

## Comments

Of the three articles on the Burgenland, each is interesting in its own way and each raises its own set of questions demanding comment. First, I will say that I found Jon D. Berlin's article well done and informative but those by Karl R. Stadler and Fritz Zimmermann, for all their excellence, somewhat depressing. And before I comment on the articles individually, I wish to make one observation concerning all of the papers: not one of them brings us past 1922. Although Burgenland has celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, none of the three historians seems to have been able to move beyond the traumatic events of its birth. Mr. Berlin cannot be faulted for this, since he has specified 1920 as his concluding year. On the other hand, although Dr. Stadler has entitled his piece "Fifty Troubled Years: The Story of the Burgenland," all but his final one or two pages deal with the events during or before the first of those fifty years. This fixation on the brief interval between 1918 and 1922 is not only curious in itself but also unfortunate, since the Burgenland has had a fascinating history. Its existence as a separate province was continually questioned; it was dissolved and given to its neighbors, Lower Austria and Styria, in 1938; and it was resurrected in 1945. When it was assigned to the First Austrian Republic its inhabitants lived in utmost poverty, but they have managed to become relatively prosperous; its inhabitants had to select a new capital city and develop an effective civil service in an area without a single urban center; it had to face the hemorrhage of massive emigration; and its political and social life was strongly influenced, even directed, by the thousands of people who worked outside the province. All of these interesting facets of its life Stadler ignores.<sup>1</sup> About kings and statesmen much is said, but as to how the Burgenland peasantry created a new provincial identity and created a successful provincial administration against all odds there is nothing.

Mr. Berlin discusses a previously ignored aspect of the

<sup>1</sup>These topics have been examined by Andrew F. Burghardt in his *The Political Geography of Burgenland* (Washington, D. C.: National Science Foundation—National Research Council, 1958).

deliberations which resulted in the transfer of the Burgenland to Austria. His article clearly reflects the American preoccupation with ethnic and economic factors, showing that the American delegation tended to judge all problem areas in terms of language and trade patterns. That Mr. Berlin is not alone in holding this limited view is evident from *The New World*, a detailed analysis of the "new" Europe by Isaiah Bowman, who was himself an advisor at Paris.<sup>2</sup> Another intriguing American characteristic has been the American distaste for historical arguments. Samuel W. Boggs complained that in Europe "too much history is remembered by both parties,"<sup>3</sup> while Norman Hill found the historic arguments "confusing."<sup>4</sup> One need but point to Dr. Fritz Zimmermann's concern with the status of the Leitha-Raab interfluvium one thousand years ago to indicate how much American pragmatism differed from the Central European veneration for the past.

Despite the limitations of the American view, Mr. Berlin's paper does offer us the gratifying experience of reading parts of the memos of Arthur DuBois and Ulysses Grant-Smith. Anyone who has actually spoken to the older inhabitants of the Burgenland must agree to the accuracy of the observations of these two gentlemen that the majority of the peasants have "no definite opinion. . . . For the most part the people look first to their own prosperity."<sup>5</sup> Most of the peasantry preferred to stay out of trouble in a very confusing situation. In fact, most of the self-avowed spokesmen for this German-speaking peasantry, even those who proclaimed the abortive "Heinzenland" Republic, were from outside the area. (The most famous of all, Karl Wollinger—the organizer of the movement in the southern part of the area to join Styria—was a Rhineland German who was intentionally planted in the area for nationalistic purposes.)

Dr. Stadler's article is a good summation of the "official" Austrian view of the events of that time. Perhaps that is

<sup>2</sup>Isaiah Bowman, *The New World* (Yonkers, N. Y.: World Book Co., 1921).

<sup>3</sup>Samuel W. Boggs, *International Boundaries. A Study of Boundary Functions and Problems* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>Norman Hill, *Claims to Territory in International Law and Relations* (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 171.

<sup>5</sup>See *ante*, p. 51.

why I find it so saddening. Surely after fifty years an Austrian should be able to approach this topic with deepened understanding; surely it is no longer necessary to reiterate the anti-Hungarian position. The author has made no attempt to view events from the Hungarian side. No Hungarian sources are quoted. Foreign sources are used only if they buttress the case against the Magyars and the "rightists." It is so difficult to understand the Magyar actions before and during the years of the transfer? After all, Hungary was being forced to give up territory which she felt certain was rightfully hers to a country for which and with which she had fought in the World War. To the Magyars, with their well-developed sense of honor, this was incredibly perfidious.

