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EXAMINATEUR « A »

EXAMINER « A »

Report

“Communists vs. Conservatives and the Struggle for the Hungarian Soul in Canada, 1940-1989” by Christopher P. Adam

General Assessment:

This excellent doctoral dissertation examines the political divisions existing among Hungarian Canadians between the 1940s and the 1980s, along with the role played by Hungarian authorities in perpetuating and, in certain cases, exacerbating these divisions. The author argues that political divisions were deeply-held and that various groups possessed a great deal of agency in the face of attempts by Budapest to mobilise the community in support of Hungarian domestic and foreign policy. For instance, the Hungarian communist movement in Canada embraced causes linked to irredentism and often paid little more than lip service to notions of internationalism. The material related to Hungarian communism in Canada is indeed among the most interesting of this dissertation, and the author convincingly shows how Hungarian-Canadian communists acted independently, and often in defiance, of Budapest.

The dissertation is based on a remarkable array of sources, including the Hungarian-Canadian press and the declassified archives of various communist-era government agencies in Hungary. That said, this reader would have preferred if sources and methodology had been discussed more fully, and in the introduction. The author’s grasp of the historiography is impressive, as is his ability to grapple with the complex reality of a community characterised by a great deal of political, religious, geographic, and social diversity. He has written a dissertation that examines, among other things, the evolution of the Hungarian-Canadian community, the subversive activities of the Budapest regime, and the “ethnic” politics of Canada’s communist movement.

The author is in constant dialogue with the historiography surrounding his subject, and often links his work to wider theoretical considerations – though this reader would have preferred to read a discussion of Bergson’s theory before page 213. His work flows nicely, and he furnishes the non-specialist with sufficient background information to allow for comprehension. The dissertation, moreover, is well written, with few typos and awkward sentences.

The author’s thesis is very convincing, though the distinction that he makes between right- and left-wing opinion within the Hungarian community seems at times somewhat manichean. Certain groups no doubt viewed the community in manichean terms, but it is often hard to gauge the extent to which, for instance, right-wing groups could count on broad support.

The real shortcoming of this dissertation, however, is the relative absence of sustained discussion concerning the Canadian reaction to the various issues that divided the Hungarian-

Canadian community. To what extent, for instance, was the RCMP aware of Budapest's activities in Canada? Was its Special Branch involved in counter-subversion among Hungarian-Canadians? Was the Duplessis-era QPP aware of various subversive activities that would have violated the Padlock Law? Moreover, one must wonder to what extent Moscow was monitoring Budapest's activities in Canada. Though excellent, the dissertation is often too strictly diasporic in its examination of the Hungarian-Canadian community. If the dissertation was turned into a monograph, I would expect the author to delve deeper into Canadian and Soviet sources that may cast further light on his topic.

Notwithstanding this criticism, the present thesis makes a notable contribution to the literature surrounding the history of the Hungarian-Canadian community and also, more generally, to the history of Cold War Canada.

Detailed comments:

Page 8: Can the Nagy government, in a strict sense, be referred to as "democratic"?

Page 24: Not clear what is meant by "communist immigration."

Page 32: Immigrants from the Russian Empire would certainly have also been the major targets of the TLC.

Page 33: The issue of race did not "find" its way into Canadian immigration policy. It was present from day one.

Page 34: French Canadian nationalists were not terribly welcoming to immigrants either.

Page 53: The Liberal party had "discovered" non-British immigrants as a potential voter base long before the 1960s.

Page 54: Best to use the term "continental" when referring to European immigrants who are not from the United Kingdom.

Page 56: Why was the Hungarian community in Montreal less politicised than that of Toronto?

Page 83: Canada would not have been constitutionally covered by Britain's declaration of war.

Page 92: These figures need to be put into perspective. Were recruitment rates for Hungarian-Canadians statistically low?

Page 135: "Jingoistic"? "Unflinching" would probably be a better word choice.

Page 178: I would have liked to read a more extensive discussion and analysis of the contacts between various Hungarian groups and Canadian politicians.

Page 182: It would be interesting for the author to discuss if there was any substance to allegations of a right-wing campaign.

Page 218: The postscript would have been more effective if it had also discussed the early 1990s.



