

JULIUS NÉMETH

LIFE AND WORK

BY

A. RÓNA-TAS

Lifting his finger he used to say: «A very interesting idea, a genuine idea indeed — but entirely nonsense of course». Those who had the privilege to enjoy his company heard these words many times uttered in his kindly mocking style. It was typical in so far that it reflected two of his main characteristics — his never diminishing interest in everything which had or could have had any bearing on his studies and his rigorous, severe but always just and methodologically backed criticism. Over his 80's, already almost deaf and plagued with various problems of illhealth and age, he never missed asking his younger colleagues what they had been reading. And in return he always reported about his reading vividly adding to the relevant summary, his learned commentary with a kind of forgiving irony. He considered the critical sense to be the most important characteristic of a scholar. In 1972 he wrote about Zoltán Gombocz his master and paragon: «Aber weder die planmäßig erworbene Bildung noch das grenzenlose materielle Wissen und Erinnerungsvermögen machen einen zum Gelehrten. Der Gelehrte braucht in ersten Linie Urteilskraft. Und das sichere Urteil war die Haupttugend Gombocz'».¹

Julius or accordingly to the Hungarian form of his first name Gyula Németh was a unique figure in the history of Turkology and his carrier was not less unique. He was born on November 2, 1890 in the town Karcag, one of the most important centres of the Hungarian countryside called up today Greater Cumania (Nagykunság). Greater Cumania was settled by the immigrant Cuman groups in the 13th century (about 1239), for a long time they preserved their autonomy and became wholly Magyarized relatively late. However an ethnic consciousness remained and has been preserved by the local inhabitants.

¹ J. Németh, *Zoltán Gombocz. Ein ungarischer Sprachforscher (1877–1935)*: *Acta Lingu. Hung.* XX (1972), p. 5. Two successive bibliographies of Németh exist, the first in *Acta Orient. Hung.* XI (1960), pp. 11–28 compiled by G. Uray and in *Hungaro-Turcica. Studies in Honour of Julius Németh* ed. Gy. Káldy-Nagy, Budapest 1976, pp. 357–364, compiled by G. Dávid. See also the bibliography of G. Hazai in Németh *Armağanı*, Ankara 1962, pp. 15–41. Dávid's bibliography runs until 1974. A new and full bibliography of the works of J. Németh will be published in the near future.

It was no coincidence that István Györffy one of the founders of modern Hungarian ethnography, has done so much for the research into the history of the Hungarian Cumans and he directed the attention of his younger schoolmate, Németh, to the language and history of his own ethnic group.² When he was fourteen the young pupil of the grammar school at Karcag began to learn Turkish. He was still a student of the same school when he first visited Istanbul in 1907. After having passed his matriculation (cca the GCE) he travelled to the Crimea.

In 1909 Németh became a student at the University of Budapest and at the same time he was admitted to the famous Eötvös-College. The college was founded by the well-known Hungarian physicist Loránd Eötvös, the son of the former Minister of Education, József Eötvös. The college bears the father's name, while the University of Budapest adopted the son's name in 1950.³ The professors and the atmosphere of the college, organized on the model of the *École Normale Supérieure* in Paris, gave the first and perhaps decisive impetus to the formation of Németh's plans, aims and scholarship. Gombocz was then a professor at the Eötvös College and his interests and personality were decisive for Németh's introduction into the basic problems of Turkology and in a broader sense of Altaic studies.

Among the scholars of that time another leading figure was Bernhardt (Bernát) Munkácsi. Munkácsi worked in the fields of Uralic, Altaic, Indoeuro-pean and Caucasian studies and was not only a many-sided scholar but also a good organizer. Together with other orientalists he founded the Hungarian Committee of the International Association of Central- and East-Asian Studies (IACEAS).⁴ One of the main activities of this Committee was to give financial

² István Györffy (1884—1939) like Németh, was born in Karcag. From 1934 he was the first full professor in ethnography at the University of Budapest.

³ József Eötvös (*eö* is an old orthography for the vowel *ö*) (1813—1871) the great Hungarian novelist and politician was twice Minister of Education. First for a short time during the Hungarian revolution and war of independence in 1848 (for six months) and later from 1867 until 1871. His son Loránd Eötvös (1848—1919) famous for his studies on the theory of gravitation, professor of the University of Budapest from 1877, became Minister of Education in 1894. The Eötvös college founded in 1895, was one of his most important achievements with a far reaching influence on Hungarian scientific and cultural life.

