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Review of *Struggle and Hope: The Hungarian-Canadian Experience* By N. F. Dreisziger with M. L. Kovacs, Paul Body, and Bennett Kovrig

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Dégh, Linda, "Review of *Struggle and Hope: The Hungarian-Canadian Experience* By N. F. Dreisziger with M. L. Kovacs, Paul Body, and Bennett Kovrig" (1986). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 975.
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BOOK REVIEWS

Struggle and Hope: The Hungarian-Canadian Experience. By N. F. Dreisziger with M. L. Kovacs, Paul Bődy, and Bennett Kovrig. Toronto, Ontario: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1982. Photographs, maps, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. viii + 245 pp. \$18.95 cloth, \$9.95 paper.

This book appears in the government sponsored series *A History of Canada's Peoples*, aiming at the general public's interest in the ethnic dimension of Canadian society. "Most Canadians belong to an ethnic group, since to do so is simply to 'have a sense of identity rooted in a common origin . . . whether this common origin is real or imaginary' . . . all have traditions and values that they cherish and that now are part of the cultural riches that Canadians share." Despite the reference to such subjective concepts as "identity," "tradition," and "values," the authors of ethnic extraction were instructed to keep within the confines of immigration and ethnic history. They were to give accounts of the origin, educational and social stratification of the immigrants, their settlement patterns, economy, labor and political relations, mobility and the ethnic institutions they create and sustain. The authors indeed followed these guidelines. It is only a question whether the chronological survey of historic facts will be sufficient to present the Hungarian-Canadian (or any other ethnic group's) experience, as the title promises.

The book, written by four historians, consists of eight chapters. The first, by Bennett Kovrig, is a general sketch of Hungarian history, fit for a lexicon but distracting from the main issues in the given context. The second, by Paul Bődy, discusses subsequent waves of emigration from Hungary, identifying the socially, economically, and politically distinctive groups of arrivals: those who came prior to 1914, between the wars, and after 1945, largely following the scheme of Lengyel, Fishman, and other earlier authors. M. L. Kovacs's third chapter introduces the forth-

coming historic survey. The first stage of the immigrant process is represented by the establishment of rural settlements in Saskatchewan (1885-1914). Kovacs describes Hungarian emigrant peasant ethnicization in terms of conflict between continuity and change: institutional maintenance of old values—church, school, family, life-cycle ritual—and adjustment by learning new skills and techniques. Chapters four to seven present a thematically, structurally, and stylistically balanced sequence, written by F. N. Dreisziger, who describes four subsequent waves of emigrants from Hungary: those who came after World War I, during the Great Depression, the 1940s war years and after World War II. Characterizing the diversity of the emigrant groups according to their social origin, educational level, political commitment, and causes of emigration, Dreisziger shows the trends of expansion, dispersal, and shift from rural to urban areas, progressing gradually from assimilation to integration into Canadian society. Focusing on the life of Hungarian-Canadians essentially in terms of the degree of their participation in ethnic organizations, the conclusion is rather pessimistic. "Hungarians are losing their ethnic identity faster than several other groups," observes Dreisziger. "The spectre of assimilation looms large on the horizon" and this valuable subculture will soon disappear if new arrivals do not reinforce its institutions. This devolutionary prognosis is confronted with an optimistic but commonplace note that would fit almost any subculture in any multicultural society: "Hungarian-Canadians have helped to diversify Canada's cultural, religious, and social life . . . their main impact has probably been the enrichment of the quality of Canadian existence."

Is this a true picture of a century of Hungarian-Canadian life and is there a danger of complete absorption into the mainstream society? Migration and acculturation is an universally ongoing process: there is no country with an ethnically homogeneous population.

Pressures to unify versus pressures to maintain differences by subgroups seem characteristic of any national populations. One is tempted to ask: if ethnic traditions survive stubbornly over millennia, can the North American generational cycle complete the annihilation of ethnic identity features in its relatively brief course? Had the authors looked at Hungarians not as a homogeneous national minority but as a body of regionally, ethnically, subculturally distinct groups, adhering to local identity designs of the Old Country; had the authors based their evaluation on the transformation from immigrant to ethnic state—from local Hungarians to Hungarian-Canadians in diverse multicultural settings—in the course of generational change, their conclusions would have been different.

The class stratification and religious and political diversions in Hungarian society preconditioned the lack of cohesion and even rift among ethnic Hungarians but this is not remarkable compared to other East-Central

Europeans with similar historic backgrounds. Likewise, the small number of Hungarians makes them more vulnerable to integration than the more numerous Italians, Ukrainians, Mexicans, or Chinese. The intensity of ethnic life is not predictable. It fluctuates as social conditions require and what seems weak or latent may enter a new period of blossoming. In our times, North American ethnicity shows public and private forms in which participation is the choice of the individual. Symbolic ethnicity (as described by Herbert Gans) is a characteristic configuration to be approximated by folklorists, oral historians, anthropologists, and sociologists. The authors of this book have assembled historical data in a solid frame and prepared the ground for such a study.

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