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EXAMINATEUR « B »

EXAMINER « B »

Report on PhD Thesis by Christopher Adam
Communists vs Conservatives and the Struggle for the Hungarian Soul in Canada,
1940-1989

1. Understanding of the Subject Matter

Mr. Adam's thesis, though brief, demonstrates a very strong understanding of the Canadian Hungarian community, particularly between the Second World War and the fall of Communism in Hungary. This is particularly the case in Montreal and Toronto, which were home to the largest concentrations of Hungarians. Adam describes, and explains very well, a very complex immigrant group, one that shared some broad characteristics, but also had pronounced divisions such as on the basis of religion, ideology, and the period in which they came to Canada. He expertly delineates Hungarian communities in Canada, as well as their interactions with their former homeland, whose leaders sought to use the expatriate community to advance its aims.

2. Contribution to Knowledge

As Adam notes, there are few works, academic or popular, covering the Hungarian community in Canada. Those that have appeared, most notably by Carmela Patrias, does not cover the period after 1940. Adam shows the powerful influence of Hungarian nationalism, how it was exploited by rival factions, as well as how it superseded the influence of social class on the political left. Also, despite strong ties to the 'old country', Adam demonstrates that Hungarians in Canada retained considerable agency. Indeed, even though Communists in Canada received funding from Budapest, there remained, on several occasions, a refusal to follow directives from overseas. Besides historians of ethnicity, those interested in post-war Canadian foreign policy and the politics of Cold War Canada will find much of interest in this work. Adam describes the considerable efforts made Communist Hungary to cultivate relations and obtain information from the expatriate community as well as efforts by Canadian authorities to thwart this effort.

3. Research Methodology

This thesis is informed by very considerable research into Canadian and Hungarian archives as well as extensive consultation of the Canadian Hungarian press. Adam has also delved into most of the key secondary sources, though an important omission is Franca Iacovetta's *The Gatekeepers*, which deals with the Hungarians, particularly in the aftermath of the 1956 revolution. It would also have been instructive if some comparison was made with the experiences of Hungarian communities in the United States. I found the application of theory, such as to discuss constructed cultures, a bit excessive at points. This was particularly the case in the chapter dealing with the Second World War era, where there appeared to be more on theory than detail on the period. Also, in the WWII chapter, Adam should discuss

the ban of communist groups under the *Defence of Canada Regulations* as this would have impacted on a notable segment of the Hungarian community. On p. 83, it is incorrect to state that Canada declared war on Hungary as an extension of Britain; legally-speaking, this situation no longer existed as of 1931 with the *Statute of Westminster*. Though the detail in several chapters is impressive, at points it is overdone. For example, why is it significant to mention the location of Hungarian associations, down to the street level, like Spadina in Toronto? Is it because this was in the middle of an ethnic district?

4. Analysis of Results and Value of Conclusions

The major conclusions of this work are well supported, namely: that this was a complex and often bitterly divided community; that nationalism trumped social class on the political left; and that the Hungarian community on all sides of the political spectrum retained considerable agency to pursue their own agenda. It does strike me, however, that the thesis would have benefitted from an additional chapter covering the overthrow of Communism in Hungary in the late 1980s, especially in light of the importance of Hungarian politics in the expatriate community. Given the fact that this thesis is on the short side in comparison to the standard for a PhD, this could have been included without exceeding the normal page length. Rather, Adam provides a very brief, and not particularly satisfactory, postscript that deals with the last half decade, and offers some speculative comments about the road ahead.

5. Organization, Writing Style and Presentation of Material

Generally, the thesis is well organized and clearly written, though at times Adam does produce long and convoluted prose, with plenty of insertions through internal parentheses. If he plans on revising for publication, I encourage him to place all his theoretical discussions in the introduction.

6. Revisions Necessary

The thesis as it stands meets the standard for the PhD.

7. General Comments

This is a careful and detailed study that makes important contributions to ethnic history and deepens understanding of Cold War politics in Canada. Mr. Adam has mined a wide variety of sources and has helped fill an important gap as the Hungarians, despite being a major immigrant group, have had little written about their experiences in Canada. This is an important thesis, one that I hope Mr. Adam will work at expanding and revising so that it becomes a publication of significance.



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EXAMINATEUR « C »

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Report on Adam: "Communists Vs. Conservatives...Hungarian Soul"

Understanding of the Topic and Contribution to Knowledge

This thesis surveys the Hungarian community in Canada in the post-WWII era, paying particular attention to the political cleavages within this community, and its evolving relationship with the Hungarian state. Adams argues that, despite the apparent divisions between right and left, both right-wing and left-wing Hungarian immigrants in Canada built their identities around ethnic nationalism. Existing literature has barely touched on the post-WWII Hungarian community in Canada, despite the fact that the 1956 revolutionary uprising in Hungary and its subsequent suppression gave rise to a large wave of new emigration of Hungarians to Canada that profoundly shaped the dynamics within the Hungarian-Canadian community. The candidate demonstrates a solid understanding of the topic, and also relates it to recent approaches in the analysis of ethnicity, ethnic identity, and political theory, including Habermas and Foucault. What is most innovative about the thesis is its extensive analysis of the activities of the Hungarian state in building relationships with Hungarian-Canadians and in recruiting agents to keep tabs on Hungarians in Canada, encourage those groups and views most conducive to its own priorities, but also to use divisive tactics to keep Hungarians in Canada disunited.