⁴ At the 13th Congress of Orientalists held in Hamburg, 1902, the statutes of the IACEAS were adopted by the membership elected at the 12th Congress in Rome. The Association has asked V. Radlov and S. Oldenburg to form a Central Committee in St. Petersburg and this was practically identical with the Russian Committee of the IACEAS. The other members were asked to form national committees in their own countries. The representatives present included those of France (Cordier, Senart, Foucher), Great Britain (Reay, Rhys-David, A. Stein), Germany (Pischel, Grünwedel, Kuhn, Leumann), the Netherlands (Kern, de Groot, de Goeje), Denmark (V. Thomsen), Sweden (Montelius), Norway (Lieblein), Switzerland (Naville), Italy (Nocentini) and the United States (F.

and moral support to young scholars to enable them to make study tours in the East, especially in Russia. The good connections with the Russian Committee of IACEAS under the chairmanship of V. V. Radlov, enabled the Committee to secure the permissions of the Russian government and introductions to the local authorities. On the session of April 18, 1910 the secretary, B. Munkácsi, submitted to the Committee the application of the then 19 year old Németh for a study tour to Caucasia. He received the travel-grant with the necessary instructions and in autumn of that same year he already submitted his report on his Kumük and Balkar studies⁵ his first independent publication. The lexical and text material of his Kumük collection appeared within a year in the *Keleti Szemle*⁶ the journal of the Hungarian Committee of the IACEAS.

Since the retirement of A. Vámbéry in 1905, the chair of Oriental Studies at the University of Budapest was vacant. J. Thúry a very talented Hungarian Turkologist, elected as his successor, died a few weeks later in May, 1906. Vámbéry the grand old man, was still alive and actually gave books and advice to his younger colleagues. The so-called «Turkish-Ugrian battle»⁷ was

Hirth). Hungary was represented by A. Vámbéry and A. Hermann, the latter an eminent scholar in Gypsology and ethnology. Among the aims of the Association paragraph *b* of section VIII stated: «Servir d'intermédiaire entre les Gouvernements intéressés et les érudits des différents pays pour obtenir toutes les autorisations ou facilités nécessaires aux exploitations scientifiques et à l'exécution de fouilles sur les territoires des différents pays». The Hungarian Committee of the IACEAS was formed from the members of the Hungarian Ethnographical Society and the Eastern Commercial Academy. Its first president was A. Vámbéry and its secretary B. Munkácsi. The Hungarian Committee gained substantial financial aid from the Ministry of Education for publishing its journal *Keleti Szemle* (see below) and for study tours.

⁵ *Németh Gyulának a Nemzetközi Közép- és Keletázsiai Társaság Magyar Bizottságához intézett jelentése az 1910. nyarán végzett kaukázusi tanulmányútjának eredményeiről* [J. Németh's report on his study tour in Caucasia in the summer of 1910 to the Hungarian Committee of the IACEAS]: *Keleti Szemle* XI (1910), pp. 162–165. Earlier Németh published only a few reports in newspapers.

⁶ The first four volumes of the *Keleti Szemle* — *Revue Orientale* have been published by the Oriental Section of the Hungarian Ethnographical Society and the Eastern Commercial Academy with the financial assistance of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. From vol. V. the journal became the official organ of the Hungarian Committee of the IACEAS. The editors were throughout to vol. XIX. I. Kunos and B. Munkácsi. After the fusion of the Hungarian Committee of the IACEAS with the Kőrösi Csoma Society (see below) in 1921, the editorial board consisted of P. Teleki, Z. F. Takács and B. Munkácsi. Practically Munkácsi guided the editorial policy from the beginnings until the last volume. The great success of the journal, secured by the collaboration of a wide range of scholars from all over the world, was also reflected by the fact that the Indiana University, Bloomington, reprinted the whole series in 1966–1969.

