

THE KOREAN IMAGE OF HUNGARY*

**Gábor Osváth Senior Lecturer College for Foreign Trade Budapest
HUNGARY**

Hungary was the first East European country to establish diplomatic relations with the Republic of Korea in February 1989. It was followed by strengthening economic and cultural relations between the two countries. The Koreans are very grateful to the Hungarians for having played a pioneering role in the establishment of diplomatic relations, and they have shown great interest in the Hungarian people and the Hungarian culture ever since. Several hundred students learn Hungarian at the department of Hungarian language and literature of the Hanky University in Seoul.

The history and culture of the East bloc has largely been unknown to South Koreans -- partly due to the rather strict national security law. For example, the final version of the name of our country was adopted in the form *Hongari* from the English version only in recent years; previously, the form *Hangari* had been used. However, the emphasis is often put on the second syllable of the word *Hongari* -- incorrectly so. (In North Korea, the name of our country is *Vengrija* originating from the Russian language.)

The Korean public used to associate Hungary almost exclusively with the memory of 1956; my teacher of Korean, who is about thirty years old, called my attention to the poem "The death of a boy from Budapest" by Kim Ch'unsu, which has become famous among the Korean youth as a protest against Stalinist dictatorship just as against South Korean dictatorial regimes.

* The collection of the material was finished in 1993.

When we meet the "average" Korean intellectual today, he proudly hastens to list whatever he knows about Hungary. We can hear the stereotypes such as the Hungarians' origin in Asia and consequently some kind of kinship between the two peoples, or the Hungarians love of music -- the names of Liszt and Bartók are mentioned most frequently.

Naturally, they do not fail to mention 1956, Imre Nagy; many have heard the name of György Lukács, they know that Budapest is a beautiful city lying on the river "*Danyubù*". As yet another common feature, they refer to the long-lasting foreign oppression both Hungary and Korea suffered. They particularly appreciate the Hungarians' love for hot, spicy food. They often note that Hungary was the first East European country to establish diplomatic relations with Korea.

Textbooks have an important role in shaping the image about any country or people. Similarly to the history books used in upper secondary schools, separate geography books describe Korea and the world outside Korea. The latter has been published in five different versions for every school to choose from. While the average textbook generally runs to about 300 pages, the coverage of Eastern Europe, including Hungary is so limited that I can quote almost all what is written about Hungary.

I studied two textbooks on world history, the first versions of both having been published in 1984 and the second versions, the subject of my analysis came out in March 1989. The countries of Eastern Europe are mentioned only with reference to a few events, e.g. Hungary first appears in relation to 1848 in the first book where it reads, "The February revolution spread to several countries (...) The nations under Austrian rule also rose, the Hungarians claimed independence" (p. 188). Hungary is further mentioned in the part on the Unification of Germany, "In response to the resistance of her nations, Austria, which did not become part of Germany, granted autonomy to Hungary, and the

dual monarchy of Austria and Hungary was formed." (p. 193) The discussion of the preceding events that led to World War I and the war itself only refers to "Austria", and the following chapter on the Versailles peace treaties writes about the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, "Individual peace treaties were signed with the defeated countries. The Austro-Hungarian empire came to an end." (p. 242) Our participation in World War II is only mentioned with reference to the peace treaties, "The peace conference in Paris in 1947 signed peace treaties with Italy, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria." (p. 262) The last reference is quoted from the chapter on the Soviet Union and the East European bloc, "an uprising broke out against Soviet rule in Poland and Hungary in 1956." (p. 266)

The other textbook on world history is somewhat more complete and detailed in a few sentences, "Independence movements began in Hungary and Bohemia (...) The Hungarian, Czech and Italian movements were broken by the Austrian army." (p. 171) "Austria, which did not become part of the German Empire, granted autonomy to the *madzsaru* nation in *Hongari* in 1867, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire was born, however the problems of national minorities which did not receive autonomy remained unresolved." (p. 175)

