This book offers a comprehensive thousand-year history of the land, people, society, culture and economy of Hungary, from its nebulous origins in the Ural Mountains to the elections of 1990 and afterwards. It tells above all the thrilling story of a people which became a great power in the region and then fought against – and was invaded by – Ottomans, Germans and Soviets. The Hungarian people preserved nevertheless a continuous individuality through its Ural-born language and a specifically Hungaro-European culture.

Dominated from the sixteenth century by the Habsburgs, while ruling its own national minorities, Hungary was deprived of two thirds of its lands and peoples through successive treaties which followed the two World Wars, after which it fell under Soviet domination for nearly fifty years. Free and independent since 1990, Hungary continues to seek its rightful position in Europe.

Miklós Molnár (b. 1918) is a French-speaking native Hungarian. He was sent to a forced labour camp by the Nazis in 1944, became editor of the communist newspaper Irodalmi Ujság (‘Literary Gazette’) in 1954, and following the fall of Imre Nagy left Hungary as a refugee in 1957. He has taught and lectured in Switzerland since 1958 and – since 1990 – in Hungary itself. Professor Molnár is the author of around twenty books and the recipient of many international honours, including the Gold Medal from the President of the Hungarian Republic for his part in the 1956 revolution. The volume Rethinking the International Conflict in Communist and Post-Communist States: Essays in Honour of Miklós Molnár, ed. Renéo Lukic (1998), is among the recent tributes to a vivid chronicler of the twentieth century.
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MIKLÓS MOLNÁR

Translated by Anna Magyar
CONTENTS

List of illustrations  page viii
Acknowledgements  xi
Chronology  xii

1 FROM THE BEGINNINGS UNTIL 1301  1

2 GRANDEUR AND DECLINE: FROM THE ANGEVIN KINGS TO
THE BATTLE OF MOHÁCS, 1301–1526  41

3 A COUNTRY UNDER THREE CROWNS, 1526–1711  87

4 VIENNA AND HUNGARY: ABSOLUTISM, REFORMS,
REVOLUTION, 1711–1848/9  139

5 RUPTURE, COMPROMISE AND THE DUAL MONARCHY,
1849–1919  201

6 BETWEEN THE WARS  250

7 UNDER SOVIET DOMINATION, 1945–1990  295

8 1990, A NEW DEPARTURE  338

Bibliographical notes  356
Index  357
ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATES

1. Hungarian warrior (?) on the Nagyszentmiklós golden goblet (Vienna, Museum of Art History) 3
2. Effigy of St Stephen on the royal coronation robe (Hungarian National Museum) 22
3. St Stephen’s tomb at Székesfehérvár (Photo: Levente Szepsy Szüsc) 23
4. The portal of Esztergom Chapel (twelfth century) 24
5. Herm of St Ladislas (c. 1400) (Győr Cathedral) 28
6. Effigy of András II on the Golden Bull 1222 (National Archives) 33
7. Church of the Benedictine Abbey of Ják (1256). Portal (Photo: László Jaksity) 36
8. Seal of the Esztergom ‘Latin’ (twelfth century) (Hungarian National Museum) 40
9. Charles-Robert of Anjou in the illustrated chronicle (fourteenth century) (National Széchenyi Library) 44
10. Console with woman’s head, 1365 (Castle Museum, Budapest) 51
11. Effigy of King Matthias Hunyadi on tiled stove (Museum of Modern History, Budapest) 69
12. Buda at the time of King Matthias Hunyadi. Wood engraving. Hartmann Schedel’s Chronicle 1493 (Hungarian National Museum) 76
13. View of Kassa in 1617 (Hungarian National Museum) 116
15. Gábor Bethlen, prince of Transylvania, 1620 (Hungarian National Museum) 120
List of illustrations