⁷ In Hungarian literature and public life the question of the origin of the Hungarian people was from early times a problem of controversy where sentiments, political feelings and ambitions were mixed with scientifically based opinions. The non-Indoeuro-

long ago over. This vivid discussion on the origin of the Hungarians resulted in a defeat for Vámbéry's thesis concerning the Turkish origin and both at the University and in the Academy the followers of Budenz, who was Vámbéry's opponent, had gained the upper hand. Nevertheless although in this subject and in questions of methods, Vámbéry failed to reach the standards of his time, in other questions he rendered an immense service to the development of Turkology. Németh described Vámbéry as «der geniale Dilettant»,⁸ however he recognized three of his merits. The change-over of Turkology from a purely Ottoman-Islamic interest towards a more general aspect including the Turkish languages and peoples in Russia, recognition of the importance of the historical monuments of the Turkish linguistic history and culture and the combination of the problems of Turkology with those of Hungarian prehistory.

Németh learned the lesson that these aims can only be attained with the use of the up-to-date methods of linguistics, and this was what he learnt, from Gombocz and his circle in the Eötvös-College, and at the University. The central figure of Hungarian linguistics of that time was J. Szinnyi (1857—1943) in the chair of the Finno-Ugrian languages. He and an other leading person, Zs. Simonyi (1853—1919) professor of the Hungarian language recognised the talent of the young scholar and gave him unprecedented opportunities. In 1913 Németh asked for a second travel-grant to the Chuvashs of Orenburg and Ufa, which he received from the Hungarian Committee of the IACEAS and that same summer he visited the Tatars of Kazan and the Chuvash population living

pean character of the Hungarian language, the struggle against Austrian Habsburg oppression, (with which the struggle for the independent national language was deeply connected), the backward social and economic conditions (where the need for the formation of the national market, the use of the national language was essential), and many other social and political factors made it understandable that the origin and present state of the Hungarian language became a central topic. In 1869 A. Vámbéry published a paper on the Hungarian and «Turkish-Tatar» word comparisons. The major but methodologically insufficiently gathered material was severely criticized by J. Budenz in 1871, and with this the so called «Turkish-Ugrian battle» began. «Ugrian» in those times was used for what we now call Finno-Ugrian. On the one side stood Vámbéry and his followers who tried to defend the thesis that the Hungarians and their language are of Turkish origin (this is certainly a somewhat oversimplified summary of Vámbéry's view, but a detailed discussion of his views and the changes in his views can not be dealt with here). On the other hand J. Budenz and other scholars offered scientific arguments in favour of the Finno-Ugrian origin of the Hungarian language. They insisted that the Turkish elements in the Hungarian language are loanwords from several periods. Hungarian public life, most of the newspapers and popular writers backed the theory of Vámbéry which gained considerable publicity. Many Hungarians rejected the relationship with poor people with a «fish fat smell» and enthusiastically «fought» for the «glorious Turkish origin». It was to the merit of Budenz, Hunfalvy, Munkácsi, Szinnyi and others that the up-to-date methods and sound facts slowly overcame the sentiments.

⁸ *Acta Lingu. Hung.* XXII (1972), p. 28.

in Bashkiria.⁹ Vámbéry died in September of the same year and once more the question of his University chair arose. At the session of the Board of the University in early 1914, a proposal was adopted that the still vacant chair of Vámbéry should not be promptly filled but the appointment should be postponed until an appropriate candidate was ready for election. The candidate whom the Board had in mind was Németh, who although still a student already published several important papers. Németh continued his studies in Leipzig, Berlin and Kiel, and two years after gaining his Ph.D. in 1913, he received a special permit from the Minister of Religion and Education to take the examinations for his *Privat Dozent*ship. This special permission was necessary because according to the normal process a period of three years was required after the Ph. D. As a *Privat Dozent*, from 1915 he had the necessary *venia legendi* to give lectures in Turkology. He pursued his work with great zeal, which in 1916 resulted in his *Türkische Grammatik* and *Türkisches Lesebuch mit Glossar* and was followed in 1917 by the *Türkisches Übungsbuch für Anfänger* and the *Türkisch—deutsches Gesprächsbuch*.¹⁰ In 1916 he became professor extraordinary and his appointment as full professor is dated from December 31, 1918. Since he retired from his chair in 1965, he had taught for an uninterrupted period of 50 years at the University of Budapest.

