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## EUROPEAN CULTURE – HUNGARIAN CULTURE /1945–2000/\*

**Hungarian Culture and Hungary's Accession into the European Union**

In the introductory study József N. Szabó demonstrates that after Hungary's accession into the European Union the country will not only belong to an economic and political community, but also to a colourful, still coherent European culture. Throughout the centuries Hungary has been involved in a cultural exchange with Europe: enriching the culture of the continent and continually adapting the eternal values of European culture. The author of the study analyses various aspects of Hungarian culture prior to the country's accession into the Union. József N. Szabó identifies some of the challenges the Hungarian cultural and professional elite shall face with the act of the country's accession. The author provides a view into Hungary's cultural connections to the individual cultures of other European nations, discussing Hungary's relations with the politically and culturally dominant countries of the Union as well as those with the smaller nations.<sup>1</sup>

**I. Hungarian-French Cultural Connections**

In the study the authors deal with the post-war Hungarian-French cultural connections, the role of France in Hungarian cultural diplomatic endeavours. It is clear that past events influenced and determined the relationship of the two cultures, the image of the two nations in each other's countries. It is therefore important to improve the image of Hungary and the Hungarians in France, in the cultural conscience of France. France became an important target country of Hungarian cultural diplomatic efforts after 1945. Hungarian-French scientific connections flourished during the brief period of post-war Hungarian democracy. A Department of Hungarian Language and Literature

<sup>1</sup> The paper is a concise summary of a research led by the author. The essays were published formerly in periodicals and in a book. This article is the English collection of them.

<sup>1</sup> N. Szabó József 2006 Az Európai Unió és a magyar kultúra. *Kultúra és Közösség*, 2:69-73.

ture was established at Sorbonne University, and an intensive cooperation between Hungarian and French artists began. The Hungarian-French and French-Hungarian Associations played an important role in shaping the cultural connections of the two countries.

During the cold war the multilateral and highly efficient Hungarian-French cultural connections had declined, and it was only after 1956 that the conditions of a new type of cooperation were created. Since the 1960s Hungarian-French cultural connections have developed to an exemplary level again. The cooperation between the two cultures in the period before the change of the political system in Hungary served the purpose of the detente and the unification of Europe.<sup>2</sup>

**II. The Relationship Between Hungarian and British Cultures**

In the study the authors present the historic preliminaries of the connections between the two countries and describe the way the two countries entered into new connections after the Second World War. The authors explore the fields of scientific cooperation, the connections between the two nations in the fields of literature and arts. In addition to this, the authors pay attention to the role of NGOs in bringing the two cultures closer to each other.

The reader is given an insight into the work of the British Council in Hungary and that of the Hungarian Institute in London. An extensive description of the life and activities of the late professor Laszló Országh is provided. His role in introducing the British and American Studies in Hungary can hardly be overestimated. The two authors also deal with the effects of the cold war on the bilateral cultural connections as well as the general diplomatic background of Hungarian-British cultural diplomatic relations.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> N. Szabó József 1995 Magyar-francia kulturális és tudományos kapcsolatok. *Századok*, 6.

<sup>3</sup> N. Szabó József – Pálffy István 1994 Magyar-angol kulturális és tudományos kapcsolatok a II. világháború után. *Világtörténet*, tavasz-nyár, 82-90.

### III. Cultural and Scientific Cooperation with the Scandinavian Countries

József N. Szabó reveals and analyses the type and significance of Hungary's cultural connections with Sweden. The author describes the research opportunities opened up for Hungarian scientists in Sweden after World War II and the efforts of the institutes and department of Hungarian at the Swedish universities aimed at introducing Hungarian science and culture into Sweden.

In the essay the results of cooperation in music and inter-library connections between Hungary and Sweden. N. Szabó analyses the adverse effects of cold war on the bilateral connections.

Hungarian-Finnish cultural connections only began in the 19th century, but they have become very intensive and multilateral during the past hundred and fifty years. So much so, that these connections are now better than Hungary's connections with countries with which our relations look back on a much longer past. The fact that the two languages belong to the same family, and the common origin of the two nations, have had greatly contributed to the rapid development of the bilateral connections. There was a pause in these connections after the Second World War, because the western powers chose to isolate themselves from Hungary, but it was Finland with which Hungary signed the first cultural cooperation agreement in 1959. As a result, joint scientific and cultural projects were resurrected. In the frameworks of twin town connections, cultural, educational and scientific connections, and the bilateral relations of the churches in the two countries, not only high-level Hungarian delegations had the opportunity of visiting Finland. The way also opened up for a number of Hungarian citizens to cross the iron curtain and visit a „western country” In this case the western country was in the north. Many Hungarian people got acquainted with the culture, traditions and social structure of Finland. Hungary's so-called „people's diplomacy” was a unique initiative in the socialist block. As part of this project, 300 Hungarian and Finnish people had the opportunity of visiting each other's country every third year between 1967 and 1988. Each time they spent a week in the other country. In the meanwhile cultural exchanges gradually expanded, and today scientific cooperation is just as important as learning about each other's music or fine arts. Scientific institutions and cultural associations in the two countries entered into bilateral agreements

in which they themselves determined the contents of their cooperation.