In the chapter dealing with World War I, the new state formation is again referred to as Austria, and Hungary is mentioned again only where the Versailles peace treaties are described, "Peace treaties were signed with the defeated countries. As a result, the Austrian empire fell apart, Hungary and Czechoslovakia became independent, Serbia increased her territories and Yugoslavia was formed." (p. 237). Hungary next appears in the chapter on Détente again, "The uprising in Poland and Hungary (1956) showed the weakening of the Soviet rule." (p. 260) The chapter on the Soviet Union and the communist bloc writes about 1956, "Under Tito's leadership, Yugoslavia pursued an independent policy, uprisings broke out in Hungary and Poland (1956), and

the Romanian (sic!) and Czechoslovakian liberalization meant a challenge for the Soviet Union" (p. 272). That chapter is illustrated by a photograph of the statue of Stalin being pulled down in Budapest.

The most recent textbook on world history that I have studied was published as an aid for preparations for university entrance, on February 25 1992. Korean students can learn more about Hungary from that book. After describing the Arab and Norman conquests of the period, the chapter on European feudalism and the Catholic church writes, "The Hungarian raid. At the end of the 9th century, *madzsaru* tribes overrunning the territory of *Hongari* raided the Eastern Franc Empire and reached as far as Italy." (pp. 118-119) The textbook continues explaining that the organized defence against the Hungarians helped to curb feudal anarchy. The chapter discussing the Napoleonic wars includes a map which shows Austria in the territory of Hungary. (p. 240) Compared to the other textbooks mentioned already, the 1848 events are described in greater detail here, "The revolution first broke out in Austria in March, and Metternich was ousted. In Hungary under Austrian oppression, Kossuth (1802-1894) led an independence movement, abolishing the privileges of the nobility, liberating the peasantry, convoking the parliament and forming an independent government." (p. 257) The defeat is not mentioned.

The section on the Prussian-Austrian war describes the consequences of Austria's defeat as this, "Subsequently, Austria and Hungary were split, and Venice was annexed to Italy." (p. 263) Unlike the other textbooks, the formation of the Monarchy is not mentioned. Perhaps owing to the current rather complicated developments in Eastern Europe, much more detailed coverage is devoted to the peace treaties after World War I, "1. Greater Austria: the Treaty of St. Germain. a) Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia are divided into three republics (sic!). b) (...) the Yugoslav Kingdom is formed (...) d) Romania is

united with Transylvania (...) 3. Greater Hungary: as a result of the Trianon Treaty, the country's territory is reduced by one third (sic!)." (p. 263) The book concludes that those peace treaties ultimately led to World War II. The part dealing with World War II only mentions Hungary with reference to the peace treaties. The chapter on the Cold War lists the territories acquired by the Soviet Union after the war and continues, "[the Soviet Union] established communist rule in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Albania, making those countries her satellites." (p. 355) The chapter on Détente mentions Hungary as this, "As a result of the internal changes of the communist bloc, the Soviet-Chinese conflict, the Polish and Hungarian uprising (1956), the Soviet leading power began to weaken." (p. 357) The most recent developments are described as follows, "From the very beginning, Yugoslavia has followed an independent political line, China has thrown down the gauntlet to Soviet hegemony, Romania and Hungary strengthened their independent political lines. Although similarly to the Polish and Hungarian uprising, Czechoslovakia was also defeated in her attempt to get rid of Soviet control, the increasing pluralization is still noteworthy in the communist bloc." (p. 361) The reader would rightfully expect a more current analysis from a book that was published in 1992.

A geography textbook published first on 1 March 1991 and again on 1 March 1992 writes, "Based on their similar communist economies, the Soviet Union and the East European countries established their political and economic integration (the Warsaw Pact, COMECON). As they increasingly joined international cooperation, those organizations were dissolved. The East European countries also include Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary which are implementing independent economic reforms and liberal policies."