In the meantime, Németh had played an active role in the organization of Hungarian oriental studies. While working with Munkácsi and others in the Hungarian Committee of the IACEAS, in 1916 he also joined the Hungarian Centre of Oriental Culture associated with the Turanian Society.¹¹ This society was a meeting place of several contradictory trends. Together with Pál Teleki¹² and some other scholars, Németh tried to give a scholarly profile to the Society. Among the, — in many respects — confused, unscholarly and politically motivated aims of the Society, there were three aspects which the group around Teleki and Németh considered to be hopeful. The research in the Balkan region, the direct connections with the scholarship and culture of Turkey, then an ally of Hungary, and the promotion of the education of young students mainly Turks from Turkey and Bulgaria. Teleki and Németh succeeded

⁹ See Németh's report: *Németh Gyula dr. jelentése az ufaï csuvasok közt tett nyelvészeti tanulmányútjáról* [Dr. J. Németh's report on his study tour among the Chuvashs of Ufa]: *Keleti Szemle* XIV (1913), pp. 211—213.

¹⁰ All four books were published in the Sammlung Göschel series. The Turkish grammar was republished in English in 1962, the Turkish reader in 1966, by T. Halasi-Kun.

¹¹ The Turanian Society (founded in 1910) was reorganized in 1916 and a Hungarian Oriental Research Centre was founded with the aim to make researches into the culture and language of the «Turanian» people whom in a quite obscure way the founders thought to be the «racial relatives of the Hungarians». After 1920, the Hungarian racists partly gained their ideological backing from the «Turanian idea».

¹² Count Pál Teleki (1879—1941) was a geographer and politician.

in publishing a volume of *Túrán*, the journal of the Society, in 1918, which was of sholarly interest and value.¹³

However in 1919 it became clear that both organizations of Hungarian oriental studies, the Hungarian Committee of the IACEAS and the Turanian Society were, for different reasons, unsuitable to serve as the centre of Hungarian oriental studies. In December, 1920 the Hungarian Committee of the IACEAS decided to merge with a newly founded society on the condition that it maintained its autonomy and the possibility of publishing the *Keleti Szemle*.¹⁴ The group around Teleki and Németh left the Turanian Society which thereafter became a gathering place of dilettants and politicians of the extreme right. The name of the new society founded by Teleki, Németh, Munkácsi and others on November 23, 1920 was the Kőrösi Csoma Society. Németh became the assistant secretary of the society and the editor-in-chief of its new journal the *Kőrösi Csoma Archivum*¹⁵.

¹³ The 1918 volume of *Túrán* was the second scientific journal of Hungarian oriental studies, but due to the historical circumstances it could secure the collaboration of only a few German and Austrian scholars such as W. Bang, Le Coq, and Oberhummer. The editorial board consisted of M. Bánffy, Gy. Prinz, B. Vikár, J. Németh, Z. F. Takács, I. Zichy and was headed by P. Teleki. In fact this was not the first volume of *Túrán*. In 1917 ten fascicules were published under the editorship of B. Vikár. This was, however, a more amateurish and popular undertaking.

¹⁴ See the minutes of the Hungarian Committee of the IACEAS in *Keleti Szemle* XIX(1922), pp. 1*—3*. For the negotiations with the newly founded Kőrösi Csoma Society three members including Németh were appointed. After the foundation of the Kőrösi Csoma Society, in 1921, a committee was elected to act as the Hungarian Committee of the IACEAS, now already an organ of the Kőrösi Csoma Society. Németh was one of its members.

¹⁵ The first issue of the *Kőrösi Csoma Archivum* was published in 1921. Its English foreword stated: «The 'Kőrösi Csoma Archives' are in reality no new periodical, but a continuation of the 'Turán', one volume of which (ten numbers) appeared in 1918, edited by Count Paul Teleki. The 'Turán' was published by the Hungarian Association of Oriental Culture, which was engaged principally in fostering cultural and political relations between the Hungarians and the Turks. In 1920 the scientific part of the Association was formed into an independent scientific body, with the title 'Kőrösi Csoma Society'; and the 'Kőrösi Csoma Archives', of which the present is the first number, are the official organ of the same. Our programme was explained in detail in the first number of the 'Turán'. This programme includes that territory of Oriental research which — as a consequence alike their original history and of their geographical situation — is of most interest to the Hungarians. As the investigation of this territory is engaging the attention of many foreign scholars too, those articles of ours which are of general interest will be published in German, French or English. We shall devote particular care to reviewing and making known, in the columns of our periodical, the details of the progress made by these researches, in order to enable the Hungarian world of science to keep in touch with all the more important publications relating thereto and at the same time to familiarise (sic) the Western world of science as far as possible with the scientific literature dealing with this subject and appearing in Hungarian, Finnish, Russian or Turkish. We

