Czech breakfast. A major asset is the unusually broad-based bibliography ('Further Reading', pp. 94–96).

The 'Language' sub-section (by Elizabeth Brinell, pp. 27–33) is, however, marred by numerous curious omissions, inconsistencies and errors. Matters are not aided here, as throughout the book, by the haphazard and inconsistent use (and misattribution or omission) of diacritics. Note as one example among hundreds the three different spellings of Mariánský Lížené on p. 8. In other respects, too, the work does not inspire confidence, beginning with the two-page 'Preface', where we learn that Kofčíč (sic) is the capital of western (sic) Slovakia (p. 9); here too even the name of one of the persons thanked (Miroslav Páner, 'died') is misspelled (Páner [sic] Reháč), and the work of the writers is described as 'mélange' — which a glance at almost any part of the book proves is praise unwarranted. Apart from many inconsistent spellings, there are errors in the headers: Tradice Trenčínska for Trenčianske Teplice, p. 422; Liptóvsko for Liptovský Mikuláš, p. 416; in the maps: there is no Záborský where shown on p. 948; Hudina (sic) is transferred from Moravia to Slovakia on p. 590 while it is already correctly located, as Hudina, west of the frontier, with the 'German' ('Republik') on p. 592; the map of Slovakia also shows Liptov (for Liptovský) when we know that it 'does not exist in Slovak language' (p. 295) in the index, contrary to which there is no reference to Hudinár Stúr on p. 482, or to Karel or Josef Čapek on p. 117, and Nára Mikuláš, meaning Nára Mikuláš nad Metujoš, is on p. 221, not 220; Blauon (sic) should have been deleted, and in the text: inconsistent references to the 'Little' or 'Lesser Quarter' in Prague; missing words and lines: 'Baroque frescoes by the blend happily...'; (p. 54); 'the first open church, representing the first open church, representing the rule of (The President of Forgetting)', had come about directly as the result of the banning of a rock group called '7'; (p. 44); odd uses of the English definite article: the Spis (the Slovak county usually known in English as Zips, p. 50); the Oltárnik (p. 393); factions and so on, such as 'the Czech and Slovak Centre in London' (p. 6); above a 1990 date line, when there was no such body, the major way authorizing 'exist' (p. 16); it is a square with a square sticker, 'a junta' (p. 150); 'John of Nepomuk' (p. 25); those who know know that he means, but gin is by definition so flavoured); (the church of St Nicholas at Kutná Hora' (p. 48) is a church of St Nicholas in Kutná Hora; there is no such church, though these of St James, St Barbara, the Holy Virgin, the Holy Trinity, St John Nepomucene and St Anne are all worth a visit); or 'This style of architecture [...] was to be current in Czechoslovakia right up to the late 17th Century' (p. 51), an unfeasible chronology. This list is symptomatic of the mixed success of converting sections of the text from the earlier book on Czechoslovakia to one on the two daughter republics as separate entities. Thus we learn that 'the Czech Republic is one hour ahead of the UK' (p. 21), which arbitrarily omits Slovakia.

The background 'academic' part of the book has its own peculiarities. For example, under 'Czech novelists of the 19th century' (pp. 77–79), three names are highlighted: Božena Němcová (unobjectionable), Jan Neruda (a major prose-writer who never wrote a novel), and Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (the philosopher-president, also too known for any novels). And the reference 'On 17 November a gathering of people commemorating a student killed by the Nazis ...' (p. 45) rather misses the point that the 'people' were themselves students, celebrating International Students' Day, and that 17 November commemorates the closure of the Czech universities by the Nazis. (The student killed by the Nazis was Jan Opletal, fatally injured at a demonstration on 28 October 1939. His funeral on 15 November triggered major anti-Nazi protests which were the actual cause of the closure of the universities two days later.)

This small sample of authorial and editorial shortcomings should suffice to suggest that the book is a curate's egg fair excellence and should be digested with some caution. What it would have been like without all the profusely acknowledged corrections and suggestions of those who read the manuscript or had responded to the previous invitation can only be conjectured.

David Short
School of Slavonic and East European Studies
University College London


This is a magnificent work and, indeed, the best survey of Hungarian history ever published in any language. It is eminently readable: a tribute not only to Stefan Halikowski-Smith who revised the text but also to László Kontler's own grasp of the English language and idiom. Unlike other accounts of Hungarian history, the present work does not concentrate on the modern period but the existence of previous centuries. The Middle Ages accounts for 100 pages of solid text; the period 1546 to 1848 requires a further 130 pages. Moreover, Kontler is as equally at home in the fourteenth century as he is in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He is thus as fully alert to debates over the medieval konjunktur system as he is to discussion over the emergence of Hungary's middle class or the role of Imre Nagy in the mid-1950s. Nor is Kontler's account just another political history, for it includes lengthy digressions on such diverse topics as Renaissance libraries, sermon literature in the sixteenth century, and popular culture at the turn of the century. Notwithstanding the breadth of Kontler's narrative, errors are remarkably few. The plural of hospices is hospices (pp. 69, 81); the February Patent of 1861 gave the Reichsrat more control of the budget than Kontler allows (p. 250) for it permitted its Zustimmung in most financial matters; and Law XII of 1867 surely cannot be regarded as creating two 'sovereign states' (p. 278); since (as Kontler himself indicates) the_angolszövetség law rested on the Pragmatic Sanction and thus upon the notion that the Habsburg lands constituted an indivisible and inalienable whole.