16. Portrait of Miklós Zrínyi, poet and general. Brass engraving by Gerhard Bouttats from a painting by Johannes Thomas (Hungarian National Museum) 127
17. Portrait of Ferenc Rákóczi II. Painting by Ádám Mányoki, 1712 (Hungarian National Museum) 135
18. Maria Theresa wearing the Hungarian crown (Hungarian National Museum) 144
19. Eszterházy Castle at Fertőd, 1791 (Hungarian National Museum) 146
20. Execution of Ignác Martinovics and his comrades, 20 May 1795 160
21. The actress Róza Széppataki-Déry. Print by Chladek-Kohlmann from a drawing by Szathmáry (Széchenyi Library) 170
22. István Széchenyi. Lithograph by J. Kriehuber (Hungarian National Museum) 172
23. Lajos Kossuth. Lithograph by Franz Eybl, 1841 (Hungarian National Museum) 174
25. Sándor Petőfi. Painting by Miklós Barabás, 1848 184
26. Francis Joseph in ceremonial coronation robe (Museum of Modern History) 203
27. Queen Elisabeth, 1867 (Hungarian National Museum) 204
28. Count Gyula Andrásy. (Photo Ignác Schrecker: Museum of Modern History) 213
29. Kálmán Tisza’s Tarot Party. Painting by Artur Ferraris (Hungarian National Museum) 214
30. The Hungarian National Museum, c. 1890 (Museum of Modern History) 228
31. Cover of the journal Nyugat, 1912 (Museum of Modern History) 238
32. The poet Endre Ady (Photo: Aladár Székely) 256
33. Béla Bartók (Photo: Pál Vajda) 257
34. Béla Kun addresses a factory crowd, April 1919 (Museum of Modern History) 258
35. Miklós Horthy enters Budapest on 16 November 1919 (Photo: János Müllner) 260
36. Panorama of Budapest, c. 1930 265
37. István Bethlen’s first government, 15 April 1921 (Museum of Modern History) 267
38. Harvest on the Great Plain, c. 1940 (Museum of Modern History) 272
39. Teleki’s farewell letter 284
40. Hungarian soldiers in Kiev, February 1942 (Museum of Modern History) 286
List of illustrations

41. The German invasion of Hungary, 19 March 1944: Germans climb to the castle (Museum of Modern History) 289
42. The Suspension Bridge destroyed by the Germans. In the background, the castle in ruins (Museum of Modern History) 294
43. Count Mihály Károlyi in Nice, with Imre Nagy and Mrs Nagy, 1949 307
44. The 1956 Revolution: after the defeat (Hungarian National Museum) 320
45. János Kádár (Photo: Sándor Mező) 329
46. The funeral ceremonies for Imre Nagy and other victims of the 1957–8 repression, 16 June 1989 (Lajos Soós, MTI Foto) 336
47. Miklós Vásárhelyi, a close friend of Imre Nagy, speaking at the 1989 ceremonies 336
48. President of the Republic Árpád Göncz (centre) at the official formation of the new government, 8 July 1998, with, on the left, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, and, on the right, President of the National Assembly János Áder (Lajos Soós, MTI Foto) 353

Maps

1. Migrations of the ancient Magyars page 6
2. The conquest of the Carpathian basin 15
3. Europe at the time of Louis the Great 52
4. Hungary at the time of King Matthias Hunyadi 71
5. Hungary until 1541 90
6. Hungary divided (late sixteenth century) 101
7. Hungary after the expulsion of the Turks 132
8. Hungary in 1848–9 190
9. The Austro-Hungarian monarchy, c. 1910 217
10. Nationalities in the kingdom of Hungary, 1910 222
11. Frontiers of Hungary after the Treaties of Trianon (1920) and Paris (1947) 247
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MIKLÓS MOLNÁR

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I would like to express my gratitude to a host of historians who revised, corrected or advised on various chapters of the work in progress. I trust they will forgive me if I simply list their names: Magda Adám, Csanád Bálint, Gábor Barta, Zsuzsa Boross, Pál Engel, Sándor Fekete, György Györffy, Tibor Hajdu, Péter Hanák, Klára Hegyi, János Kalmár, Pierre Kende, Gyula Kristó, György Litván, János Makkay, Ambrus Miskolczy, Attila Pók, Ignác Romsics, István Sós, Ferenc Szakály, Zoltán Szász, Zsuzsa Teke, Lórand Tilkovszky, Aladár Urbán, János J. Varga.

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And finally, I would like to thank my Geneva friends, László Nagy for his constant encouragement and János Szokolóczy who accompanied and assisted me throughout this work, which owes much to his insight.
CHRONOLOGY

c. 2000 BC Separation of the Finno-Ugric languages in western Siberia
1000–500 BC Separation of the Ugrrians, Magyar people group in the southern Ural region (Bashkiria)
AD 500–800 Migration of the Hungarian tribes from the Urals to the Black Sea region
862 Established at Etelköz, near the River Don, the Hungarians venture into Frankish territories
895–900 Conquest of the Carpathian basin
899–970 Forays to the West and to the Balkans
900–1301 Reign of the House of Árpád
1001 Coronation of István I (St Stephen). Foundation of the state, Christianisation, pagan revolts
1077–1116 László I (St Ladislas) and Kálmán I (Coloman) expand the influence of the kingdom to the Balkans, Croatia and Dalmatia. Advances in justice and culture
1172–96 Béla III strengthens the power of the state and the property of the lay nobles
1192–5 The Pray Codex, containing the oldest Hungarian text
1222 The Golden Bull of András (Andrew) II; first charter of equal rights for the nobility
1241–2 Mongol-Tatar invasion, followed by Béla IV’s reconstruction
1301 Extinction of the dynasty of the House of Árpád
1310–82 Two Neapolitan Angevin kings, Charles-Robert and Louis I the Great. Period of progress and expansion. Louis becomes King of Poland in 1370
1367 Foundation of the University of Pécs
1387–1437 Sigismund I of Luxemburg, the future emperor. Half a century
Chronology

