

A Hungarian on the Revolt

BEHIND THE RAPE OF
HUNGARY.

By François Fejtő. 335 pp. New
York: David McKay Company,
\$5.50.

Reviewed by
JOHN C. CAMPBELL

THE Hungarian revolt of a year ago continues to have a great fascination, despite the many opportunities we have had to re-live it vicariously through an ever-flowing stream of published material: news stories and interviews, memoirs and manifestoes, documentary collections and picture books. Much of this continuing interest stems from a sincere admiration for the courage shown by the Hungarian people, and from the knowledge that 1956, like 1775 or 1848, was one of the great

moments in the history of man's struggle for freedom. Perhaps it reflects also a sense of guilt that the Western world did not lift a finger while the Hungarian drama was played out to its tragic end.

Almost any new book on Hungary, therefore, will strike some responsive chord with American readers, whether or not it adds to our factual knowledge of the revolt or throws new light on the great political and moral issues which it raised. François Fejtő's book is doubly welcome because it does both. Mr. Fejtő is a Hungarian writer, who as envoy to Paris broke with the Budapest regime after the notorious Rajk trial in 1949. He writes as one who is involved, politically and emotionally, in the events he describes. But he is also a keen political analyst, author of an earlier book on the "people's democracies" of Eastern Europe, and the beneficiary of excellent sources of information. His story of the background of the revolt, especially the in-fighting behind the "monolithic" exterior of the Hungarian Communist Party, is the most revealing yet published. One may raise an eyebrow and wonder about the sources of some of the "inside" information, but it has an authentic ring, and the author may as well have the benefit of the doubt.

The Communist system in

Hungary, as Mr. Fejtő shows, had broken down on many fronts. It could not meet the needs of any element of the population except the Stalinist functionaries. But it was the intellectuals, most of them Communists themselves, who first took up the fight to expose and denounce it, who spoke out against the rottenness and the special privilege, the stifling of thought and expression, the betrayal of ideals and of truth. These are the words of Gyula Hay, spoken at a writers' congress a month before the revolt: "I have been a Marxist for nearly 40 years. . . . But the psychic tortures of the recent past have taught me that no philosophy, however just, can be relied on as an automatic safeguard against errors, aberrations, and even against crime and dishonor."

The struggle for the truth goes on in Hungary today. Gyula Hay, Tibor Deri and their colleagues have been vilified, hounded and thrown into jail by the Kadar regime. Their personal tragedy symbolizes Hungary's and freedom's tragedy, but the words they spoke and wrote cannot be destroyed. The Hungarian people, Mr. Fejtő concludes, now know, as he is realistic enough to point out, that the question of Hungary can be solved only within the framework of a general European settlement.

John Campbell is Director of Political Studies for the Council on Foreign Relations.



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