarizers', and 'accomplices of the Germans', are added to the already existing ones. The object of stereotyping is the Hungarian aristocracy, the leading political elite of that time, who is considered to be characteristic of the Hungarians in general. The resurfacing of the negative Western

images of Hungary is clearly connected to the fact that the Hungarians found themselves in a different political camp than the Western Powers. Following the establishment of the anti-German coalition consisting of Britain, France and Russia in 1907, R.W. Seton-Watson and his collaborators launched the anti-Hungarian images and stereotypes in the countries of the *Entente*. These Western images and stereotypes were stirred up by the negative auto-images of Hungarian progressives and left-wing radicals, like the poet Endre Ady and his literary periodical *Nyugat* (The West) and Oszkar Jaszi and his scientific magazine *Huszadik Szazad* (The Twentieth Century) condemning the 'eastern backwardness' of Hungary with its feudal society dominated by the aristocracy.⁴⁰

The foundation of the post-Trianon Hungarian national state does not alter Western images and stereotypes. More objective approaches do not seem to affect them. An example of this are the personal impressions of Major General Harry Hill Bandholtz American member of the Inter-Allied Military Mission to Budapest from August 10, 1919 until February 10, 1920 during the Romanian occupation of Hungary. In his *Undiplomatic Diary* that was published in 1933, Bandholtz shows a high respect for the Hungarians: 'The Hungarians certainly have many defects, at least from an American point of view, but they are so far superior to any of their neighbours that it is a crime against civilization to continue with the proposed dismemberment of the country'.⁴¹

The following two factors are responsible for the negative Western images and stereotypes in the interwar period. First, the Western perception of Hungarians as inferior conservatives who live in a kind of political dreamworld remains unaffected. The features of Hungarian political conservatism including *diszmagyar*, the gala-dress of the Hungarian aristocracy; oligarchic oppression of peasants; absence of universal suffrage; the ancient Hungarian Constitution; respect for the Holy Crown; attachment to the institutions of the Monarchy and legitimism are regarded as something unique and exotic but also as something backward. Secondly, the Western Powers consider the Hungarian struggle for revision of the Treaty of Trianon as a disturbing phenomenon in the European balance of power and peace. In the West, only British conservatives grouped around Lord Rothmere seriously supported Hungarian revisionism.⁴² The fusion of political conservatism and the goals of the revisionist movement resulted in Western stereotyping of Hungarians as 'chauvinists', 'irredentists', 'revisionists' and 'revengists'.⁴³ In fact, old images survived with a few new variants.

During the Second World War Hungary was an ally of Nazi Germany, although Hungary was not willing to obey all the orders of the Nazis. After the war, however, the Western stereotype of the Hungarians as accomplices of German hegemony in Europe prevails again. Hungary is branded once more 'the No.1 satellite' and 'the most faithful ally' of Nazi Germany, despite the fact that Hungary refused to offer military and logistic assistance to the Germans in order to crush Poland in 1939; despite the secret agreement arrived at between Great Britain and Admiral Horthy's government, in Turkey, on August 17, 1943, providing that Hungary would surrender to the Western Allies as soon as they reached the country's border; despite Hungary's Hitlerite-German invasion of March 19, 1944; despite all the assistance extended throughout the war to Allied (above all Polish and French) prisoners of war escaped from German POW camps; despite the overt collaboration of Hungary's Slovak, Romanian and Croat neighbors with Germany; and despite Prime Minister Count Paul Teleki's most significant suicide

as a protest against violating Hungarian non-belligerence.⁴⁴

The book of John Flournoy Montgomery, US ambassador to Budapest between 1933 and 1941, entitled *Hungary, the Unwilling Satellite* does not seriously affect the image of Hungary as 'the most faithful ally' of Nazi Germany.⁴⁵ Montgomery outlines in his book which is based on personal impressions and experiences the vulnerable geopolitical position of Hungary in the period before the Second World War. According to Montgomery, Hungary incited Hitler's anger during the war because it made no effort toward the extermination of the Jews as long as the Hungarians could control their own destiny, that is, until Hungary's occupation by the Nazis in March 1944.⁴⁶ Raul Hilberg, author of the authoritative work on the Holocaust, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, notes: 'By 1944 only one important area was still intact. The area was Hungary, and 750,000 Jews survived within its borders. When the Hungarian Jews looked at a map of Axis Europe at the beginning of 1944, they could see that all around them Jewish communities had been attacked and destroyed' and 'In March 1944 ... the Germans overran the country and catastrophe overtook the Jews.'⁴⁷ During the German occupation Admiral Horthy remained Regent of Hungary, he accepted the ignominy of it and tried to save what could be saved. On June 26, 1944 Horthy decreed to cancel the deportations of the Jews from Budapest where most of the Hungarian Jews were living. The deportations of the Jews had started after the Nazis had taken control over Hungary and installed a puppet regime of Hungarian fascists recruited from the Arrow Cross movement. The leadership of the national gendarmerie collaborating with the Germans neglected Horthy's decree and wanted to continue the deportations of the Jews. On July 6, 1944 Admiral Horthy ordered the Hungarian army, including a tank division, to prevent the gendarmerie from deporting the remaining 200,000 Jews from Budapest. The forces of the gendarmerie withdrew from the city avoiding a weaponed conflict with the army and the deportation of the Jews was stopped.⁴⁸

