Great Expectations
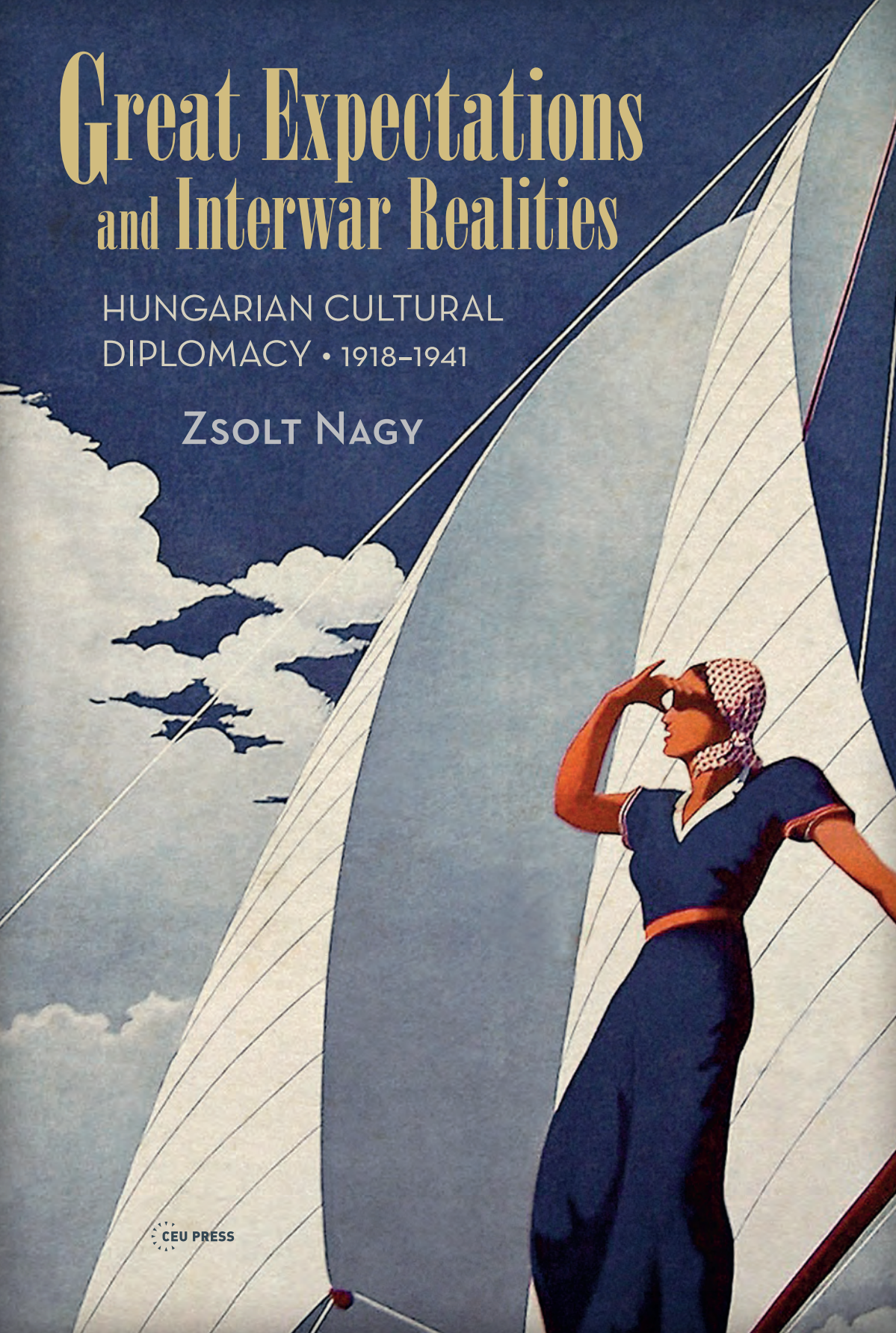## and Interwar Realities

HUNGARIAN CULTURAL
DIPLOMACY • 1918–1941

ZSOLT NAGY

GREAT EXPECTATIONS
AND INTERWAR REALITIES

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HUNGARIAN CULTURAL DIPLOMACY, 1918–1941

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CEU PRESS

To my wife Karla

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

BNV: Budapesti Nemzetközi Vásár (Budapest International Trade Fair)

ELTE Kt: ELTE Egyetemi Könyvtár Kézirattár (Manuscript Collection of the University Library of Eötvös Loránd University)

HQ: *Hungarian Quarterly*

HRL: Hungarian Reference Library in New York

IBUSZ: Idegenforgalmi Beszerzési Utazási és Szállítási Rt. (Tourism, Procurement, Travel, and Transport Company)

Kirbib: Királyi Balatoni Intéző Bizottság (Royal Balaton Management Committee)

KÜM: Külügyminisztérium (Hungarian Foreign Ministry)

LUCE: L' Unione Cinematografica Educativa

MÁV: Magyar Királyi Államvasutak (Royal Hungarian State Railways)

MFI: Magyar Filmiroda (Hungarian Film Bureau)

MKT: Magyar Külügyi Társaság (Hungarian Society for Foreign Affairs)

MNFA: Magyar Nemzeti Filmarchívum (Hungarian National Film Archives)