Kontler's account is almost entirely free from Hungarian patri-geist. He is perhaps rather too dismissive of Romanian claims of autochthony in Transylvania. There is some historic, linguistic and comparative evidence for this which deserves at least acknowledgement. He is also too cursory in his account of magyarization policies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and thus he misses a good opportunity for explaining not only their contemporary rationale but also their firm foundation in liberal theory. Kontler's accounts of 1848 and 1956, the twin 'foundation myths' of modern Hungary, are in
places too heroically conceived. He does not discuss the warmer aspects of these movements, nor does he divide Hungarians which they engendered, or their role less as revolution than as episodes of civil war. After all, the post-1956 regime was not so much the work of the Soviets as of numerous and willing Hungarian émigrés.

Kotler’s aim is not, however, to provide a revisionist interpretation of Hungarian history but, instead, to distil the fruits of the latest research. Nevertheless, there is a ‘Kondrizean’ view of Hungarian history which owes much to Bélendi and Sólyom, and not a little to Wallerstein. In Kotler’s opinion, Hungary was different from the West during the Middle Ages. On account of Hungary’s late entry to membership of western Christendom, it experienced an ‘accelerated, contracted and to some extent initiative development’ (p. 68). Notwithstanding Catholicism, chronicler and a degree of Christianity, the establishment of a uniform administration, there was a János-based ‘development’ amounting to an ‘incompleteness of structures’ (p. 87)—in particular, a lack of urbanisation and a failure to fully institute a vasallage system through the teth. This account of medieval Hungarian history, which is pure Sólyom, is supplemented by Wallerstein. The price-revolution of the sixteenth century pushed Hungary into the economic periphery of Europe and exaggerated trends previously evident. Hungary and the region as a whole were thus consolidated in their role as providers of raw materials, serfs and labour was imposed, and the nobility was confirmed in political, social and economic hegemony.

Yet, at the same time, Kotler is torn between what he defines in his Introduction (‘Reflections on Symbolic Geography’, pp. 12–20) as the maximist and minimalist interpretations of Hungarian history. Was Hungary essentially different from western Europe? Or was it the perception of this, rather than its reality, which guided Hungarian development over the centuries? Kotler is too shrewd to come down on one side or the other. In his view, it is the interrelationship of perception and reality, and the hybrid forms which their combination have engendered, which have tended to characterize Hungarian history. Béla IV, Maria and Joseph thus equally apprehended the Hungarian backwardness vis-à-vis the West, but in attempting to close the gap they imposed new institutional patterns which served only to entrench Hungary’s distinctiveness. In Kotler’s view, Central Europe exists less as a reality than a programme of reform and the desire for an ever-widening perception of the world, the consciousness [...] to be ‘western’ in terms of values and structures’ (p. 17). As Kotler concludes, the interplay of the reality and apprehension of backwardness, Beltdhetesség has been, for historical and geographical reasons, a permanent, near-natural endowment for Hungary, which has occasionally pushed her into lethargy and overreaction, but also been given as he has occasionally pushed her into lethargy and overreaction, but also been given occasional stimulus, flexibility, adaptability and a peculiar ability to respond to challenges (p. 20).

In summary, Hungary and Central Europe constitute ‘part of the modern self-reflection of peoples concerned’ (p. 17). It may be the case that Kotler’s conception of the West is an ideal one and a stereotype for London, Paris, and Amsterdam. It has, however, been a similar misperception which has spurred Hungarians on for much of their history and which has prompted the sense of beltdhetesség that Kotler makes of the main springs of Hungarian development. Nevertheless, as Mártin Szepsz Csombor discovered almost four centuries ago, there is also a Europe made up of such a sort of ‘wretched little town’ that the landlord overcharges you fourfold for beer and punishes his daughter. That place is actually Rochester, which is today a commuter suburb of London not far from the railway to Paris.

This is a book which serves not only the general reader but also the specialist with an interest in just one part of Hungary’s history. It is comprehensive, inspiring, and provoking. This reviewer must, however, register two regrets. First, the bibliography (pp. 597–610) is too thin and hardly does justice to the burgeoning, weighty monograph literature on Hungarian history. Secondly, there is no western co-publisher, which is bound to limit the circulation, availability, and sales of this splendid and important book.

School of Slavonic and East European Studies
University College London

Martyn Rady


The Dominant Ideas of the Nineteenth Century and Their Impact on the State, by the Hungarian Baron József Évtőj (1813–71), is a two-volume political and social treatise written in German while the author was living in Munich following the 1848 revolution in Hungary. (Évtőj, already an important writer of prose fiction, had become minister of education in the revolutionary government of 1848 but had resigned following disagreement with Kossuth.) The first volume of the treatise appeared in 1851 and the second in 1854. Évtőj falsely claimed to have written the work first in Hungarian and then to have translated it into German himself. In fact it was the two German volumes that were translated, each by a different translator, into Hungarian. The first volume of D. Mervyn Jones’s translation into English, with an introductory essay by the translator, was published as volume 87 in the series Atlantic Studies on Society in Change in 1996. The second volume, which is being discussed here, is a translation from the original German version. It contains Évtőj’s long text, followed by quite extensive notes on the text (pp. 595–72) by Évtőj himself, a useful note by Jones on the German and Hungarian versions of the second volume (pp. 577–78), an index with brief notes on the subjects to which reference is made (pp. 577–80), and a list of corrigenda to the translation of the first volume. The translation reads well: one does not sense an original in another language behind it and the translator deploys a vocabulary and register appropriate to the subject and period.

The Dominant Ideas is a treatise written against the background of the French Revolution and subsequent Napoleonic Wars, the rise of national consciousness among ethnic groups living within the autocratic empire, the birth of socialism, the revolutionary upheavals of 1848, and—after the first volume