

***A határ két oldalán (Across the border)*, by Michael Sozan. Paris: Irodalmi Ujsag (Literary Journal), 1985. 148 pp., 18 photographs, 23 tables, 2 children's drawings. Gazette Litteraire Hongroise, 32 rue du Faubourg-Montmartre-F-75009, Paris, France. \$12.00, 90 French Franks, or 30 German Marks (paper).**

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This comparative monograph about two villages, one in Austria, the other in Hungary, is a significant contribution to the study of East European rural society and to that of peasantry and social change. Based on 12 months of field research during the 1970s in each of the two rural communities, it is the first scholarly study that explores and contrasts the society and culture on the two sides of the "Iron Curtain." The two communities -- Alsóör (Unterwart), in Austria's Burgenland, and Tap, in Hungary's Győr County -- are merely ninety kilometers apart from one another, and have many historic, linguistic, denominational, demographic, and economic similarities. However, the historical bifurcation of the region, that began with the 1918 Peace Treaty of Paris when Hungary lost the area now called Burgenland, accelerated dramatically after World War Two, when Hungary fell under Soviet influence. As a result, major socioeconomic, political, and cultural differences developed in the two villages during the decades after the Second World War. Sozan asks: What happens when two diametrically opposed socioeconomic systems, two very different political ideologies undermine traditional East Central European peasant communities?

The monograph consists of an introduction and five chapters. In the introduction Sozan elaborates on the problems of research in Hungary by "Western" anthropologists, while he recounts his field experiences (with specific focus on his relations with the authorities) and discusses the future of anthropological research in Hungary. In the chapters that follow, Sozan examines, compares and contrasts the two villages' history, politics, economics, social organization, and ideology respectively.

Not hiding his impatience with cultural relativism, Sozan concludes that post-peasant formation was a much smoother process in Austria than in Hungary. He contends that the 46 years of Soviet-style socialism caused far more sociocultural displacements and deleterious personality development than did changing capitalism during the same period. He maintains that the most blatant divergencies occurred between the two villages in the area of self determination: While the villagers in Austria gained political autonomy and a good measure of independence, the villagers in Hungary have lost any semblance of these. The Hungarian villagers received collective and state farms and a new breed of bureaucrats, accompanied by a new system of corruption that, according to Sozan, was unheard of in Hungary prior to World War Two. He attempts to show that in rural Hungary social mobility is ironically limited by "acceptable alternatives": the beneficiaries are the children of the middlepeasants and those of wealth villagers, the ones with intellectual material resources, but not the poorer segments of rural society for whom the "revolution" was invented. Socialist planners, while proud of their achievements in the sphere of economic development, are at a total loss at the unexpected effects of social reorganization. Sozan is now working on a more elaborate English language version of this monograph.