During the Soviet-communist occupation of Hungary the positive Western images of Hungarians reappear. The Hungarian uprising of 1956 reinforced the image of Hungarians as brave, heroic defenders of European values and liberty against oppressive barbarism from the East. The Hungarian ability to survive under difficult conditions made the West label Hungary the 'happiest barrack of the socialist camp' in the last decade of the Kadar regime. But even these positive Western images of the Hungarians are accompanied by the old negative Western images classifying Hungarians as 'chauvinists' and 'irridentists'. Consider for example Daniel Patrick Moynihan's private opinions that 'in 1956 Cardinal Joseph Mindszenty sought sanctuary in the American embassy in Budapest, where he remained for fifteen years. He is remembered there as much for his bitterness toward Woodrow Wilson and the Versailles Peace Treaty as for his anti-communism' and that 'Hungarian opinion was openly irridentist during the latter years of Marxist rule'.⁴⁹

Conclusion

The Western stereotypes and images of the Hungarians have been predominantly negative in this century. The Hungarian stereotype dwells on conservative, undemocratic traditions, nationalism and anti-Semitism, the Hungarian national character of melancholia, Hungarians as a source of trouble in Central Europe, and the Hungarians as

Germanophiles. Western influential decision-makers advocating the Hungarian cause are like white ravens. Intensive contacts between the West and Hungary involving the training of Hungarian students at Protestant western universities in Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands and Great Britain between the 16th and 18th centuries, the political exiles of 1848-49 and 1956 in the West, or the personal impressions of Western 'eye-witnesses', like Harry Hill Bandholtz or John Flournoy Montgomery do not seem to have a corrective effect.

In recent years following the collapse of communism in 1989 the Western image of Hungary has turned negative. Much of it has to do with the resurrection of national traditions and identity that have been suppressed under communism. Western political decision-makers suspect and fear that this will lead to Hungarian revisionism and that Hungary will support the rising power of Germany in Central and Eastern Europe. Statements of Hungarian politicians, like the one of Prime Minister Jozsef Antall that he is the Prime Minister of 15 million Hungarians in spirit, and national events, such as the reburial of Admiral Horthy, clearly stir up Western suspicion toward Hungary. This triggers the negative set of Western images and stereotypes of the Hungarians.

A comparative approach of the Western national images and stereotypes of Central and Eastern Europe is important in order to determine whether the image of the barbarians is an insightful framework for studying the relation between the Western political attitudes and decisions and the Western perception of the area. A positive image of the Hungarians often goes together with a negative image of the Czechs or Romanians as the following quotations from Bandholtz' *Undiplomatic Diary* illustrate:

When the American army was in France and we heard so much of the Czech-Slovaks, we formed a very high opinion of them, but I am afraid that this opinion was based entirely on propaganda, because, in all the asinine and ridiculous stunts lately pulled off in this corner of Europe, the Czechs have been ahead of all other small nations,⁵⁰

and:

Personally I came here rather inclined to condone or extenuate much of the Roumanian procedure, but their outrageous conduct in violation of all international law, decency, and humane considerations, has made me become an advocate of the Hungarian cause.⁵¹

In this volume Wandycz observes that the Polish image during the Versailles Peace talks was negative, although partitioned Poland was resurrected by the Western allies. Hungary, also having a negative image during the Peace talks, was however dismembered by the same countries. This seems to counter the claim of a direct connection between Western political attitudes and decisions and Western images and stereotypes. I will leave this puzzle for further research. On the other hand, it underscores the fact that the other side of the *Limes* is considered the domain of the barbarians.