A few paragraphs down, however, it reads, "Although they have not abandoned communist policy, the Soviet Union and the different East European countries

have started to adopt the methods of capitalist economies in part recently in order to improve their miserable economic situation." (pp. 192-193)

The geography books I have studied write about Hungary in the chapter on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The Hungarian plain (*puszta*) and animal husbandry on the plain receive much greater emphasis than justified by their importance, "In landlocked Hungary, a pasture zone called *puszta* has formed due to dry weather conditions." (G.5, p. 211) Poland, Hungary and Romania with expanses of lowland are mainly agricultural countries. (...) Cattle and horse breeding flourishes on pastures called *puszta* in Hungary, grape and olives are grown in the Mediterranean Yugoslavia and Albania." (110, p. 212) The relative emphasis in the text suggests as if Hungarian viticulture and fruit production were less important. A photograph in another textbook shows peasants stacking wheat, and the title says, "Wheat production on the Great Hungarian Plain. Productivity is low." (G.4, p. 208) "Hungary is a landlocked country along the Danube where livestock is grown on pastures called *puszta*, 77% of the country's territory is arable land. Steel and engineering industries based on lignite, bauxite, natural gas and iron ore (sic!) as well as the chemical industry are being developed", reads a third geography textbook (G 3, p. 192).

Interesting statements are found about the Hungarian people, the origin of the Hungarian language, the culture of the region in the various geography textbooks, all suggesting that the authors had difficulty in identifying the complex situation of nationalities, religions and cultures in Eastern Europe. "The northern and southern parts of Eastern Europe are populated by Slavic people while Hungarians and Romanians live in the middle. Romanians account for 85% of Romania's population, they descend from the ancient Roman Empire and the major religion is Greek Orthodox. Hungarians descend from Asia, the Albanians are Latin people of Greek descent (sic!). In Eastern Europe, Poles, Czechs,

Hungarians and Yugoslavs have the characteristics of European culture and their religion is mostly Catholic. (...) They lived under foreign rule for a long time, therefore it is the least developed part of Europe." (G 3, p. 205) "The East European people are for the most part Slavic and mainly Greek Orthodox. The Hungarians living in the middle [of Eastern Europe] are Mongolic but have become slavonized" (G 5, p. 213) It is to be noted that the same textbooks write about the Finns by generally mentioning their Asian origin and emphasizing the great cultural similarities with other Scandinavian countries. One of the textbooks even analyzes, quite correctly, the cultural differences that split Eastern Europe, "the influence of European culture is strong in Poland, Czechoslovakia and part of Hungary; Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania were under Turkish rule for a long time, therefore they bear more oriental characteristics, they are consequently less developed industrial countries and the people are Greek Orthodox with the exception of a few districts." (G 1, p. 109)

The various tourist guidebooks, travel books and brochures also depict an interesting and revealing image of Hungary. "Hungary was founded by the Hungarian-speaking tribe of the nomadic Finno-Ugric people coming from Central Asia", says the travel book titled 'The seven countries of Eastern Europe' (p. 155) The brochure titled 'Eastern Europe' reads this, "At the end of the 9th century, the nomadic Finno-Ugric Hungarian people from Central Asia migrated to the area along the Danube and established the Hungarian kingdom. Having assimilated to the Byzantine Christian culture, they reinforced Hungarian statehood." (p. 35) It follows, "The country became under Austrian rule in the 17th century and later the Austro-Hungarian empire was born in the 18th century. It was defeated in World War I and lost 70% of its territory." (p. 35)

The travel book 'Let's go Europe' writes the following, "Hungary suffered from Turkish and the Austrian Hapsburg's invasion from the 16th century to the 18th century. In the aftermath of World War I, two thirds of her territory were again divided." (p. 331) Editing of this book was completed in July 1992, it also refers to the most recent political developments, "In order to facilitate the transition from central planning to a market economy in Hungary, the ruling communist party gave up their monopoly power and the official name of the state was changed. Subsequently, the Alliance of Free Democrats came to power (sic!). Changes are taking place rapidly. Hungary left the Warsaw Pact, and the Soviet troops were withdrawn from the country (...)

