

# Austro-Hungarian Empire haunts Europe

by Rachel Douglas

When Otto Hapsburg, son of the last Emperor of Austria-Hungary, visited Hungary for nearly a week in February and March, his grandstanding before the press in Budapest echoed the talk about a new concept for Central Europe, emanating from the milieu of Henry Kissinger. Publicity about new multi-party electoral procedures in Hungary and reorganization of Warsaw Pact forces in Eastern Europe (advertised as cuts, but actually efficiency measures) bolsters the notion that a "Finlandized" *Eastern* Europe and a Western Europe stripped of the American military presence, could be the domain of a Soviet-American "compact" such as Kissinger talks about. Hapsburg's trip fed a campaign to reincarnate pre-World War I entities, like the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in the framework of such a compact.

This revival of the oligarchy and some of its political institutions would befit the plunge of the economy and culture of the continent, along with the rest of the world, into a Dark Age.

Speaking at the Gellert Hotel in Budapest March 3, at the end of his stay in Hungary with a delegation of the European Parliament (in which he represents the West German Christian Democratic Union), Hapsburg was asked about eventual reunification of Hungary with Austria, "I would say there is a certain chance," he replied. "The evolution in the last year has been so staggeringly rapid that of course it is very dangerous now to make any sort of prophecy. But I am quite optimistic." Although he personally had never pressed a claim to the Hungarian throne, Hapsburg said he had not been stripped of Hungarian citizenship, as he had believed, in 1948-49.

The *Times* of London reported in February, that Hapsburg would join the soon-to-be-reconstituted Hungarian Christian Democrats. At the Budapest press conference, he refused to rule out an eventual run for the post of head of state in Hungary.

In the meantime, according to Reuters, "unification of Europe was more important" to Hapsburg "than any domestic policy in Hungary, Austria or West Germany," and he predicted that Hungary eventually would join the European Community. "You see we are all in the same boat. If the unification does not succeed, then we are all going to sink together."

Before the Hapsburg visit, it was already clear from the activity and pronouncements of the Hungarian leadership,

that Hungary's political reform, the institution of a multi-party system (supervised by the Communists and with Warsaw Pact membership not touched), is intended not only to divert the population from the horrible economic crisis, but also to advance both the Kissingerian design for Central Europe and the Soviet bloc's ideas about splicing Eastern Europe into the EC's unified market project, "Europe 1992."

## 'This Central European idea'

In December 1988, Hungarian party and government leader Imre Pozsgay addressed the Arnoldshain Evangelical Academy in West Germany, on the topic "Europe—Dream and Reality." In his speech, recently printed in the West German press, Pozsgay said that the division of Europe after the war was "a mistake, an error," which could be remedied in new ways. "It is no accident," he said, "that in our search for this central European idea, in our clinging to central Europe, Hungary has opened up especially toward Austria. . . . One could think of the historical memories, of the beautiful common experiences and historical developments with Austria. . . . But I think that the basic motive in Hungary's opening up toward Austria is Austria's present neutrality. . . . Central Europe serves Hungary as a stepping-stone to enter the world."

On Jan. 29, Hungarian party chief Karoly Grosz spoke at the Davos Economic Forum in Switzerland, and the Hungarian Communist daily reported his speech under the headline: "Our Fate—Europe." Declaring his "harmony" with the "ideas on cooperation" of West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Grosz said: "We Hungarians have started on the road leading to a common Europe. We are carrying out political and economic reforms simultaneously. . . . We are determined in our strategic efforts to open up to the world at large. . . . By establishing free-trade zones, creating mixed enterprises, and involving working capital, we are striving to achieve production cooperation that will expand our traditional trade relations."

Hungary and Austria have launched preparations of a joint world's fair in Budapest and Vienna in 1995, which was discussed in February between Prime Ministers Nemeth and Vranitzky. Nemeth said that Hungary may join the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), which comprises Austria, Sweden, and other non-EC members. Meanwhile, Moscow has announced that Soviet party chief Gorbachov will receive Grosz in Moscow in the second half of March.

Soviet progaganda has been promoting the Hungarian "multi-party" political reform as proof of the democratization allegedly sweeping Eastern Europe. On Feb. 8, Academician Oleg Bogomolov told a Moscow press conference that the socialist countries were going through a watershed, and that Hungary could develop a political system similar to that of Austria or Sweden, as long as it remained a member of the Warsaw Pact. What Gorbachov calls the "common European house" is supposed to have a Russian landlord, as far as Moscow is concerned.