Dr. Stadler also seems to be unable to understand the motivations of those Austrians who opposed the transfer; they are simply labelled as "rightists" or linked to the "fascists" of the anti-Semitic League. At the present time one can still meet many Austrians who feel that it was unjust for Austria to take territory from a former ally who had to share Austria's defeat and dismemberment. Surely one can sympathize with their position even if one feels, as I do, that the transfer to Austria was desirable.

Dr. Stadler's repetition of the old charges that the Ödenburg (Sopron) plebiscite was "fraudulent" and "a farce" could not help but depress me in a personal way, for I had the illusion that I had effectively disproved that charge in my analysis of the event.<sup>6</sup> Ödenburg was an administrative and commercial city. All the civil service, the lawyers, and the teachers would automatically have voted for Hungary since they were dependent on the Magyar language for their expertise and since they had in any case been condemned by the Grossdeutsche as Magyaronen. The merchants were anti-Marxist; during the Béla Kun regime there had been an anti-communist uprising in the vicinity. (It was sharply suppressed.) The Catholic clergy, whether German or Magyar, passionately believed in the legitimacy of the boundaries of the Lands of the Crown of St. Stephen, and they wielded a great influence. (In contrast, the Lutherans, who wished a union of all German lands, voted strongly for Austria.) Even

<sup>6</sup>Andrew F. Burghardt, *Borderland. A Historical and Geographical Study of Burgenland* (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1962), pp. 178-188 and 310-315.

the leading *grossdeutsch* propagandist, Alfred Walheim, asked, "And which Ödenburg should be polled? The present one which the Magyars have made into a noticeably Magyar city, or the future one which we will have again made into a German city?"<sup>7</sup> Finally, Hungary was able to appeal to loyalty, patriotism, and historic justice. In point of fact almost every plebiscite held between 1918 and 1922 resulted in a vote favoring the country previously in control. It is interesting that the Klagenfurt Basin plebiscite (which voted for Austria) is accepted as fair, whereas that of Ödenburg is not.

I can understand why Austrians in general have convinced themselves that the plebiscite was a fraud; the loss of Ödenburg was a severe blow to the Burgenland. Clearly, having a plebiscite limited to the city and its surroundings was a serious mistake. Whether in or out of Austria, Ödenburg should not have been separated from the Burgenland. However, it is one thing to point out the error of holding that plebiscite and quite another to conclude therefrom that the unfortunate result must have been "fraudulent."

Dr. Stadler also exaggerates the danger of an attempt by Hungary to regain the Burgenland. In this he is merely echoing the feelings of many Burgenlanders themselves. As late as 1957 I spoke to people who were convinced that the Hungarians would return someday. However, in this matter also the article suffers from the fact that the author sees the situation only from the Austrian side. If he had managed to speak to a few Hungarians he would have discovered a remarkable lack of interest in the Burgenland. The Hungarians were interested primarily in retaining the historic city of Sopron (Ödenburg), and in this they succeeded. Compared to Transylvania, southern Slovakia, the Banat, and Bácska, this thin strip populated by poor peasants was very unimportant indeed.

A feeling of security has finally filled the inhabitants of the Burgenland. The province is now regarded as a secure, prospering, integral part of Austria; the old fear of the Magyars has finally been exorcised, except perhaps among a few nationalistic intellectuals. Now would be the time to examine the events of 1918-1922 freshly and fairly, with an understanding for *both sides* in that fratricidal quarrel.

<sup>7</sup>*Deutschösterreichische Tageszeitung* (Vienna), October 8, 1921.

There is one error of fact in Stadler's article which must be refuted: the Magyars certainly represented more than 1.5 percent of the Burgenland population "in the early 1920's."<sup>8</sup> The *Austrian* census of 1923 gave the Magyar proportion as 5.2 percent. The Hungarian census of 1920 (before the exodus of Magyar officials, teachers, and others who preferred to remain within Hungary) set the figure at 8.0 percent. (Perhaps the Hungarian censuses were not so dishonest as others have made them out to be!) Not mentioned in detail by either Dr. Stadler or Dr. Zimmermann were the Croats, who represented not 10 but 14.1 percent of the population in 1923.

Dr. Zimmermann's contribution is a remarkable example of historical analysis, but like the work of Dr. Stadler, its title is somewhat misleading. His principal period of emphasis appears to be the early years of the Hungarian kingdom, long before there was any "Habsburg monarchy." We are 55 percent of the way through the text before the first Habsburg appears; 86 percent, before the liberation of Hungary from the Turks; 92 percent, before the *Ausgleich* of 1867. The article deals primarily with events along a fluctuating military frontier, which was repeatedly marked off by its rivers: the Fischa, the Leitha, and the Raab.