MOL: Magyar Országos Levéltár (Hungarian National Archives)

MRA: Magyar Rádió Archívuma (Hungarian Radio Archives)

MRL: Magyar Revíziós Liga (Hungarian Revisionist League)

MSZT: Magyar Szemle Társaság (Society of the Hungarian Review)

MTHR: Magyar Telefon Hirmondó és Rádió Rt. (Hungarian Telephone News Service and Radio)

NRH: *Nouvelle Revue de Hongrie*

MV: *Magyar Világhíradó* (Hungarian World News)

MTI: Magyar Távirati Iroda (Hungarian Telegraph Bureau)

OMIH: Országos Magyar Idegenforgalmi Hivatal (Hungarian National Tourism Bureau)

OSzKKt: Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, Kézirattár (Hungarian National Széchényi Library manuscript division)

TESZK: Társadalmi Egyesületek Szervezetének Központja (Central Organization of Social Groups)

TEVÉL: Területvédő Liga (League for the Protection of [Hungarian] Territory)

UFA: Universum-Film-Aktiengesellschaft

VKM: Vallás- és Közoktatásügyi Minisztérium (Ministry of Religion and Public Education)

Acknowledgements

If someone had told me twenty-some years ago, when I arrived in the United States, that I would author a book that tells the story of interwar Hungarian cultural diplomacy—and that I would write it in English—I might have had some misgivings about that person's mental faculties. Yet here I am, writing to acknowledge and sincerely thank those without whom this book would have remained but a fantasy. Just as my journey was long, so is the list of people and institutions I owe thanks to.

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liant neighbor in Keszthely, where I grew up. She and her family lost almost everything after World War II. What did remain was her incredible collection of books, stretching from floor to ceiling, wall to wall in her 300-square-foot apartment. She guided me through her collection with care and patience while introducing me to some of the greatest literature ever written. She also died far too early. I can only hope that somewhere and somehow, they both see me and are proud of me. Last, but certainly not least, for she is the most important person in my life, is my wife Karla. There is simply not enough space here to thank her for everything she has done and continues to do for me. There is not enough space to apologize for vacations never taken, for all the evenings I missed, for my mood swings (which were plenty), for never learning how to pay a bill, and for all else that I could have done but did not, citing my need to read, research, and write. The beauty of her is that she never made me feel that I should apologize for anything. She followed me from place to place, sacrificed, and supported me every step of the way. She has done it all and continues to do so with a smile on her face and love in her eyes. For that and more, I dedicate this book to her.

Introduction

"If there is an international institute of propaganda, it ought to present a diploma to the Hungarian entrusted with the task of placing Hungary's grievances before the world," wrote historian Bernard Newman in 1939.[1] Of course, there was no such institution. Even if there were, it is questionable whether Hungarians would have wanted such a diploma, for in the post-World War I period, the word "propaganda" gained a rather negative connotation.[2] Instead, the Hungarian government opted for a less direct form of persuasion—a campaign of cultural diplomacy. Hungarian cultural diplomacy went beyond protesting; it actively sought to alter the country's position on the international scene. In other words, it was a public relations campaign *avant la lettre*, deploying a variety of cultural resources aimed at constructing a positive image abroad and shaping international public opinion in Hun-

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[1] Bernard Newman, *Danger Spots of Europe* (London: The Right Book Club, 1939), 286.

[2] As Nicoletta F. Gullace stated in her recent article, "most scholars of propaganda look at the 1920s as the moment the term 'propaganda' lost its neutral tone and came to be regarded as something malign and subversive." Nicoletta F. Gullace, "Allied Propaganda and World War I: Interwar Legacies, Media Studies, and the Politics of War Guilt," *History Compass* 9, no. 9 (2011): 689. See also, as Gullace suggests, Philip M. Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Present Day* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 1–16.

gary's favor. The primary task of this cultural diplomacy was to create a positive image of a modern, progressive country, the best representative of European culture and Western civilization in East and Central Europe, and promulgating it on the international stage. In the absence of military, economic, and political power, this endeavor became an essential component of Hungary's foreign policy, for it had plenty of grievances to air before the world.

Great Expectations and Interwar Realities is an examination of the practice variously referred to as "cultural diplomacy," "self-advertisement," "image cultivation," "image projection," "public relations," "soft power," "nation-branding," "perception management," "national reputation management," and, most recently, "public diplomacy."[3] By investigating the intersection of diplomacy, national identity construction, and cultural production, my study evaluates the promises and limitations of interwar Hungarian cultural diplomacy. It asks two questions: What was the value of such practices when employed by a state that lacked material and non-material power? In which ways did the country's cultural-diplomatic endeavors contribute to its postwar nation-building project? In posing these questions, *Great Expectations and Interwar Realities*, while rooted in Hungary, examines larger themes such as the nature of interwar international relations and the complexities of national identity construction. Hungarian cultural diplomacy had a great impact, if for different reasons than historians have often thought. For while cultural diplomacy helps us to understand the ways in which small states exploited the gaps in the international system, its most enduring achievements are connected with domestic development.