Research Methodology

The research methodology is primarily qualitative, making use of the many newspapers produced by the Hungarian immigrant community in Canada as well as the Hungarian state archives and archival sources within Canada. At the same time, however, the thesis also offers some key statistics to understand the size and distribution of the Hungarian population in Canada, and other quantitative aspects of this topic. Overall, the research method was appropriate for the topic, and the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the research were appropriate for a PhD thesis. I think the analysis of the way in which the Hungarian state interacted with the Hungarian community in Canada could have been more probing. For example, what do we really know about the informants and whether they were often adding spin to their reports to make them meet "expectations." What was the overall scale of the state's efforts, compared to the scale and distribution of the Hungarian community in Canada? Did its role or impact really amount to much? Or was it more a kind of exercise in pretending to keep control of a situation that was really beyond their reach? How helpful could it have been to get reports on people years after the fact, by an informant who is obviously prone to lying? (Du Garde)

I would also like to have seen a better analysis of how Hungarian-Canadians fit within Canadian society. For example, how did they compare with Canadian averages in terms of income, urban vs. rural location, etc? Did right-wing Canadian-Hungarians tend to be of a different socio-economic status than those from the left?

Analysis of Results and Value of Conclusions

The results and conclusions were appropriate and remained closely tied to the presentation of empirical evidence. Overall, however, I found myself wondering why we need to have yet another study of a particular immigrant community at a particular time? This is where I find the thesis somewhat lacking. For example, there is no significant attempt to put this thesis into a larger context of historical studies of immigrant communities in Canada: how did the experience of Polish-Canadians, Czech- and Slovak-Canadians, etc. compare with one another? Or what does all of this knowledge add up to? And how is the history of Canadian-Hungarians part of Canadian history? And did Hungarians integrate into Canadian society more or faster or differently than they integrated into, e.g., American society? Or, what about the relationship between the Hungarian state and Hungarians in Canada? Did all the other Eastern European states have similar relationships? And how and why did this differ from, say the relationship of the Greek state to Canadian Greeks, or of the Italian state to Canadian Italians? If this thesis is eventually to be published, I think that some greater effort has to be made to reframe it in a way that gives it broader significance. Right now, the study mainly tells us that Hungarians took their politics with them when they emigrated, and kept it alive in Canada, while linking it with an ethnic-nationalist tinge. But isn't this what we would expect? The ethnic/national focus has obvious functions for emigrant communities: it reflects their need to create an identity within a new home, while also reaffirming the validity of their old identity.

Organization, Writing Style, Presentation of Material

I found a few small errors, but overall the thesis is well written and clear. The organization is partly thematic and partly chronological, and overall seemed to work well.

Necessary Revisions

Correct minor errors.



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EXAMINATEUR « D »

EXAMINER « D »

Christopher Peter Adam. "Communists vs. Conservatives and the Struggle for the Hungarian Soul in Canada, 1940-1989"

Christopher Adam has written a very interesting and insightful dissertation that contributes to our knowledge of European postwar diaspora communities. He examines the ideological tensions between conservatives and communists from 1940 to 1989 within the broader context of 20th century Hungarian and Hungarian-Canadian history. A significant contribution of this dissertation is Adam's main thesis—which I think is borne out by the evidence—that the tensions between conservatives and communists had less to do with battles based on pure ideology and more to do with which side of the ideological divide could steal the thunder of patriotism. This is not to say that ideology was secondary, but more importantly, that within the communist camp, communist ideology and patriotism were not mutually exclusive. Indeed it would appear that for Hungarian-Canadian communists patriotism trumped an internationalist perspective. This is also the first study to examine the Hungarian émigré community's relationship with Hungary in the post-1956 era. It makes extensive use of Hungarian language newspapers and important sources from the Hungarian State Security Archives and Library and Archives Canada.