The other misleading aspect of the title is its suggestion that in the past there was something called a "Burgenland." Dr. Zimmermann imposes a modern concept upon an old landscape. This would be an acceptable explanatory device if there were actually some unit to which the modern term could safely be applied. But there is not. We are given a detailed history of boundary changes and of the rise and fall of border holdings. But the Burgenland as we know it cuts across the river systems, and not only did the name not exist before 1919 but there had never been in the area any sense of belonging together or of working together before late 1918. In fact, the principal reason why Walheim's first choice of a name, Heizenland (or Heanzenland), was unacceptable, was that the northerners felt no traditional ties with the legendary Heinz of Güssing. By listing so many monarchs and Herrschaften, Dr. Zimmermann has, in effect, imposed a modern political term on a collection of separate and separated border positions.

<sup>8</sup>See *ante*, p. 76.

The question arises of why the author has written this long article attempting to establish German (Austrian) rights to the lands between the Fischa and the Raab. Why this compendium of past German claims in the face of the obvious fact that virtually everyone in the old empire recognized the Leitha boundary in the decades (centuries?) before 1914? Evidently Dr. Zimmermann's answers lie in his statements that "one is almost compelled to assume that the Burgenland must have had an existence of its own that is not revealed in mere scholarly recounting of isolated events,"<sup>9</sup> and that "to regard the Burgenland as a non-historic, artificial creation would be to contradict well-established facts."<sup>10</sup> Clearly, the author is attempting to *create a political* German heritage for this province.

He states correctly that the Burgenland exhibits "a character of its own just as deeply rooted as those of the Tyrol,"<sup>11</sup> etc. However, what he will not accept is the fact that this "character" has its root in the area's Hungarian past, when, in fact, it is precisely this Hungarian past that makes the province different. This is the uniqueness which is recognized by everyone, in or out of the Burgenland. In 1956 I participated in a field trip of European geographers during which the Viennese excursion leaders referred to the Seewinkel as an area that was physically and culturally a part of Hungary. I have myself led trips into the province and have had people remark that as soon as they reached Landsee or Kittsee everything had "a Hungarian look." The Burgenlanders themselves utilize this image from the operettas at Mörbischof to the *Csárda* at Jennersdorf. The fact that the Burgenland has a distinct "character" does not require any proof of its historical continuity through centuries. Since it possesses a Hungarian past, not shared by the other Austrian provinces, it is certain to be "different." For people accustomed to condemning the evils of the Hungarian past it is, of course, unthinkable to accept the fact that the identity of a German-speaking province is based largely on that Hungarian past. Hence, historians labor long in an effort to prove that this land was really not a part of Hungary, all the evidence to the contrary notwithstanding.

Dr. Zimmermann stresses at length the fact that the Mag-

<sup>9</sup>See *ante*, p. 8.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

yars did not exterminate or drive out the previous inhabitants of Pannonia. This argument leads me to the interesting conclusion that the claim of the Magyars to the Burgenland, etc., was weakened because they were not savage or blood-thirsty enough. Surely a claim to an area should not be based on degrees of extermination! Much more logical is the Hungarian claim to the area, which was based on the fact that they fashioned an enduring, crowned state within the Pannonian Basin.

Twice Dr. Zimmermann equates present Ödenburg with the Odinburch of 1100 years ago. This identification is by no means certain. Károly Mollay, who made an investigation of the identity of Odinburch, concluded rather convincingly that the Carolingian Odinburch was within present-day eastern Styria and that a form of "Sopron" may have been used earlier (in 1096) than "Ödenburg" (1283) for this city.<sup>12</sup> (Odin or Öden merely means "wasted" or "destroyed.")

Zimmermann also limits the early Magyars to the Alföld,<sup>13</sup> thereby ignoring the fact that the Magyars were a composite of both Turkic and Finnic elements. Virtually all the early royal or other urban centers of Hungary proved to be west of the Alföld: Esztergom, Székesfehérvár, Veszprém, Vác, etc. One page later Dr. Zimmermann claims that the location of the fortifications "proves beyond question that there was no early Magyar settlement in the Burgenland."<sup>14</sup> It proves nothing of the kind; it merely indicates where the major rivers were, since rivers formed the defense lines. Even the Maginot Line was well inside France.