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[3] I have chosen the term "cultural diplomacy," for Hungarians themselves referred to it as such during the interwar years. The term (*kultúrdiplomácia*) was coined by János Hankiss in his 1934 article "A kultúrdiplomácia alapvetése," *Külügyi Szemle* (1934, no. 2): 158–64. He defined it further—albeit reluctantly, for he argued that simple definition does not do justice to the complexity of the undertaking—in his 1937 follow-up publication as an action that "brings about foreign policy goals with the use of cultural instruments." See János Hankiss, *A kultúrdiplomácia alapvetése* (Budapest: Magyar Külügyi Társaság, 1937), 1. For a useful discussion on definitions and more, see Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009).

Conducting a cultural-diplomatic campaign was one of the few viable alternatives that the Hungarian leadership had to alter the country's place in the postwar international order. In November 1918, Austria-Hungary capitulated, signaling the end not only of World War I but also of the Dual Monarchy. During the war 661,000 Hungarian soldiers were killed, 740,000 were captured (thousands of whom vanished in Siberia), and some 250,000 disabled personnel arrived home from the front. As a consequence of malnourishment and inadequate health care, the civilian death toll reached 600,000.[4] In addition to the physical devastation, the war left its destructive imprint on the country's moral fabric. News about corruption, crime, prostitution, and the subsequent increase in sexually transmitted diseases became a part of everyday life. Within two years, Hungary experienced tremendous upheaval: a failed democratic bourgeois revolution; the rise of a Bolshevik-style Soviet Republic, its Red Terror, and its ultimate collapse; foreign occupation; counter-revolution; quasi-civil war; White Terror; and a draconian peace treaty. On June 4, 1920, Hungarian delegates signed the Treaty of Trianon, drafted by France, Great Britain, and the United States. With the stroke of a pen, Hungary lost 71.5 percent of its prewar territory and 63.6 percent of its population. In addition, Hungary also lost 62.2 percent of its railways, 73.8 percent of its roads, and 64.6 percent of its navigable waterways. Fiume, Hungary's only seaport, was also taken away. The treaty reduced most of the country's timber, coal, and iron resources. In addition, approximately three

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[4] There is no certainty about the number of Hungarian victims. Ferenc Julier stated in 1933 that of the 3.8 million men mobilized, 661,000 died, 743,000 were wounded, and 734,000 were taken prisoner. See Ferenc Julier, *1914–1918: A világháború magyar szemmel* (Budapest: Magyar Szemle Társaság, 1933), http://www.bibl.u-szeged.hu/bibl/mil/ww1/julier/8.html (accessed June 11, 2016). Mária Ormos provides different numbers. According to her data, 3.4 million Hungarian men were mobilized, 531,000 died, 500,000 were injured, and over 833,000 were taken prisoner. See Mária Ormos, *Hungary in the Age of the Two World Wars, 1914–1945* (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 2007. Distributed by Columbia University Press), 20. The discrepancy might have something to do with the number of prisoners and their fate. According to Holger H. Herwig, from the entire Austro-Hungarian Army, 1,691,000 men were taken prisoner, and 480,000 died in captivity. See Holger H. Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914–1918* (London: Arnold, 1997), 439.

million ethnic Hungarians in the detached territories became minorities in neighboring countries. Hungarians reacted with disbelief and resentment. The "Trianon Syndrome," as some historians have termed it, transformed the national mentality. Revisionism—revising the Trianon Treaty—became Hungary's civic religion. The majority of the population, including Hungarian leaders, agreed that recovering the lost territories needed to be the primary aim of foreign policy.[5]

Before we proceed, a few words are necessary about the relationship between revisionism, power, and international relations. The oft-quoted maxim of Thucydides offers a very straight-forward equation: "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must."[6] Hungarian leadership was not prepared to consent to Thucydides's axiom and was unwilling to accept the country's marginalized status.

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[5] There is a great deal of literature on the subject of Hungarian revisionism. The best single-volume study on the topic, in my opinion, is Miklós Zeidler, *A revíziós gondolat* (Budapest: Osiris Zsebkönyvtár, 2001). A revised and expanded edition was published under the same title in 2009: see Miklós Zeidler, *A revíziós gondolat* (Pozsony [Bratislava]: Kalligram, 2009). Zeidler's English-language study also offers a fine guide to this issue: see Miklós Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision in Hungary 1920–1945*, trans. Thomas J. DeKornfeld and Helen DeKornfeld (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 2007. Distributed by Columbia University Press). See also Ignác Romsics, ed., *Trianon és a magyar politikai gondolkodás, 1920–1953* (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 1998); and Béla Király, Peter Pastor, and Ivan Sanders, eds., *Essays on World War I: Total War and Peacemaking; A Case Study of Trianon* (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1982). Another concept that is often used in discussions of interwar Hungarian politics is irredentism. In my usage of revisionism vis-à-vis irredentism, I adhere to Zeidler's distinction, in which revisionism signals Hungarian aims to *legally* revise the postwar treaty. This was the official stance of the Hungarian government after 1927. The government actually spoke out against irredentist propaganda (officially, that is), which they viewed as inflammatory and something that jeopardized the government's pursuit of the treaty's peaceful revision. However, one must note that contemporaries did not necessarily make this distinction and that irredentist claims and rhetoric were often used even in some government publications. For more, see Zeidler, *A revíziós gondolat* (2001), 51–52.