Adam builds on Vertovec's and Gamlen's theories to argue that while home-states will attempt to govern diasporas it is important to keep in mind that a diaspora community has its internal tensions that can influence the way they respond to the home-state's interference (or not!). As Adam notes, the tensions emanated not only from ideological differences, but generational ones as well.

It is not totally clear for me whether the emphasis on patriotism grew out of the migration experience or was simply a necessity in order that the Communists continue to have relevance in the Hungarian immigrant community. It appears from Chapter 2 that Adams is arguing the latter: both camps had to argue loyalty to the Hungarian homeland and to Canada, and support the Canadian war effort, if they wished to be relevant to the needs of Hungarian immigrants.

The literature review seemed complete with regards to the works on Hungarian Canadian studies. This is clearly not a large field and the only missing work I noticed was an article by Linda Dégh, "Folk Religion as Ideology for Ethnic Survival: The Hungarians of Kipling Saskatchewan in a 1980 collection edited by Fred Luebke: *Ethnicity on the Great Plains* (University of Nebraska Press).

The prism through which Adam reads and analyzes the nature of the relationship between the home-state and the Hungarian-Canadian communities is the ethnic press. As he points out, the Hungarian press, unlike other ethnic presses, was less concerned with language maintenance than with conveying "specific political ideological messages." This might be true, but the author needs to make a stronger case, with

examples. Precise time periods must also be considered. For example, the Italian-Canadian press in the 1930s and 1940s was strongly divided along ideological and political lines and newspapers' primary goal was to attract readers in one ideological direction or another. I wonder if the same can be said of the postwar Ukrainian press. Given the significant weight of the ethnic press to this thesis, would like to have seen a broader discussion of the ethnic press in Canada, the US and Australia, as there is a literature out there.

By the early 1960s Hungarian government did not see interwar anti-communists as a problem. They focused their attention on monitoring DPs from the late 40s and early 50s. The late 1960s, the Hungarian authorities tried to convince communist organizations to win over the sympathies of the 1956 left-leaning émigrés. They discovered these communists in the 1960s to be the old and exhausted, introverted, and mistrustful of Hungarian government officials.

Perhaps the most significant finding in this dissertation is that “ethnic and national identification proved far more salient among Hungarian-Canadians – including communists – than their class identity (p. 216)”. This does not only stand in contrast to the work of Carmela Patrias, but it also calls into question those scholarly works that have argued that among left-leaning working-class immigrants, class always trumped ethnicity.

I have questions below for Mr. Adam. They should be addressed as he carries out revisions that will help in turning the thesis into a book. None of them needs to be changed for the final version of the dissertation, beyond the typos that I list at the very end.

pp. 48-50: Given the significance of Displaced People in the overall Hungarian immigration to Canada, I would have expected a more complex presentation of Canada's response to the European refugee crisis. Did the Liberal government not have to prepare the terrain very carefully in order to sell to Canadians the idea that refugees and immigrants could be a positive force in Canada?

Among other things, the first chapter is supposed to be dealing with Canadian immigration policy. Overall, the coverage is quite schematic and idiosyncratic, and in particular for the 1950s. Should there not be a paragraph or two at least, that deal with the imperatives of Canadian immigration policy in the 1950s and 1960s? Also, should there not be at least some mention of RCMP surveillance of displaced people from Hungary in 1950s (as covered by Reg Whitaker)?

The generally good relations between the Jewish and Gentile Hungarians in Montréal is an interesting phenomenon. Are there other reasons for the absence of such relations in Toronto, beyond your argument that Toronto Hungarians tended to be more right wing than those of Montréal? Would the presence of Rabbi Shnurmacher have been a major reason for the good relations in Montréal? I presume that just as there were right wing immigrants in Montréal there must have also been moderates in Toronto who would

have been open to good relations with the Jewish community?

The first chapter of the dissertation tells us a great deal about the Hungarian immigrant communities in Canada, and in particular about their institutional life. Why is there virtually no discussion about Hungarian immigrants and work culture, occupations and enterprise? What were their main occupations? Did they concentrate in certain sectors? How did they move into these areas of work and enterprise? Was there a relationship between occupation and political ideology?

A weaker section in the early part of the dissertation is the discussion on Hungarian-Canadian identity (pp.69ff.) The author asserts that it was “in significant part, constructed and maintained by politics and historic traumas (p. 69).” However, he follows this up with a discussion on Hungarian Jews and the Hungarian identity, without really developing the broader question of the construction of Hungarian Canadianness. He concludes the discussion on p. 77 by simply pointing out that the community was divided into the two rival factions that sided either with the *Munkás* or the *Újság*. Would the author agree with this assessment or would he argue that the entire thesis in fact is concerned with how identity is constructed in an émigré community?