In conclusion, may I make the same pleas I have made in respect to Dr. Stadler's article: Isn't it time to accept the Hungarian past of this area? Is it not time to stop being frozen in the hatreds of 1921 and to try to see the good on both sides? Did only the Magyars "waste" territory? Were only they "chauvinistic?" The special charm and appeal of

<sup>12</sup>Károly Mollay, *Scarbantia, Ödenburg, Sopron. Siedlungsgeschichte und Ortsnamenkunde* (Budapest, 1944). The book was originally published under the title *Ödenburg, Helynévfeltés és Településtörténet* (Budapest, 1942). In his other published work, Dr. Zimmermann has simply waved away Mollay's arguments without refuting them, and reiterated the identification of Odin (or Oden)-burch with Ödenburg. Fritz Zimmermann, *Die vormadjarische Besiedlung des burgenländischen Raumes* (Eisenstadt, 1954).

<sup>13</sup>See *ante*, p. 15.

<sup>14</sup>See *ante*, p. 16.

the Burgenland lies in the fact that its culture is a harmonious blending of Austrian and Hungarian elements. This is obviously its great attraction; no one goes to the Burgenland expecting to see Tyroleans or an Alpine landscape. It is a bit of "eastern" Europe incorporated into the west. The people of the Burgenland have long since made their peace with the past, as they well proved in 1956. Why can't the intellectuals do likewise? Instead of trying to manipulate history to prove the validity of archaic nationalisms, it would be better if scholars allowed themselves to see both sides honestly and returned to the true task of the historian: to help us understand how we and our world came to be.

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## Reply

The comments on my article by Andrew F. Burghardt, an American who knows the Burgenland remarkably well, and Vera Zimányi, a Hungarian historian, complement each other in an interesting way. Zimányi censures me for having located the original home of the Magyars in Central Asia, which is approximately 6,000 kilometers from the Burgenland, instead of, as Tibor P. Veres maintains it to be,<sup>1</sup> in western Siberia, which is only 4,000 kilometers away. Burghardt, on the other hand, reproves me for failing to mention the Turkish component of the Magyar ethnic stock. But is not Turkestan regarded as the homeland of the Turkish people, and is not at least East Turkestan part of Central Asia?

Zimányi asserts that my study is based on "random and casually-selected data." Yet, even though before 1921 no single inn in the Burgenland was called a "csárda," Burghardt attributes political significance to the fact that a single attractive tourist locale in Jennersdorf retained the name "Lindencsárda" to arouse the interest of foreign visitors. Burghardt does not accept the pro-German (i. e., Austrian) attitude of Karl Wollinger as valid proof of the pro-German sentiments of the peasants, since he "was a Rhineland German who was intentionally planted in the area for nationalistic purposes." This implantation of a trained nationalist agitator was, indeed, a masterstroke, for Wollinger was, in fact, born on May 26, 1877, at St. Gotthard, in Hungary—the same community where his mother Katharina, whose maiden name was Lipp, was also born.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Burghardt has failed to mention that the person to whom we are indebted for the performance of Hungarian operettas at Mörbisch—the manager of the the-

<sup>1</sup>In "A magyar nép etnikai történetének vázlata" [Outlines of the Ethnological History of the Magyar People], *Valóság. A Tudományos ismeretterjesztő Társulat folyóirata* [Fact: Journal of the Society for the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge], 1972, No. 5, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Official communication from the Gemeindeamt of Heiligenkreuz i. L., Burgenland (where Wollinger lived after 1921), May 15, 1951; *Volk und Heimat*, Vol. XIV (1961), No. 23-24, pp. 9-12.

ater, Prof. Herbert Alsen—was born in 1906 in Hildesheim, in West Germany.<sup>3</sup>

As for Károly Mollay's identification of the Chuomberch of 859 as Kumberg and therefore of a tiny place in Styria as the Odinburch of 859, it should be pointed out, among other things, that Kumberg actually was founded by Count Palatine Kuno, who died in 1086. The village was named after him.<sup>4</sup> As to the study by August Ernst to which Zimányi refers, I discussed it about ten years ago in a report to the Landtag and the Nationalrat. I have sent a copy of this report to the editor of the *Austrian History Yearbook*.<sup>5</sup> Ernst did not at that time venture to engage in a scholarly debate with me over what I had written about his findings. All he did do was to keep my study from being published in the *Burgenländische Heimatblätter*, which he edited. Since he wanted this publication to be only "a scholarly journal for the general public" but not a genuine scientific organ for the clarification of controversial issues, he had obvious reasons for avoiding scholarly discussions.