[6] Quoted in John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 163; and somewhat differently in Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003), 16. For the original quote, see Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 5.89.

They aimed to reverse the treaty, recover the country's lost territory, recapture its former status and glory, reclaim its markets and resources, expand its ideology of Hungarian regional supremacy, and alter Hungary's overall international position.[7] However, carrying out these sorts of changes requires considerable power. What, then, makes a state strong? What is power? To Joseph Nye, "power is like weather" in that "everyone depends on it and talks about it, but few understand it."[8] Power "is also like love, easier to experience than to define or measure, but no less real for that."[9] If one looks up the dictionary definition (as Nye did), one learns that power is "the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events."[10] According to John J. Mearsheimer, power is military might.[11] For others, power includes "wealth, population, territory, raw materials, and technology."[12] Post-World War I Hungary had none of these. Yet even the doyens of the realist school of international relations—Edward Hallett Carr and Hans J. Morgenthau—agreed that in the post-World War I world, in addition to the aforementioned "hard powers," there was an additional source of power: "the power over opinion."[13]

The recognition that public opinion matters is one of the least-examined legacies of the Great War. Hungarians recognized the importance of international public opinion. "International public opinion is a remarkable thing. It is like atmospheric pressure one cannot see, yet under its weight one has anxious feelings," wrote Kuno Klebelsberg, Hungarian minister of religion and public education (or minister of

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[7] For more on revisionism as a concept, see Jason W. Davidson in *The Origins of Revisionist and Status-Quo States* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

[8] Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 1.

[9] Ibid.

[10] *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (2014); "power, n," def. 2, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/power (accessed March 19, 2014).

[11] Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 5.

[12] Davidson, *The Origins of Revisionist and Status-Quo States*, 28.

[13] Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1941), 168–75; and Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th ed. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1973), 148–49, 257–60, and 332–39.

culture, as it was also called) in 1927.[14] He might not have been able to define it exactly, but Klebelsberg and postwar Hungarian leadership realized that successful foreign policy, especially in the absence of "hard power," required generating positive international public opinion. He argued that the negative image of the country was responsible for the treaty's severity and the country's isolation. The Hungarian political elite, Klebelsberg and his colleagues, Prime Ministers Pál Teleki and István Bethlen, and members of the Foreign Ministry (KÜM) believed cultural diplomacy was one of the most viable means of regaining the lost territories and gaining international recognition. Hungary's political situation could only improve if the great nations' judgment of the country improved. Yet, continued Klebelsberg, it could not be done through simple propaganda, since the idea of organized propaganda in itself breeds mistrust and suspicion.[15] The answer was a cultural-diplomatic campaign, which emerged as a crucial instrument in the country's postwar recovery.

Hungarian leadership was not alone in recognizing the links between international public opinion, cultural production, and power. Other East-Central European states also competed for the attention and backing of the international community. The reason for the competition was the Versailles system. The end of World War I and the peace treaties that followed significantly altered both the physical and mental map of East and Central Europe. The great empires of the Romanovs, Hohenzollerns, Habsburgs, and Ottomans gave way to a collection of new, or considerably altered, nation-states. The Treaties of Paris and the creation of the League of Nations carried the promise of ending Great Power hegemony in international relations and supposed the empowerment of small states. For a few years the new system seemed to work, despite what Mark Mazower calls its "liberal paternalistic nature." However, by the mid-1920s, Mazower argues, "as the balance of power in Europe shifted, the League became increasingly marginalized," and

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[14] Kuno Klebelsberg, *Neonacionalizmus* (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1928), 97. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. In the semi-official discourse, the Ministry of Religion and Public Education (*Vallás- és Közoktatásügyi Minisztérium*, VKM) was often referred to in shorthand as the Ministry of Culture (*Kultuszminisztérium*).

[15] Ibid., 107.

"diplomacy flowed around Geneva rather than through it."[16] In many ways, it was the return of Great Power politics. Once again, the Western powers had the sole right to mediate and settle border disputes and adjustment plans, call for plebiscites, and oversee the compliance of the various states with the treaties in respect to their minorities.[17] The East-Central European nations found themselves in a dependent relationship. Hungarian, Romanian, Czechoslovak, and Yugoslav leaders vied for the West's acceptance and support in order to secure their country's place within the European community and to establish sovereign rights over their real and perceived national territories. In this new geopolitical climate, the small nation-states of Eastern and East-Central Europe, bound by their treaty obligations, faced a new reality: the game might be played in the East, but the referee and the rules came from the West. They understood cultural diplomacy as a zero-sum game. As Lord Newton, who was friendly to the Hungarian case, wrote in 1934:

> This is the era of Propaganda, and all the smaller European nations, and some of the greater, are engaged ceaselessly in putting their cases before the world. Those who were on the winning side are vociferating that nothing would induce them to relinquish the spoils which they had obtained either by merit or by luck, and those who were defeated are equally persistent in demanding that their grievances should be remedied, that minorities should be protected, and the flagrant injustices in connection with the wholesale transfer of nationals from one State to another should be rectified.[18]

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[16] Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1999), 64–65.

[17] These rights nominally belonged to the League of Nations, but in reality they were under the purview of the Great Powers. On interwar minority rights, see Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004). See also Zara Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History, 1919–1933* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), especially chaps. 7 and 10.