Two years later in 1922 Németh was elected as a corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. His inaugural lecture was delivered in 1923 under the title *Huns, Bulgarians, Hungarians*.¹⁶ Working already on his *opus magnum* «The formation of the land conquering Hungarians» he gave his first results and outlined his plans.

In 1927 when the Hungarian Academy of Sciences celebrated its 100th anniversary Németh summarized the achievements of the Academy in the oriental studies. His lecture *The Hungarian Academy and the Oriental Philology*¹⁷ reviewed the history of Hungarian oriental studies, and outlined its main trends and aims. He stressed the importance of the work of the orientalists in clarifying the origins of the Hungarian language and people, the study of the relations between the Hungarians and the Orient, research into the history of the Ottoman occupation of Hungary, and also evaluated those oriental studies which had no direct bearing on Hungarian history.

Three years later in 1930, the chair of Németh was reorganized under the new name «Institute of Turkish Philology and Hungarian Prehistory». This reorganization had more practical than conceptual reasons, because since 1870, the appointment of Vámbéry as full professor the chair of Oriental Studies had always had as its central topic, training and study as expressed by the new title.

Németh became the dean of the Faculty of Philosophy in 1932 and three years later he was elected an ordinary member of the Hungarian Academy. His inaugural lecture *The Divān of Khudayī* was never published. He was vice-president of the Board of Examination of Secondary School Teachers from 1935 and in this capacity he did a good deal to promote the pedagogical training of Hungarian teachers. In 1937, he was awarded with the then highest distinction for scholarly achievements, the Corvin-laurels. Two years later in 1939, he became Academician-Secretary of the Section of Linguistics and Literature of the Hungarian Academy and he held this post until the reorganization of the Aca-

request our Hungarian and foreign colleagues to kindly afford us their support» (*Kőrösi Csoma Archivum* I, p. 2). It is very peculiar that the foreword was published not in German but in English. From the foreword it can also be seen how seriously the upholding of contacts with the Russian oriental studies was intended, since the aims of the journal included the mediation of the achievements of Russian scholars, or those writing in Russian, to the west. The last Russian work reviewed in the *Kőrösi Csoma Archivum* by T. Kowalski was the work of P. P. Horoših (*Jakuty. Opyt ukazatelja istoriko-ětnologičeskoj literatury o jakutskoj narodnosti*. Pod red. i s predisloviem É. K. Pekarskogo, Irkutsk 1924) in *KCsA* II(1926–1932), p. 194. Three volumes of the *Kőrösi Csoma Archivum* (I 1921–1925, II 1926–1932, III 1941–1943) and a supplementary volume (1935–1939) were published. The journal was reprinted by Brill, Leiden in 1967.

¹⁶ *Hunok, bolgárok, magyarok: Budapesti Szemle* 195(1924), pp. 167–178.

¹⁷ *Akadémiánk és a keleti filológia: Budapesti Szemle* 211(1928), pp. 80–95.

demy in 1949. He was also elected as the managing vice president of the Association of Learned Societies in 1939 when a new institute was founded on the University, the Institute of Hungarology (Magyarságtudományi Intézet).¹⁸ The initiative came from the dean, Sándor Eckhardt an outstanding scholar in French and Hungarian philology, and from Gyula Szekfü, the renowned historian. The aim of the Institute was to uphold with scholarly methods the study of Hungarian culture, language and history against the increasing pressure of German influence. On the proposal of Eckhardt and Szekfü Németh was elected the director of the Institute for the academic years 1939'40 and 1940'41. From 1941 until 1946 Németh was a member of the Board of Directors of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

After the end of second World War and the liberation of Hungary, Németh played an active part in the reorganization of Hungarian academic life. For the years 1947—48 he was elected Rector of the University of Budapest, and for his merits in scholarship and public activities in 1948 he was presented with the Kossuth-prize (first class), the highest distinction which the new democratic state conferred on persons in public life.