The Finnish-Hungarian Association played a decisive role in the intensification of the connections. Similarly important was the role of the network of twin towns. The first twin town agreements were signed in the 50s. Before 1989 there was a system of clubs in Hungary, with the purpose of making the culture of Finland better known and more popular in Hungary. Although it was not a fully independent organization, as it worked under the aegis of the National Patriotic Front, it was the only organization devoted to the culture and civilization of a western country in Hungary before the change of the political system in Hungary.

Since Finland has been a member of the European Union, the cooperation between Hungary and Finland has been enriched with new elements. Government officials, professionals and local governments in Finland do a lot for promoting the cause of Hungary's accession into the Union. Their traditionally positive attitude to Hungary is rooted in the common origin and cultural-linguistic relationship. The extremely rich cultural cooperation between the two nations, that now looks back on decades of traditions, has made it possible to know and understand each other, to build up a mutual confidence that now often leads to a mutually beneficial, and formerly not too significant economic cooperation.<sup>4</sup>

### IV. Type and Significance of the Italian-Hungarian Cultural Relations

The work of József N. Szabó and József Pankovics describes the connections between the cultures of the two nations. These connections were just as excellent in the past as they are today. The authors reveal the Italian-Hungarian cultural connections in the period following World War II. In those days the relations were relatively good, considering the circumstances. N. Szabó and Pankovics survey the possibilities used by the professional and cultural elite in Hungary to establish new connections with foreign universities and other educational and cultural institutions. The role of the cultural institutions in both countries are the subject of a thorough analysis of the two authors. They also analyse

<sup>4</sup> N. Szabó József 1995 Magyar-svéd kulturális és tudományos kapcsolatok /1945–1948/. *Világtörténet*, tavasznyár, 66-72.

the reactions of the Vatican to the official politics of the socialist Hungarian Government related to the Church.

The paper also deals with the results of the multilateral cooperation in music, literature and arts. The authors discuss the adverse effects of the cold war on the bilateral cultural and professional connections of the two nations. The essay pays great attention to the thousand-year old ecclesiastic connections between Hungary and Italy.<sup>5</sup>

## V. The Special Relationship Between the German and Hungarian Cultures

The analysis shows that the relationship between the Hungarian and German cultures is a special one. Hungary has belonged to the German cultural sphere for hundreds of years. During this period, our nation has adapted the outstanding values of the German culture, trying to keep any discrepancies away from Hungary. After World War II, Hungary had to find a new cultural orientation, preserving the eternal values acquired from the German culture in the centuries before. Austria had a decisive role in keeping Hungary's connections with the German culture alive in the post-war period. The author deals with the process of building up cultural connections between Hungary and Austria after the war, the role of Vienna in the German and European culture. N. Szabó also pays attention to Switzerland, a country that was also an important target country of Hungarian cultural diplomacy, and that also contributed to reinforcing Hungary's international positions after the lost war.

Hungarian-German cultural and scientific relations look back on long and great traditions. From time to time new focal points and new fields of cooperation emerged under the effect of the changing circumstances. In the period after 1948 the connections, in a sense, doubled as the German Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic were established. The traditional cultural, scientific and economic connections became extremely complicated. After 1989-1990 the situation became somewhat easier as the Democratic Republic merged into the Federal. Hungary had a new

German partner, and also as a result of the change of the political system in Hungary, the bilateral connections began to flourish. New possibilities opened up for the Hungarian cultural and scientific „foreign policy”.

It is not possible to provide a complete list of government and non-governmental institutions, programmes, projects and events in one single essay. In the present article the author wishes to present the history of Goethe Institute, the cultural institute of the Federal German Republic in Hungary. The agreement between the two governments regarding the creation of the institute in Budapest was not free from any tension. It took place in 1987, when the East German Cultural and Information Centre in Budapest still functioned. In this paper an attempt is made to provide the history of the Institute, its effects on Hungarian cultural life since March 1988, when the Institute was opened. The author places his arguments in the broader context of European culture.<sup>6</sup>

## VI. The Philosophical Construction of the Romantic Europe-Concept in Central and Eastern Europe

The author undertakes the task of highlighting why it was Eastern European thinkers of Catholic orientation who most specifically called for a united Europe in the nineteenth century. This Europe-concept is assumed to spring from a sense of utopian compensation produced by the economic and social underdevelopment of the region. The author also intends to argue that, despite its utopianism, this romantic image can considerably contribute to contemporary arguments concerning Europe. Although the significance of establishing the legal and institutional framework of a united Europe cannot be denied, one must not overlook the spiritual-metaphysical aspects of the matter either. As Husserl explains, the spirit of Europe, in all its variations, contains an inherent entelechy that explains the constant urge to reach an ideal state of existence.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> N. Szabó József 1996 Magyar-olasz kulturális kapcsolatok /1945–1948/. *Világtörténet*, tavasz-nyár, 45-59; Pankovics József: *Magyar-olasz kulturális kapcsolatok 1948 után*. Studia Europaea Nyiregyháziensia... 121-132.

<sup>6</sup> *Adalékok a magyar-német kulturális kapcsolatok történetéhez*. Studia Europaea Nyiregyháziensia... 152-162.

<sup>7</sup> Kiss Lajos András: *Európa a filozófiai gondolkodásban*. Studia Europaea Nyiregyháziensia... 162-178.