[18] Lord Newton's preface to Count Stephen Bethlen (István Bethlen), *The Treaty of Trianon and European Peace: Four Lectures Delivered in London in November 1933* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1934), v. (Reprint, Arno Press Inc., 1971.)

Not surprisingly, for the regions' leaders, from Hungary's István Bethlen to Czechoslovakia's Edvard Beneš, diplomacy was, to appropriate Carl von Clausewitz's maxim, a continuation of war by other means. It was certainly perceived as a competition, but it was a different kind of conflict. Kuno Klebelsberg announced the basic guideline of the campaign in his 1922 inaugural speech: "It is not the sword but culture that can sustain and make the Hungarian homeland great once again."[19] Accordingly, on this battlefield, artists, architects, and filmmakers became warriors, just as their paintings, buildings, movies, and other cultural products became weaponry. This study is thus about the origins, organization, and practice of those efforts.

To Hungarians the "soft power" of cultural diplomacy indeed seemed to be a viable option. In his *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Joseph Nye argues that there are three sources of soft power: culture, political values, and foreign policies.[20] Michael David-Fox's recent study of 1920s and 1930s Soviet cultural diplomacy illuminated the importance of political values—in the form of courting Western public opinion by showcasing the great socialist experiment to intellectuals and beyond.[21] The Hungarian political system was, and was seen as, anachronistic and did not have a clear and universally recognizable message. Foreign policy as soft power requires legitimacy and some level of moral authority. Legitimacy and authority were goals that Hungarian cultural diplomacy could only hope to achieve. Culture, however, was available. The "ministry of culture shall simultaneously carry out the duties of the ministry of national defense," proclaimed Klebelsberg.[22] The Hungarian political elite, in concert with the country's intellectual and industrial elite, spared no effort in reshaping the country's image abroad. Yet as Nye puts it, the soft power of cultural

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[19] Quoted in Kuno Klebelsberg, *Jöjjetek harmincas évek!* (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1930), 111.

[20] Nye, *Soft Power*, 11.

[21] Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921–1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[22] Kuno Klebelsberg, *Gróf Klebelsberg Kuno beszédei, cikkei és törvényjavaslatai, 1916–1926* (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1927), 516. The statement was originally made on February 20, 1925, during discussion about the budget of the Ministry of Culture (Ministry of Religion and Public Education).

diplomacy requires an audience who is willing to receive the message. The success of soft power depends on the "currency of attraction." Creating an attractive image requires careful framing of the message and its objectives and must avoid a "narrow and myopic perspective."[23]

To be sure, Hungary's message and its very objectives were rather "narrow and myopic." The stated ambition was to change the status quo and revise Trianon, as well as to gain the respect of other nations—both things to which Hungarians felt entitled. The central theme of Hungarian cultural diplomacy was based on a conviction that the solidification and promotion of the country's alleged cultural superiority (*kultúrfölény*) and Western roots would facilitate the rise of Hungary. Architects of the cultural-diplomatic campaign argued that the challenge was to maintain and expand Hungary's role as *primus inter pares*, that is, to be "first among equals" in the field of cultural achievement in East-Central Europe, and to portray Hungarian regional superiority to the world. To spread this message, government and government-related agencies undertook a series of important initiatives: establishing new cultural institutions abroad, creating foreign-language journals, reinventing the country's tourism industry, and producing modern cinema and radio broadcasts to carry the content of cultural diplomacy to foreign audiences. These efforts achieved some success, for the cultural institutions attracted visitors, the number of foreign tourists skyrocketed, and the products of the new media—short culture films and radio programs—appealed to audiences worldwide.

In spite of Hungarian efforts, pleased onlookers, joyful tourists, and delighted cinemagoers and radio listeners could not change the fact that the Great Powers had little interest in the region and even less in supporting Hungarian revisionist goals. At least, that was the case until another revisionist country—one with actual military, economic, and political power—entered the scene: Nazi Germany. While Hungarians continued their worldwide campaign of cultural diplomacy, traditional diplomacy moved closer to Berlin, for it was Hitler's Germany, not the international community, that offered the real possibility of territorial revision. By 1941 Hungary partially achieved its revisionist goal, but not because its cultural diplomacy convinced international

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[23] Nye, *Soft Power*, 16, 60–61, and 99.

public opinion of the necessity of such revision. Rather, it was a result of a Faustian bargain for which Hungary and many of its citizens would pay a heavy price. In this sense, Hungarian cultural diplomacy was unsuccessful.