References

1. See Hugh Seton-Watson, 'What is Europe, Where is Europe? From Mystique to Politique', in: George Schöpflin (ed.), *In Search of Central Europe*, London, 1989, pp. 30-46.
2. In this paper, I will not attempt to define what a stereotype is and what the mechanisms of stereotyping are (see Wandycz, this volume) for an approach. It seems to me that a stereotype deforms reality although it has a fixed core that corresponds to a part of reality. So a stereotype reassures reality and adds something new to it. I will set aside the theoretical problem of stereotypes and images for further research.
3. See Bruno Naarden, *Socialist Europe and Revolutionary Russia: Perception and Prejudice, 1848-1923*, Cambridge, 1992, Chpt. 1.
4. Stephen Borsody, *The New Central Europe*. New York, 1993, pp. xiv, 67.
5. In this paper, I rely heavily on earlier studies of Western images and national stereotypes of the Hungarians, including Sándor Eckhardt, 'A magyarság külföldi arcképe', in: *Gyula Szekfü, Mi a magyar?*. Budapest, 1939, reprint Budapest, 1992, pp. 87-137; Kálmán Benda, *A törökör német ujságírodalma, a XV-XVII. századi német hírlapok magyar vonatkozásainak forráskritikájához*. Budapest, 1942; Béla Köpeczi, *Magyarország a kereszténység ellensége, a Thököly-felkelés az európai közvéleményben*. Budapest, 1976; articles in B. Köpeczi, L. Hopp and A.R. Várkonyi (eds.) *Rákóczi-Tanulmányok*. Budapest, 1980, especially Béla Köpeczi's *Rákóczi külpolitikája és a szabadságharc nemzetközi jelentősége*, pp. 205-229; Yves de Daruvar, *The Tragic Fate of Hungary, a Country Carved-up Alive at Trianon*. USA, second edition, translation from *Le destin dramatique de la Hongrie*, Paris, 1971); György Gömöri, *Angol-magyar kapcsolatok a XVI-XVII. században*. Budapest, 1989; György Gömöri, *Erdélyiek és angolok*. Budapest, 1990; Stephen Borsody, *The New Central Europe*. New York, 1993; György Gömöri, *Angol és skót utazók a régi Magyarországon 1542-1737*. Budapest, 1994; and Géza Jeszenszky, *Az elvesztett presztízs, Magyarország megítélésének megváltozása Nagy-Britanniában (1914-1918)*. Budapest, 1994.
6. See Szabolcs de Vajay, *Der Eintritt der ungarischen Stämmenbundes in die europäischen Geschichte*, Mainz, 1968.
7. Modern Hungarian historiography has rejected the myth of the Hunnish descendancy of the Hungarians (see Sándor Vogel, this volume). Up until the end of the last century the alleged link between the Huns and the Hungarians was however generally accepted. This auto-image played a crucial role throughout Hungarian history in times when Hungarian national identity had to be stressed, as opposed to Westernized Christian identity; when foreign intruders had to be wiped out from Hungary; and when Hungarian territorial claims concerning the Carpathian Basin were put forward. The problems of Hungarian auto-images I will set aside for further research.
8. See Marcel Dunan (ed.), *Larousse Encyclopedia of Ancient & Medieval History*. London, 1992, p. 281.
9. Consider Johannes Duft and Tibor Missura-Sipos, *Die Ungarn in Sankt Gallen*, St. Gallen, 1992, for a description of the Hungarians' plundering of the Monastery of