"The Hungarians are faced with a lot of difficulties inherited from the previous regime. At an inflation rate of 20-50%, one quarter of the population have sunk into poverty, and most people have to work in second jobs to maintain their standards of living." (p. 331) Compared to other countries in Eastern Europe, all travel books devote special attention to Hungarian culture, appreciating its values. The travel book 'Let's go Europe' mentions the names of Kodály, Ferenc (Franz) Liszt, Jancsó, Vasarely, Márta Sebestyén ("Those who like folk music should not forget to buy Márta Sebestyén's cassettes", p. 332).

The history of Hungary is discussed in greatest detail in the travel book 'The seven countries of Eastern Europe' which was translated from Japanese and edited for the Korean readers. The book describes the history and culture of the region from the Hungarian perspective in many places; the positive feelings towards Hungarians together with the fact that the country is an attractive destination for tourists. A pluralistic party system was introduced, trade unions were given the right to strike, a new constitution was adopted, the stock exchange was opened. With those and similar measures, the country grew closer to the West European political systems" (ibid.).

Its worth mentioning how the history of Transylvania is described in the chapter on Romania, "The Dacian kingdom flourished from the 1st century BC. for two hundred years and created a special culture. (The Roman conquest is not mentioned. -- the author) After the establishment of the Hungarian state in the 9th century AD, a large Hungarian population settled down in this region, Germans were admitted in the 12th century and they did a lot for the prosperity of Transylvania. The Romanian people growing livestock on highlands and coming from the area of Albania settled down in the 13th century, thus Transylvania became the home for several ethnic groups. There is a religious difference between Hungarians and Romanians and they have always fought for primacy.

After World War I, the Hungarians could not choose but give up this region to Romania (...) The Romanian government embarked on an assimilation policy in 1959, banning Hungarian universities and theatres just as the use of Hungarian proper names and geographical names. After 1988 under the pretext of improving productivity in agriculture, attempts were made to wipe out houses, churches and cemeteries in rural areas to turn them into agricultural land, and the resisting Hungarians were harassed. This kind of aggressive policy against national minorities was a direct reason for the fall of Ceausescu's regime. The events started in Temesvár. The Romanian authorities trying to deport a priest who was active in protecting the human rights of Hungarians led to a major anti-government protest" (p. 447)

We can read in the chapter on Marosvásárhely that "This is the centre of Székely land. The Székely's are one of the Hungarian tribes. As soldiers they guarded the ancient eastern borderline and were granted autonomy in exchange, they developed a special culture. It explains why they are weaker in their desire to return to Hungary than other Hungarians in Transylvania" (p. 455). The

Hungarian names of the cities described are included in parentheses, however rather inconsistently. It is mentioned in the chapter on Kolozsvár that half of the city's population are Hungarian but the Hungarian name of the city is not given (neither is it for Marosvásárhely). Separate parts are devoted to Magyarvista, Makófalva, Szék, Torockó as regions abundant in Hungarian folk traditions, however the photographs illustrating the section on Szék shows Romanian folk dance. There are two photographs showing an interior and a folk costume from Kalotaszeg. Magyarvista is described as "the village famous for the Calvinist church in the centre. The minister's elevating sermons are heard at church services (...) The church offers a good view of the television antennas. All show towards Budapest because people say they want to hear the news from Budapest. Even amidst the efforts to assimilate them to Romanians, they demonstrate the firm persistence that they want to remain Hungarian" (p. 448).

In the various travel books, an important feature is the discussion of what language the traveller can use to make himself understood in the given country. What we can read on the pages of the Korean travel books is highly interesting, they suggest that the Hungarians are less good at English but almost everybody speaks German.

Here are a few examples: "The official language is Hungarian but German is generally used" (Eastern Europe, p. 35). "The official language is Hungarian which is of Asian origin. English is spoken at the airports, hotels and other places which foreign tourists frequent but German is the most likely language to make ourselves understood in."

The travel book translated from Japanese warns the reader in a separate heading, "Hungarians do not get along well with English". No such critical remark is made about the command of foreign languages in any other part of the book which describe other East European countries.