Great Expectations and Interwar Realities offers another way to look at cultural diplomacy, by moving beyond immediate goals and instead focusing on its long-term consequences in connection with the country's state- and nation-building efforts. It is easy to forget that World War I not only ended the empires but also produced a number of new or newly reconstructed entities in dire need of international recognition. Joseph Rothschild's 1974 *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* cautioned against passing over the obvious yet continuously underrated achievement of the period. Newly constructed or reconstructed nations carved out a level of legitimacy on the international stage that, as Rothschild argued, neither Nazi Germany nor the Soviet Union was able to undermine.[24] National identity construction and its imagery and infrastructure played a significant role in this development. Because its very goal was to gain support for foreign policy as well as much-needed recognition as a member of the community of nations, cultural diplomacy was a crucial component of fashioning that identity. In other words, by examining the practices of cultural diplomacy, we can see that Hungarian national identity was much more than an internal construct, for it was influenced greatly by the actual and fictional standards of the West. Paul Hanebrink's outstanding study of Hungary's Christian nationalism—*In Defense of Christian Hungary*—was an important step toward understanding the complexities of interwar Hungarian identity construction.[25] My book builds on this and asks questions about the relationship between Hungarianness and Europeanness. What kind of Hungary did Hungarians seek to present to the world: modern or traditional? How Hungary did position itself in relation to Western civilization (as they understood it)? Why did they replace the pagan chieftain Árpád with St. Stephen at the forefront of

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[24] Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974), 24.

[25] Paul Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890–1944* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006).

the pantheon of Hungarian history? What was Hungarian about Hungarian music? What tourist attractions best represented Hungary and Hungarian culture: the serene and traditional countryside, or cosmopolitan and modern Budapest? Or something in between? By examining the ways these and similar questions were debated and negotiated, this book offers a different understanding of identity construction in which external factors—beyond rivalry and "othering"—carried a great deal of weight.

Hungarians, of course, were neither the first nor the last to employ their cultural capital—real and imagined—to reformulate their image abroad in order to gain the necessary support for foreign policy goals. Richard T. Arndt recently remarked that if war was the "last resort of kings," as Hugo Grotius contended, then cultural diplomacy was surely the first.[26] Cultural diplomacy has been practiced since the Bronze Age. Scholars such as historian Jan Melissen argue that image cultivation was practiced in biblical times and continued through Byzantine times and the Italian Renaissance.[27] The Venetians had already introduced the regular distribution of newsletters, but it was the invention of the printing press that truly revolutionized the role of public opinion in international relations. One of the "true pioneers" who realized the potential of "identity creation and image projection" was Cardinal Richelieu in early seventeenth-century France.[28] In 1635 he established the Académie Française to cultivate French language and culture to broaden the influence of the kingdom. His successor, Cardinal Mazarin, continued the work of his tutor and in turn established the Collège des Quatre-Nations in 1643. Patriots and other individuals also utilized their artistic talents to conduct their own cultural propaganda campaign. Lord Byron at the beginning of the nineteenth century invoked and propagated the dream that "Greece might still be free." Novelist Henryk Sienkiewicz and pianist Ignacy Paderewski did a great deal to promote the idea of an independent and free Poland. Yet it

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[26] Richard T. Arndt, *The First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005), xi.

[27] Jan Melissen, "The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice," in *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, ed. Jan Melissen (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 3.

[28] Ibid.

was only at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, wrote Philip M. Taylor, that "attempts to inform, cultivate, control and manipulate public opinion have resulted in the scientific development of the new arts of publicity, public relations, advertising and propaganda conducted through organizations designed specifically to influence the audience to respond in a manner desired by those in power or by those who wish to be in power."[29] France's Alliance Française (1883) was the forerunner of this development. The institution's goal was to promote French language and culture worldwide. Among its founders were Jules Verne, Ferdinand de Lesseps, and Jules Renan.

The real turning point in the history of cultural diplomacy was World War I. As Harold D. Lasswell put it in his 1927 *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, "the history of the late War shows that modern war must be fought on three fronts: the military front, the economic front, and the propaganda front."[30] In the aftermath of the Great War, intellectuals and politicians alike awoke to the power of propaganda. A new emphasis on cultivating public opinion resulted in an explosion of studies. The United States led the way in the new field of public relations. Universities offered courses on the subject, and public relations firms were established. Intellectuals such as philosopher John Dewey expressed deep concern about the effects of propaganda on public consciousness, not to mention its impact on political practices. Opposed to the Deweyan liberal optimists were the realists, who propagated a scientific understanding of the concept and promoted a new brand of public relations expertise. Their camp included the likes of Edward Bernays, Ivy Ledbetter Lee, Harold Lasswell, and Walter Lippmann.[31] Lippmann pointed out that we, as people, know our environment only indirectly and that newspapers, books, and other materials indirectly influence our understanding and belief system.[32] In

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[29] Philip M. Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda, 1919–1939* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 1.

[30] Harold D. Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), 214.

[31] Brett Gary, *The Nervous Liberals: Propaganda Anxieties from World War I to the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 15.

[32] Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1922), 4–5.

his 1923 book *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, Edward Bernays argued that "perhaps the most significant social, political and industrial fact about the present century is the increased attention which is paid to public opinion."[33] Bernays, a nephew of Sigmund Freud, used a combination of his uncle's psychoanalysis and the work of French social psychologist Gustave Le Bon on crowd psychology to explain the concept of public relations. In his view, "no idea or opinion [was] an isolated factor."[34] Harold D. Lasswell argued similarly but went even further, pointing out that governments often constructed ideas and opinions through propaganda. He maintained that even after the war's conclusion, "all governments are engaged to some extent in propaganda as part of their ordinary peace-time functions," because "they make propaganda on behalf of diplomatic friends or against diplomatic antagonists, and this is unavoidable." [35]