- St. Gall in 926 based on medieval sources.
10. See Eckhardt, 'A magyarság külföldi arcképe'. 91.
 11. This metaphor had a number of variants including Hungary being the *védőbástya* 'stronghold', *védővár* 'bastion', *védősánc* 'fortification', *védőgát* 'dam', *kőfal* 'stonewall', *oszlop* 'pillar', and *pajzs* 'shield' of Christian Europe.
 12. Cited by C.A. Macartney, 'Britain and Eastern Europe', in Francis S. Wagner (ed.), *Toward a New Central Europe*. Florida, 1970, p. 53.
 13. See Mark Imre Major, *American Hungarian Relations 1918-1944*. Florida, 1974, pp. 114-116.
 14. See Benda, *A törökör német ujságírodalma, a XV-XVII. századi német hírlapok magyar vonatkozásainak forráskritikájához*, 1942.
 15. Benda, *Ibid.*, p. 61.
 16. On the positive and negative images of the uprising led by Imre Thököly see Béla Köpeczi, *Magyarország a kereszténység ellensége*; and on the Western images and stereotypes of Ferenc Rákóczi's War of Independence the articles in B. Köpeczi, et al. (eds.) *Rákóczi-Tanulmányok*. Compare for the negative images of Gábor Bethlen in British texts Gömöri, *Angol-magyar kapcsolatok a XVI-XVII. században*, pp. 60-66.
 17. Macartney, 'Britain and Eastern Europe,' p. 53.
 18. See for these arguments the marxist historian István Diószegi, *A magyar külpolitika utjai*, Budapest, 1984, pp. 214-218.
 19. Cited by de Daruvar, *The Tragic Fate of Hungary*, p. 54.
 20. Official historiography in Slovakia, Romania and Serbia often claims that the Hungarians have oppressed the Slovaks, Romanians and Serbs for a millennium. In recent years following the fall of communism non-nationalist, demythicized approaches of the relations between on the one hand, the Hungarians, and on the other hand, the Slovaks, Romanians and Serbs have been pursued. See for example Alexandru Dutu (this volume); Sándor Vogel (this volume); and Dusan Kovác, 'Die Slowakei als ein Teil von Ungarn', in R. Aspeslagh, Hans Renner and H. van der Meulen (eds.), *Im historischen Würgegriff*. Baden-Baden, 1994, pp. 21-31.
 21. See for example Eduard Benes' wartime pamphlet *Détruisez l'Autriche-Hongrie! Le martyre des Tchéco-Slovaques à travers l'histoire*, Paris, 1916.
 22. See Stephen Borsody, 'State- and Nation-building in Central Europe: the Origins of the Hungarian Problem', in Stephen Borsody (ed.), *The Hungarians: A Divided Nation*. New Haven, 1988, p. 13.
 23. Compare Géza Jeszenszky, 'The Correspondence of Oszkár Jászi and R.W. Seton-Watson before World War I', in *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 26, Budapest, 1980, pp. 437-445.
 24. On this issue see Jeszenszky, *Az elvesztett presztízs, Magyarország megítélésének megváltozása Nagy-Britanniában (194-1918)* Chpt. 1.
 25. Cited in Hugh Seton-Watson, 'R.W. Seton-Watson and the Trianon Settlement', in B.K. Király, P. Pastor, and I. Sanders (eds.), *War and Society in East Central Europe Vol. VI, Essays on World War I: Total War and Peacemaking, A Case Study on Trianon* New York, 1982, pp. 3-15.
 26. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
 27. I will leave the origin of Hungary's changing image in France as a topic for further

research.

28. See Bertrand Auerbach, *Les Races et les nationalités en Autriche-Hongrie*. Paris, 1898, p. 331.
29. Harold Nicolson spent four years as a child with his parents in Budapest after his father Arthur Nicolson was appointed as Great Britain's ambassador to Hungary in 1888. John Lukács in his excellent *Budapest 1900* is puzzled at the question as to why the Nicolson's did not like Budapest. (See John Lukács, *Budapest 1900: A Historical Portrait of a City and its Culture*. New York, 1988, Chpt. 2.
30. Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919*. New York, 1933, p. 34.
31. See Count Carlo Sforza, *Makers of Modern Europe, Portraits and Personal Impressions and Recollections*. Indianapolis, 1928, Chapter VI, pp. 66-78.
32. Compare Henry Bogdan, *From Warsaw to Sofia, A History of Eastern Europe*. Santa Fe, 1989, p. 150.
33. Sforza, *Making of Modern Europe*, p. 69.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
40. See Lukács, *Budapest 1900*, 1988.
41. See *An Undiplomatic Diary*, by the American Member of the Inter-Allied Military Mission to Hungary 1919-1920 Maj. Gen. Harry Hill Bandholtz, U.S.A., Fritz-Konrad Krüger (ed.), New York, 1933, p. 362.
42. See Ignác Romsics, *Bethlen István*, Budapest, 1991, pp. 181-183.
43. For a similar interpretation see István Bibó, 'A mai külföld szemlélete a magyarságról,' in *Válogatott tanulmányok 1935-1944*, Budapest, 1986, p. 155.
44. Compare de Daruvar, *The Tragic Fate of Hungary*, pp. 178-179.
45. See John Flournoy Montgomery, *Hungary, the Unwilling Satellite*, New York, 1947.
46. *Ibid.*, Chpts. 2 and 4.
47. See Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, New York, 1985, pp. 796-797.
48. For more details see the authoritative work *The Hungarian Army in the Second World War (A magyar honvédség a második világháborúban)* by the Swiss Historian Péter Gosztonyi, Budapest, 1992, pp. 152-155.
49. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Pandemonium, Ethnicity in International Politics*. Oxford, 1993, p. 72.
50. *An Undiplomatic Diary*, p. 311.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 361.