1416–56
The Ottoman Empire threatens Hungary

1456–58
János (John) Hunyadi, military leader, governor (1446–52) and great commander, stops Turkish expansion at Nándorfehérvár (Belgrade)

1458–90
Matthias I, Hunyadi’s son, reconstructs the kingdom and introduces Renaissance culture

1514
The great peasant revolt under the leadership of György (George) Dózsa. István Werbőczi’s corpus of civil law (Tripartitum) establishes the customary rights of the nobility to the detriment of the peasants, who are reduced to servitude

1526
At Mohács, Suleiman I the Magnificent annihilates the Hungarian army. Two rival kings, János (John) Szapolyai and the Habsburg Ferdinand I, divide the country between them

1541
The sultan occupies Buda, the Turks settle in the middle of the country. The division of Hungary into three parts – the Turkish, the Transylvanian and the western part under Habsburg rule – lasts till the end of the seventeenth century

1568
The Transylvanian Torda Diet proclaims religious freedom

1571
István (Stephen) Báthori, the future king of Poland, is elected prince of Transylvania

1604–6
Uprising against the Habsburgs led by István (Stephen) Bocskai

1613–29
Transylvania’s golden age under Gábor Bethlen. War against the Habsburgs

1637–1705
Leopold I, king of Hungary and emperor, introduces Habsburg absolutism in Hungary

1686
Liberation of Buda, retreat of the Turks

1687
Transylvania falls under Viennese domination

1699
Peace treaty with the Ottoman Empire, the end of 158 years of occupation

1703–11
War of liberation of Ferenc (Francis) Rákóczi II against the Habsburgs

1722–3
The Hungarian Diet sanctions the succession to the throne of the female line of the house of Habsburg. The nobility retain their privileges