Nations small and large came to appreciate the benefits of positive foreign public opinion. Democratic and authoritarian governments from London to Tokyo deployed their cultural capital under the aegis of "cultural diplomacy." Various government and government-related institutions opened their doors with the goal of promoting their respective nations' cultural, scientific, and historical achievements. To fulfill their task, they utilized the scientific and technological advances of the time, projecting their messages through moving pictures and radio waves. In 1923 the French government openly acknowledged the need for "intellectual expansion." The "cultural relation section" of the French Foreign Ministry opened cultural institutions within and outside embassies worldwide. In these institutions one found the crème of France's young intellectuals, many of whom became household names in academic circles: Claude-Lèvi Strauss, Michel Foucault, and Roland Barthes.[36] Through the interwar years the French example was followed by German institutions, the Italian Dante Alighieri Society, the Soviet All-Union Society for Cultural Ties Abroad, the Japanese Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, the British Council, and

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[33] Edward L. Bernays, *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1923), 34.

[34] Ibid., 97.

[35] Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique*, 14.

[36] Arndt, *The First Resort*, 37.

others.[37] These various activities multiplied during the Cold War. In short, cultural diplomacy became a major attribute of twentieth-century foreign relations.

Scholars of cultural diplomacy have done an excellent job illustrating the role of cultural diplomacy in international relations. However, for the most part they have disregarded both East-Central Europe and the interwar period, preferring to focus on post-World War II American-Soviet cultural diplomacy.[38] This is slowly changing, and recent studies are challenging the hitherto hegemonic periodization and geographical focus of the pertinent literature. Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht was among the first to call for the decentralization of the topic.[39] Andrea Orzoff, in her excellent study of interwar Czechoslovak cultural diplomacy, demonstrated that the principal practitioners of cultural diplomacy included the small countries of East-Central Europe.[40] Being small does not necessarily mean being inconsequential, as we

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[37] For more on this, see Ruth Emily McMurry and Muna Lee, *The Cultural Approach: Another Way in International Relations* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1947); Frederick C. Barghoorn, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960); Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921–1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Philip M. Taylor, "Cultural Diplomacy and the British Council: 1934–1939," *British Journal of International Studies* 4, no. 3 (October 1978): 244–65; and Sang Mi Park, "Japan as a Cultural State (bunka kokka Nippon): Theater, Culture, and Politics" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2007).

[38] For example, see Frank A. Ninkovich, *The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938–1950* (Cambridge, UK, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); and Naima Prevots, *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).

[39] Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, ed., *Decentering America* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007); Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, *Sound Diplomacy: Music and Emotions in Transatlantic Relations, 1850–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); and Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Frank Schumacher, eds., *Culture and International History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003).

[40] Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle: The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914–1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

have learned from Holly Case's recent work, which investigates the question of Europeanness in connection with Hungarian and Romanian efforts to gain control and legitimacy over the disputed territory of Transylvania during World War II.[41] *Great Expectations and Interwar Realities* aims to contribute to this ongoing re-examination of small-state cultural diplomacy.[42]

This study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter contextualizes the construction of interwar cultural diplomacy in Hungary and elsewhere. It starts with the war years (1914–1918) to illustrate the growing importance of propaganda. It asks the following questions: How did the Hungarian leadership conclude that the "resurrection" of the country depended on its image abroad? What steps did it take to organize the country's cultural production to compete with the similar efforts of the neighboring states? Finally, the chapter provides an overview of traditional diplomacy, providing a framework for what comes later.

Chapter 2 illustrates the complexity of postwar image (re-)construction. By investigating the ways Hungarians viewed themselves and the rest of Europe, my study depicts the anxieties, fears, and hopes that surrounded Hungary's effort to renew and revise its tarnished image abroad. It also argues that competing visions of Hungarianness played an important role in the construction of national identity. Finally, the chapter speaks to the larger questions of Europeanness, for the Hungarian elite was determined to build a national identity that would enable the country to join the European community of nations.

The three subsequent chapters present detailed studies of the Hungarian campaign of cultural diplomacy in practice by examining three separate, yet related, topics: academia and scholarship, tourism, and

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[41] Holly Case, *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 4.

[42] Anikó Kovács-Bertrand's fine monograph examines Hungarian revisionist propaganda practices. However, I think her periodization of the topic forecloses a large and productive segment of Hungarian cultural diplomacy, which in my estimation continued until at least 1941 (and as Case showed in her *Between States*, even beyond). See Anikó Kovács-Bertrand, *Der ungarische Revisionismus nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg: Der publizistische Kampf gegen den Friedensvertrag von Trianon, 1918–1931* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1997).