Beyond easing Hungarian immigrants’ travel back to Hungary, what other effective tools did the embassy use to hold sway over the Hungarian-Canadian communities?

- Hungarian agents did not seem to be very useful to the State’s cause. They gave few leads on names of immigrants to keep on a watch list, and seemed to have greater sympathy for the Diefenbaker Conservatives than the Pearson Liberals, because of the Chief’s suspicions of the US. Du Garde’s most important advice to officials in Budapest seemed to have been to take rivalries already in place and to exacerbate them (p. 114). Would that be an accurate assessment?
- (Incidentally, the *Munkás* was critical of Louis St. Laurent liberals and paradoxically praised Diefenbaker, though for his anti-American stance. Did this have any bearing on Hungarian Canadian voting patterns? Do we know anything about those voting patterns?)
- The last part of ch. 3 is long on details on how the Hungarian Embassy in Ottawa organized spy activities, in particular on the Hungarian Canadian communities. It is not clear how those agents, or the Embassy, with the help of those agents, divided the communities, sowed discord in the communities. Would it be fair to argue that allowing Hungarian immigrants easier access back to Hungary for return visits was the most effective way to introduce tensions in the émigré communities?

Adam argues that the “relative acceptance” of immigrants not of Anglo-Saxon background was the key factor in drawing Eastern European immigrants into the Communist Party of Canada, more “than any affinity that these ethnic minorities may have felt towards Marxist ideology (ch. 4, p. 127).”

- Are you arguing that those Hungarians who joined the CPC were soft on ideology

and strong patriots, and that their attachment to leftist thought was more sentimental than ideological?

- How do you square this with the antagonisms between Eastern Europeans and the “Anglo-Saxons” in the CPC regarding leadership in the CPC? Could the appeal of patriotism be partially accounted for by the frustration that Hungarian immigrants, like other Eastern European immigrants, felt at being denied leadership positions in the CPC?

The discussion on the Hungarian communists and their atrophy through fatigue, inwardness and internal feud is fascinating. It appears that they lacked the vision and drive to meet the challenge of the post-1956 refugee movement.

- Was this in fact a greater problem than the embarrassing, uncritical support that the Communists, and the *Munkás* in particular, had given to the Hungarian regime from 1947 to 1956? Had the Hungarian Canadian Communists perhaps lost their raison d’être even before the 1956ers arrived in Canada? Was it their participation in the economic, social and cultural life of Canada that caused them to lose an active interest in leftist politics?

Smaller issues:

Page 33. Are you sure that’s selecting Ukrainian immigrants in cobalt itself working fine were behind the foundation of the first coal miners union in Western Canada, in 1913? The Western Federation of Miners was already established in British Columbia in 1890, and Wellington minors on Vancouver Island had already formed the Minors Mutual Protective Association in 1877.

p. 81. Can you explain the close connections between the *Újság* and the Horthy regime? You refer to the paper as a mouthpiece for the regime, but what concrete collaboration or connections existed with the regime? Did the regime, for example, finance the paper?

You refer to Canadian-Hungarians a few times? How is that different from Hungarian Canadians?

p. 173: How did the authorities in Budapest build “contacts among non-aligned, political and left-leaning Hungarians in the 1970s”? Did they do this through their agents?

You quote from a number of letters to the editors of both major newspapers from the right and the left: how do you know that these letters were authentic and not invented by the respective editors?

Typos, etc.

- p. 1: fn. 1 Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press
- p. 4: last line, par. 1: hermeneutics
- p. 25: l. 2: worrisome
- p. 48, last par, l. 1: The end of ~~the~~ World War II
- p. 53, l. 3: One **of** the
- p. 58, l. 6 worshippers
- p. 66, par. 1, last sentence: syntax
- p. 68, 6th last line: bullied
- p. 77, l. 1 Railways Agreement
- p. 99: organizations. **Because...**
- p. 100: **of** English and Scottish...
- p. 131, l. 5: **in** 1940
- p. 133, l. 2 survival
- p. 143, l. 1 to Toronto
- p. 143, l. 4 break down

odd quotation marks on p. 145, 147, 148, 152

- p. 153, l. 3, not only to
- p. 161, l. 8: Koronyi.
- p. 161, l. 15: unaware of **this** development
- p. 179: last line, **had** reviewed
- p. 182, l. 3: **rapprochement**

Be consistent on whether it will be Hungarian Canadian or Hungarian-Canadian, throughout the dissertation.