Another complaint raised by one of the commentators is that in my account of a thousand years of Burgenland history I did not discuss all relevant themes from the Finnish-Ugric/Ural-Altai origins and original home of the Magyar people to social and economic history (the lack of which Zimányi deplores) and the political significance of the Lindencsárda at Jennersdorf with the scrupulous exactitude that may be desired. Perhaps at least one or two other readers will forgive me this oversight, especially when they realize that I had to limit the length of my article to approximately fifty typewritten pages. Personally I can hardly forgive myself

<sup>3</sup>Office of the Burgenland provincial government, Burgenland provincial press service release No. 48 (November 30, 1972), pp. 13-14.

<sup>4</sup>Fritz Posch, "Siedlungsgeschichte der Oststeiermark," *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtsforschung*, Supplementary Vol. XIII (1941), No. 4, p. 670.

<sup>5</sup>*Editor's note*: This mimeographed report, entitled "Die staatsrechtlichen Grundlagen der Zugehörigkeit des Burgenlandes zu Oesterreich im 15. Jahrhundert," is now on file in our editorial office and available for study there by interested persons. The author has also sent the editor two other studies that will be preserved in our office: Alfred von Schwartz, *Die Zukunft der Deutschen in Ungarn. Epilog zur Oedenburger Volksabstimmung* (Oedenburg: Druck der Röttig-Romwalter Druckerei, 1922); and a reprint of Fritz Zimmermann, "Die Madjaren im Burgenland," *Südostdeutsche Heimatblätter*, Vol. VI, No. 4 (1957), pp. 154-163.

for initiating the present polemics, for I fear that they might be offensive to a good friend of Austria such as Prof. Burghardt. Unfortunately, far too many critical remarks amount to complaints that the works of other authors personally unknown to me have been written from a too-parochial, Austrian point of view. My critics certainly must agree with me that, in Central Europe as well as elsewhere, historical arguments since the first discussions involving the history of settlements have always been influenced by considerations of international power politics. However, Burghardt, in addition, quite openly wants to put us in a position in which our only alternatives are to be nice fellows and admit that the Burgenland should really belong to Hungary or to be chauvinists and German nationalists arguing that Austria had a right to it.

It should not be forgotten that in 1918-1919 almost one-half of the 12,500,000 German-speaking inhabitants of the Danubian monarchy became second-class citizens of foreign national states and that most of them were forced to leave their homelands in 1945-1946. Today we are still being reproached because the enfeebled Austrian national and political body offered no resistance to Hitler's Germany in 1938, while Czechoslovakia, which was twice as large as Austria but also did not resist, is not condemned but pitied.

Burghardt is of the opinion that in 1921 Hungary was mainly concerned with retaining Ödenburg and had little interest in the rest of the Burgenland, with its sparse population. Is he unaware of the demands for other areas made by the Hungarians immediately after the plebiscite? And is he incognizant of the continuous revisionist policies of the Hungarians?

We are told, in way of reproach, that Ödenburg was lost not only because of the terror exerted by Hungarians during the plebiscite but also, at least in part, because of the attitude of the German inhabitants. I, too, am convinced that there were Germans in Ödenburg who voluntarily voted for Hungary. But were these Germans not expelled in 1946? Or are we to delude ourselves into believing that if the Burgenland had remained with Hungary in 1921 its inhabitants would have been spared from expulsion after the Second World War?

Let us not fool ourselves. The effects of the series of events

with which the return of the Burgenland is connected, beginning with the murder at Sarejevo in 1914 and continuing through the First World War and the collapse of the monarchy, will be apparent for a long time. That is why every word published by a historian in an organ such as the *Yearbook* becomes not only a topic for historical consideration (*Geschichtsbetrachtung*) but also a historical determinant (*Geschichtsfaktor*). A nation that has already lost half of its organic substance simply cannot make concessions in the way of historical considerations if it wants to continue to live. We Austrians need to use only the same general standards that have always been used when we write about our past and present thoughts and actions. However, people should not expect us always to admit that only the most detrimental aspects of our past history are consequential. And people should not complain if we providently treat those matters more fully which we know can be used against us if they remain unclarified. The same is true in regard to the contributions of other authors.

As far as my own research is concerned, I am fully aware that in many ways my ideas are at variance with the "accepted teaching" that one should simply accept unquestioningly what twenty other scholars have written. As for me personally, I have already written enough special articles about the most important facets of the history of the Burgenland to prove my competence in the field. Zimányi must know very well that serious discussions can be carried on only within the framework of limited themes.

If the present publication constitutes "a general debate" that will serve as a prelude to the clarification of important facets of the history of the Burgenland, and if, as a consequence of this debate, Americans also will become conscious of the continuing "historical" role of Austria, all persons who have shared in it, especially the most caustic critics, deserve our most sincere gratitude.

Fritz Zimmermann