After the reorganization of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1949,¹⁹ Németh was elected as president of the First Class of Language and Literature, and he held this position until 1955.

An important change in the Hungarian scientific life came with the establishment of branch Institutes within the framework and under the guidance of the Academy.²⁰ One of the first institutes of this new type was the Institute of Linguistics and Németh was appointed as its director and he held this position until his retirement in 1965. At the same time he became the editor-in-chief of the new journal, the *Acta Linguistica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* where he was active until his death.

He was elected an honorary member of several Academies and learned societies in the 1950s and 1960s: the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (1953), the Academy of the German Democratic Republic (1955), the Saxonian Academy, Leipzig (1958), the Societas Uralo-Altaica (1952), the Société Finno-Ougrienne (1956), the Royal Asiatic Society (1956), the Linguistic Society of Turkey (1960), the Historical Society of Turkey (1960), and the Oriental Society

¹⁸ The Institute of Hungarology organized working teams and gave scholarships for students in Hungarian ethnography, dialectology, physical anthropology, the history of Hungarian culture and Hungarian prehistory. In the organisation of the Institute, lectures were held for postgraduate students and others for a larger public. Some of the lectures were later published as were the results achieved by the young scholars who gained the scholarships.

¹⁹ On the reorganization of the Hungarian Academy see: *A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia másfél évszázada 1825—1975* [The 150 years of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences 1825—1975], Budapest 1975, pp. 363—381.

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 381.

of the Polish Academy (1966) etc. In addition to receiving high decorations from the Hungarian government he was presented with the Indiana University Gold Medal for Altaic Studies in 1967 and the Cyrill and Method order (Bulgaria) in 1970.

When he was 75 Németh retired from both the chair of Turkology and from the directorship of the Institute of Linguistics in 1965, but he continued to take an active part in several committees and institutions. His pupils, colleagues and friends published two memorial volumes on the occasion of his 70th birthday in 1960 and another one in 1975 on his 85th anniversary.²¹ His 80th birthday was commemorated by the University of Budapest, which conferred on him the degree of *doctor honoris causa*. He left us for ever on December 14, 1976, eleven years after his retirement, and a few weeks after his 86th birthday.

Although he was always aware of the fact that administration was an important factor in the development of science, teaching was perhaps a more essential part of his life. His university lectures were major events and were attended not only by students of Turkology but also by linguists, historians and anthropologists. And how effective and fruitful his pedagogical activities were can be concluded from the large number of his pupils who became professors and leading scholars. Professor L. Ligeti the founder of the chair of Central Asia, the former vice president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and for a time after the retirement of Németh the director of the chair of Turkology always considered him as one of his *maître*-s. Németh's pupils were Professor Zs. Kakuk, the present holder of the chair of Turkology at the University of Budapest and L. Rásonyi, former professor in Kolozsvár and Ankara. Many professors in Hungary gained their introduction into Turkish philology from Németh, including Professor L. Fekete who joined the chair of Németh in 1939 and inaugurated the study of Ottoman diplomatic and historical sources in the same institute, Professor K. Czeglédy, holder of the chair for Semitic studies who is well known for his research into the Arabic and other oriental sources on the early Turks and Hungarians, and Zs. Telegdi, professor of Persian and general linguistics, whose work on the Persian-Turkish contacts are likely of great reputation. Professor I. Tálasi who continued the work of I. Györffy concerning the cultural anthropology of the Hungarian Cumans gained his introduction into Turkology as did I myself, from the first lessons in Chuvash given by Professor Németh. The list could be continued by other leading scholars in Hungary, such as Gy. Káldy-Nagy who continues the work of L. Fekete at the chair of Turkology or Gy. Györffy who is well known for his studies on the Pechenegs and the early history of the Hungarians and

²¹ The volumes XI(1960) and XII(1961) of *Acta Orient. Hung.*, and the *Németh Armağanı*, Ankara 1962, further: *Hungaro-Turcica, Studies in honour of Julius Németh*, Budapest 1976.

others, or mention could be made of those who are not working with actual Turkological problems, but with related topics.