radio and film production. Other topics could have been included in the discussion, such as sports, fairs, and festivals, and industrial/agricultural products and their marketing. However, I have decided to limit my examination to the above three subjects, for two reasons. First, there is the basic problem of sources. Unfortunately, during World War II and the 1956 Revolution, much of the relevant documentation that was housed at the Hungarian National Archives was destroyed. My second consideration concerns target audiences. Academic representation targeted a small, educated, and, for the most part, privileged elite group of intellectuals, such as university professors and their students. Tourism targeted those who could afford to travel. In the 1920s and 1930s, despite advances in mass transportation, traveling abroad for leisure for the most part remained the privilege of the well-off. However, radio and cinema offered ways for Hungarians to bring the country to the lower classes, as these media were the most "democratic" instruments of cultural diplomacy. Consequently, my selection provides an across-the-board analysis of Hungarian cultural diplomacy. These chapters do not pretend to offer an all-encompassing examination of interwar Hungarian academia, tourism, and cinema and radio history. Rather, they focus on their connections to cultural diplomacy, because an in-depth analysis of these three "construction sites" indicates that cultural diplomacy, depending on its target, at times complemented traditional diplomacy, while at other times it probed possible avenues that traditional diplomacy could not. Moreover, it shows that the construction of national identity, especially when done for foreign consumption, is a complicated process accompanied by uncertainty, manipulation, and conflict. Governmental and non-governmental organizations joined forces to fashion a European identity for Hungary, yet they were uncertain about what was to be considered European. In their search for positive illumination of the Hungarian character, they manipulated, and at times invented, cultural traditions and created and managed new outlets for cultural production. Conflicts between traditionalists and modernizers, and between ideologues and businesspeople, further complicated this process. So too did the growing influence of the Hungarian radical right, with its virulent anti-Semitism and xenophobia. Examining the motivations and rationale behind the selection process allows us to gain a better understanding of the practice of interwar cultural diplomacy, with its external goals and internal challenges.

The final chapter investigates the ever-elusive issue of reception and both the short- and long-term legacies of interwar Hungarian cultural diplomacy. Being a "small country" with the added burden of being a "defeated small country" significantly reduced Hungary's diplomatic options. The political leadership refused to accept the postwar order but had very little power to change it. This anxiety was not lost on foreign onlookers. As one traveler cleverly put it, Hungary was a "country grinding her teeth."[43] But in reality it did more than "grind" those teeth and shout "*Nem! Nem! Soha!*" (No! No! Never!—referring to the unwillingness to accept the territorial losses of Trianon). Hungarians indeed devised and carried out a highly sophisticated public relations campaign, but to what end? Could a happy audience of, for instance, Béla Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*—as magnificent as it is—change the way a foreign government viewed Hungarian political goals? Joseph Nye argues that measuring which cultural assets should be utilized can be done by taking opinion polls and organizing focus groups—tools that were not yet available to the practitioners of interwar cultural diplomacy.[44] Does cultural diplomacy have the power to produce tangible results in policy outcomes? Under what circumstances? These are just some of the questions I will answer in the concluding chapter, one that admittedly seeks to raise more questions than to provide definitive answers.

Great Expectations and Interwar Realities looks to move beyond questions about the success and/or failure of Hungarian interwar cultural diplomacy and offers a new interpretation of interwar diplomatic history and national identity construction in East-Central Europe. I want to emphasize that this is not a study about the rights and wrongs of the postwar treaties in general; nor it is a re-evaluation of the Treaty of Trianon. Without a doubt, territorial revisionism was the leitmotif of both traditional and cultural diplomacy in Hungary, just as securing the postwar status quo motivated Romanian, Yugoslav, and Czechoslovak diplomacy. However, my study seeks to better understand the shared experience of this cultural and political moment in Europe. Hungarian sociologist and political thinker István Bibó

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[43] Haruko Ichikawa, *Japanese Lady in Europe* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1937), 357.

[44] Nye, *Soft Power*, 16.

penned an excellent study in 1946 with a telling title: "The Misery of the Small East European States." Bibó argued that the "hysteria" that characterized the region's political life was the result of uncertainties and fears over territorial status and the very existence of a nation.[45] This sort of existential anxiety and talk of the "death of a nation," Bibó continued, might have been an "empty phrase" to Western Europeans, but to the people of Eastern Europe it was a tangible reality.[46] Indeed, to Hungarians, Czechoslovaks, Poles, and the like—not to mention Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians—their very existence as a nation-state was, and continued to be, a real concern and a source of tremendous apprehension.

To the small nation-states of the region, cultural diplomacy was a rational and pragmatic choice. To these countries, not having powerful friends was not an option, for their fears were certainly not without foundation. It is enough to recall what took place in Munich during the autumn of 1938. Czechoslovakia—a status-quo-seeking and for the most part democratic nation—disappeared from the map of Europe with the blessing of the Great Powers of Europe. From the perspective of these countries, interwar European history looks different. Thus I suggest that we view the region's history—and within that Hungarian history—between the wars for what it was, not what followed. In other words, we should view the period not as a prelude to World War II but as a postlude to World War I, with all its anxieties, failures, and successes.[47]

The history of European international relations between the wars is not complete without pointing out the shortcomings of the international system and the Great Powers who failed to listen to and understand the region they helped to create. However, those shortcomings

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[45] István Bibó, "A kelet-európai kisállamok nyomorúsága," in *Harmadik út: politikai és történeti tanulmányok*, ed. Zoltán Szabó (London: Magyar Könyves Céh, 1960), 117.

[46] Ibid., 132.

[47] My thinking on the issue is indebted to Holly Case's *Between States*, as well as Eric Weitz's and Eberhard Kolb's work on Weimar Germany. For more, see Eberhard Kolb, *The Weimar Republic*, trans. P. S. Falla and R. J. Park (London and New York: Routledge, 2005); and Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).