1740–80
The conciliatory and enlightened reign of Maria Theresa
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1780–90</td>
<td>Joseph II, an enlightened absolute monarch, tries to impose reforms but fails in the face of resistance by the nobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1795</td>
<td>At Buda, execution of the leaders of the ‘Jacobin conspirators’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800–48</td>
<td>The language reform movement. Flourishing of Hungarian literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>Publication of the work <em>Hitel</em> (Credit) by Count István (Stephen) Széchenyi, the initiator of modernisation and founder of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1832–48</td>
<td>Period of reforms in the Diet. Lajos (Louis) Kossuth emerges as leader of the liberal–radical opposition. The Diet committees support national demands. The opening of the National Theatre at Pest. Suspension bridge to link Pest and Buda. The first railway line from Pest to Vác</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849–67</td>
<td>Executions and repression. Neo-absolutist regime, passive resistance. Beginning of the reconciliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>Ferenc (Francis) Deák embarks on talks with Vienna regarding the restitution of constitutional freedoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td>The Austrian army is defeated by the Prussians at Sadowa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>Austro-Hungarian compromise based on mutual concessions. The start of the 51-year period of dualism. Count Gyula (Julius) Andrásy’s government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>The Hungarian Parliament adopts liberal laws regarding education and the rights of the national minorities of the kingdom. Hungarian–Croatian compromise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871–9</td>
<td>Gyula Andrásy minister of foreign affairs of the dual monarchy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chronology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>Pest, Buda and Óbuda are united, Budapest is born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875–90</td>
<td>Kálmán (Coloman) Tisza heads the liberal government, the advocates of independence are in opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Hungary’s millennium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>The Liberal Party loses the elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906–10</td>
<td>Coalition governments. Serious conflicts with the minorities, with the trade union movement and with the Social Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>Annexation of Bosnia–Herzegovina (2 million inhabitants) by the monarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Last census before the war. Hungary (without Croatia) has 18,246,000 inhabitants of whom 54.5 per cent are of Hungarian mother tongue. More than 1.5 million Hungarian citizens have emigrated to the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>General strike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>István (Stephen) Tisza’s government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>The assassination of the crown prince at Sarajevo. Outbreak of the First World War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>The death of Francis Joseph I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>The defeat and disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy (October). Democratic revolution. Abdication of King Charles IV. Mihály (Michael) Károlyi president of the Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>The Republic of Councils and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The collapse of Béla Kun’s regime (1 August); Romanian occupation. Admiral Miklós (Nicolas) Horthy and the national army enter the capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Miklós Horthy elected regent of the kingdom. The Treaty of Trianon (4 June). Hungary loses, excluding Croatia, two thirds of its territory and 10.5 million inhabitants, among them more than 3 million Magyars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Italian–Hungarian treaty</td>
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<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Economic crisis. The departure of Bethlen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932–6</td>
<td>The government of Gyula (Julius) Görömbös. Turn to the right and rapprochement with Hitler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>The first anti-Jewish law. Hitler’s arbitration at Vienna: Hungary regains part of Upper Hungary (Slovakia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
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<td>------</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1939 | Hungary occupies Carpathian Ukraine  
The second anti-Jewish law  
Rise of the Hungarian Nazis, the Arrow-Cross, at the elections |
| 1940 | The second Vienna arbitration: northern Transylvania is returned to Hungary  
Adherence to the tripartite pact of Berlin–Rome–Tokyo |
| 1941 | Hungary attacks Yugoslavia. Suicide of Prime Minister Pál (Paul) Teleki  
Hungary enters the war against the Soviet Union (26 June) |
| 1942–4 | Miklós (Nicolas) Kállay appointed head of government. He attempts overtures towards the Allies |
| 1943 | The Hungarian Second Army is annihilated at Voronezh on the Don. Secret negotiations with Britain |
| 1944 | Germany occupies Hungary (19 March). The pro-German government of Döme Sztójay  
The deportation of about 437,000 Jews from the provinces to Nazi concentration camps  
The Red Army crosses the Hungarian border  
Horthy proclaims armistice on the radio (15 October). The Germans occupy strategic points.  
Horthy appoints the Nazi Ferenc (Francis) Szálasi as president of the Council of Ministers  
Bloody terror of the Arrow Cross. Assassination or deportation of 105,000 Jews from the capital  
National Assembly and provisional government at Debrecen (22 December). Three Communist ministers |
| 1945 | Armistice signed in Moscow  
Yalta Conference (February)  
The Soviet army liberates Budapest (13 February) and the whole country (4 April). Allied Control Commission presided over by Marshall Voroshilov  
Legislative elections (4 November). Smallholders’ Party 57 per cent, Communist Party 17 per cent. Coalition government, including four communists |
| 1946 | Proclamation of the Republic. President Zoltán Tildy  
New currency. One forint equals 400,000 quadrillion pengős  
Nationalisation of the banks and of the iron and steel industry |
| 1947 | Peace treaty signed in Paris. The Soviet army remains. Arrests and processes aimed at the Smallholders’ Party. Deportation of |
its general secretary Béla Kovács to the Soviet Union. Forced resignation of the president of the Council of Ministers, Ferenc (Francis) Nagy

1948
Forced fusion of the Social Democratic Party with the Communist Party. The party’s name is changed, its general secretary Mátyás (Matthias) Rákosi leads the country. Police regime Further nationalisation of economic and educational institutions (Roman Catholic and Protestant ones)

1949
The trials of Cardinal József Mindszenty and other Church dignitaries Elections: the Popular Front candidates achieve 96.27 per cent of the suffrage
The trial and execution of László Rajk

1950–2
Total dictatorship of the Communist Party. Forced industrialisation, persecution of the kulaks, trials, executions. János Kádár is arrested

1953–5
The death of Stalin. The reformer Imre Nagy becomes prime minister. Mátyás Rákosi remains the leader of the party. Struggle between reformists and Stalinists. Imre Nagy is ousted (March–April 1955)

1956
The Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party (February) The opposition movement of Hungarian writers and of the Petöfi Circle grows. The Russians oust Rákosi (18–21 July) The solemn funeral of Rajk and other victims of Stalinist terror (6 October)

1957–63

1961
Recollectivisation of agriculture

1963
General amnesty. Political relaxation

1968
The launching of economic reforms

1972
The reform reaches an impasse
Chronology

1985  The Kádár regime, reputed to have been prosperous and the most liberal, runs out of steam. Heavy foreign debts

1987  Democratic opposition spreads. Decline in purchasing power and consumption

1988  Kádár is eliminated from power
       Foundation of democratic political parties

1989  The crisis of the regime deepens
       National funeral for Imre Nagy and the other victims of repression
       Round-table negotiations for a democratic transition
       Proclamation of the Hungarian Republic (23 October)

1990  Legislative elections. The Democratic Forum forms a centre–right coalition government, headed by József (Joseph) Antall
       Árpád Göncz president of the Republic

1994  Legislative elections. The Socialist (ex-Communist) Party gets an absolute majority. Gyula (Julius) Horn forms a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats

1996  Commemoration of the eleventh centenary of Hungary