In a similar manner the list of names of those who have worked or are working abroad is impressive. His students were the professors Gy. Hazai (Berlin), the late J. Eckman and A. Bodrogligeti (California), T. Halasi-Kun (Columbia, New York), D. Sinor (Bloomington, Indiana), H. Eren, Z. Koşay, Ş. Baştav (Ankara), R. H. Özdem (Istanbul), P. Mijatev (Sofia), J. Blaskovics (Prague) and others.

It is regrettable that with exception of his manuals and introductions into Ottoman Turkish cited above he never published his university lectures. His *Introduction into Turkish Philology* was perhaps one of his most famous lectures, a kind of a *bibliographie raisonnée* with introductions to the most important problems of Turkology. On many occasions he considered the question of publishing his favourite lectures, but he always found himself confronted with the problem of language. Publication in Hungarian would have limited its impact to a very few students, while a publication in German would have hempered the beginner for whom it was intended.

The most interesting lectures for graduate and postgraduate students were those in which he gave an account of the scientific problems on which he was just engaged. Joining the tradition of Hungarian Turkology, he always set as his main aim the solution of controversial and difficult problems of the Hungarian-Turkish contacts. Németh was, however, aware that this could be done only under special conditions and with a special programme. In his review on the Hungarian Turkology written in 1964,²² Németh stressed the fact that in the first decades of the 20th century, there was a turning point in the history of Turkology so far as this branch of philology tried to come closer to the standards of Indo-European and Finno-Ugrian studies. The young Németh started his work in three directions: an attempt to clear up the Altaic background of Turkish linguistic history, collecting and working up the contemporary Turkish languages, and making a comparative-historical study into the languages which have or could have a special bearing on the reconstruction of the Turkish languages in general.

Several of his early papers were dedicated to the interrelationship of the Mongolian and Turkish languages²³ where he expressed his doubts about the

²² *Obščie problemy tjurkского jazykoznanija v Vengrii: Voprosy Jazykoznanija* XIII(1964), pp. 119–125, see also *Special'nye problemy tjurkского jazykoznanija v Vengrii: Voprosy Jazykoznanija* XII(1963), pp. 126–136.

²³ *Die türkisch-mongolische Hypothese: ZDMG* LXVI(1912), pp. 549–576; *Egy török-mongol hangtörvény* [A Turkish-Mongolian sound law]: *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények* XLI(1912), pp. 401–412; *Über den Ursprung des Wortes šaman und einige Bemerkungen zur türkisch-mongolischen Lautgeschichte: Keleti Szemle* XIV (1914), pp. 240–249; *A török-mongol nyelvviszonyhoz* [To the Turkish-Mongolian linguistic relations]: *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények* XLIII(1914), pp. 126–142.

hitherto generally accepted genetic relationship of these groups, a question which after a half century again became one of the central problems in Altaic studies. His field work resulted in publications of the Kumük and Balkar material, while his Chuvash notes remained unpublished. The best work of this early period, the *Outline of Proto Yakut Phonetics*²⁴ with the exception of some details²⁵ remained almost unnoticed in Turkology, because it has been published only in Hungarian. As to his aims I quote the first sentences of this paper: «This phonetics (i.e. phonology) of the Yakut language is in fact an inevitable preliminary work to a greater monography in which I wish to describe the history of Chuvash phonetics. If both these works will be ready and there will perhaps be some who are ready to undertake the solution of a few other more or less complicated questions, we shall not be far from being able to reconstruct the picture of the phonetics of Proto Turkish and thus we shall be able to put on a sound basis the research on the Proto Turks and the problems related with them.»²⁶ Németh considered the Proto Yakuts and the Proto Chuvash as those who separated the earliest from the other Turks and thus the history of the two languages could offer the most in the reconstruction of those times when all the Turkish languages lived together. He also assumed that the Proto Yakut and Proto Chuvash lived together for a time — after their separation from the other Turks — and thus they had some common, secondary traits. He called them *s*-languages in opposition to the remaining *y*-languages referring to the Yakut (*s*-) and Chuvash (*ś*-) Anlaut in front of the *y*- and other sounds of the remaining Turkish languages. But from the citation referred to above it is also clear that Németh's last aim was a historical one.