The following lines suggest a touch of naivety: "People speak neither English nor German in rural areas so do not forget to take with you an English-Hungarian dictionary that you can buy on the second floor of the Soviet book store in Váci utca at the Cossuth Rákóczi crossing (sic!). Equipped with the dictionary, you can safely go on your bicycle tour on the great plain" (ibid. p. 107). Apart from travel agencies and hotels, English is not spoken almost anywhere but when you ask somebody on the street, you can get along with German. Because of the long-standing relations with Austria, the average Hungarian understands more or less German" (The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, p. 21).

Summing up the Korean image of Hungary, we can conclude that although our image is often inaccurate and superficial, it reflects a large degree of sympathy and appreciation overall. Inaccuracy is due to the inadequate academic background, often the use inappropriate sources and the lack of consultations with Hungarian experts.

Hungary is part of the East European region for the Koreans; they use the term Eastern Europe in both a geographical meaning and a political sense, however Hungary occupies an outstanding place in terms of details and coverage in the textbooks and travel books analyzed in comparison with other East European countries. It is undoubtedly due to the increased attention which is shown towards our country since we first established diplomatic relations. The Koreans particularly appreciate the oriental origin of the Hungarian people and language and certain similarities between the two languages. Hungarian music is also in the forefront of interest among Koreans (probably in response to Japanese influence): "Similarly to Vienna, Budapest is also one of the centres of music worldwide and has famous names in other arts as well" They are extremely optimistic about Hungary's future prospects: "Compared to other East European countries, Hungary has perhaps the best chances (...) Hungary is witnessing

revolutionary changes even more rapidly than other East European countries. This is the impression one gets when walking in Budapest."

The primary sources for developing an image of Hungary are the media, schools and travels. Under the cultural agreement between the two countries, textbooks will be reviewed by both sides. Unfortunately, Hungarian literature which is mostly present in anthologies and have been translated from a third language has yet played a marginal role in promoting the image of Hungary (the following works have been published so far: *Húsz óra*, *Rozsdatemető*, *Niki*, *A látogató*, *Az őz*, *A Pál utcai fiúk*, and about a dozen poems).

The Hungarian government could contribute with fellowship programs to laying the foundations of Hungarian studies to train historians, philologists and translators of Hungarian literature in Korea. It is only then that we can expect the image of Hungary to be based not only on sheer sympathy but to be more detailed and academically accurate. It is also in the interest of Hungary economically since Korea is playing an increasingly important role in the dynamically growing Far East.

References

1. **Li Minho-Shin Sungha**: Segyesa, Taehan ch'ulp'an Kongsu, Seoul, 1989.
2. **Min Sokhung-NaYongil etc**: Segyesa, Kyohaksa, Seoul, 1989.
3. Saesegyesa, Seoul, 1992..
4. **Chu Gyongshik**: Segye chiri, Nungnyokkaebal, Seoul, 1992.
5. G1: **Hyong Giju**: Segye Chiri, Minmungo, Seoul, 1992.
G2: see 4.
G3: **Cho Donggyu**: Segye chiri, Samhvasa, Seoul, 1992..

- G4: **Cho Donggyu**: Seye chiri, Munhosa, Seoul, 1992.
- G5: **O T'aesan**: Segye chiri, Chihaksa, Seoul, 1992.
6. Tongyurop ilgopgaeguk, Chungangilbo, Seoul, 1991.
 7. Togyuop, Hangukkvangwang kongsa, Seoul, 1991.
 8. Let's go Europe, 1992. by the Harvard Student Agencies; Korean traslation and edition: Green bee, Seoul, 1992.
 9. **Kim Hyonshik**: Soryon-Tongyurop, Tongasa, Seoul, 1991. p. 196.
 10. Hongari yuhakui kil, Edition of the Korea Trust Agency, Seoul, 1990. p. 5.
 11. **Kim Sanghu**: 33 gae toshi Yurop, Travel World, Seoul, 1992. p. 483.