Although he wrote a special paper on Chuvash in 1913²⁷ and later he many times returned to some questions of detail, he abandoned his first plan and this had its reasons. He recognized that Yakut and Chuvash are not sufficient to reconstruct Proto-Turkish and the early monuments of the Turkish languages, the discovery and elaboration of which had then just begun were equally of immense importance for this purpose. While it was impossible to work with original material of the recently found Turkish monuments, there was one which had been found on the former territory of Hungary, the famous treasure of Nagyszentmiklós. In several papers he tried to solve the riddle of the language of its inscriptions,²⁸ and he insisted that it represented the earliest written

²⁴ *Az ősjakut hangtan alapjai: Nyelvtudományi Közlemények XLIII(1914)*, pp. 276—326, 448—476.

²⁵ *Die langen Vokale im Jakutischen: Keleti Szemle XV(1914—1915)*, pp. 150—164.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 276.

²⁷ *A török-mongol a-féle hangok fejlődése a csuvasban* [The development of Turkish-Mongolian *a*-type sounds in Chuvash]: *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények XLII(1913)*, pp. 75—85.

²⁸ *A nagyszentmiklósi feliratokhoz* [On the inscriptions of Nagyszentmiklós]: *Egyetemes Philológiai Közlöny XXXIX(1915)*, 495—497; *Az «Attila-kincs» feliratainak*

document of the Kipchak-Pecheneg language. The importance of the language of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure is self evident. In any case it pertains to the Western Turkish area, while the great and smaller inscription of Central Asia, the Uyghur, Manichean, Brahmi and other documents belong to the Eastern one. It was written in a Turkish language, which had to have the closest contacts with the early Hungarians and it was written in a special type of runic characters (together with Greek inscriptions) that is identical neither to the east Turkish runic script nor to the Hungarian, but could be a possible link between them. In the twilight of his life, in 1971, Németh returned to this of his favourite topics.²⁹

The recognition of the importance of linguistic monuments in historical reconstruction was also the reason why he dealt with the Codex Cumanicus,³⁰ the inscriptions of the Talas valley,³¹ the Orkhon inscriptions³² and the Ongin

ügye I. A Nagyszentmiklói feliratokhoz [On the problem of the inscriptions of the «Attila treasure» I. On the inscriptions of Nagyszentmiklós]: *Ethnographia* XXVI(1915), pp. 216–217; *Az «Attila-kincs» feliratainak ügye* [The problem of the inscriptions of the «Attila-treasure»]: *Egyetemes Philológiai Közöny* XL(1916), pp. 419–422; *A nagyszentmiklói kincs revíziója* [The revision of the problem of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure]: *Történelmi Szemle* V(1916), pp. 285–286; Sebestyén Gyula, *A magyar rovásírás hiteles emlékei* (A review on the book of Gy. Sebestyén, The authentic monuments of the Hungarian runic script): *Egyetemes Philológiai Közöny* XL(1916), pp. 560–570 where he came into a lively dispute with G. Sebestyén both on the problems of the Hungarian runic script and the problems of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure. A rejoinder to Sebestyén's answer is: *A bíráló felelete* [The answer of the reviewer]: *Egyetemes Philológiai Közöny* XL(1916), pp. 675–679; *Thomsen a nagyszentmiklói kincs feliratairól* [Thomsen on the inscriptions of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure]: *Egyetemes Philológiai Közöny* XLI(1917), pp. 638–641; *A nagyszentmiklói kincs körül* [Concerning the Nagyszentmiklós treasure]: *Turán* 1918, pp. 265–267, 325–329; *Válasz Sebestyénnak* [Answer to Sebestyén]: *Turán* 1918, pp. 332–333. *Árpád-kori törökjeink (Kié volt a nagyszentmiklói kincs?)* [The Turks in Hungary in the times of the Arpad dynasty, to whom belonged the treasure of Nagyszentmiklós?]: *Népünk és Nyelvünk* III(1931), pp. 169–185. In 1932 he published his monograph on the Nagyszentmiklós treasure which appeared in several forms: *A nagyszentmiklói kincs feliratai* [The inscriptions of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure]: *Magyar Nyelv* XXVIII(1932), pp. 65–85, 129–139, separately and with new pagination in the series *A Magyar Nyelvtudományi Társaság Kiadványai* No. 30, 1932, 35 p.; *Die Inschriften des Schatzes von Nagy-Szent-Miklós. Mit zwei Anhängen: I. Die Sprache der Petschenegen und Komanen; II. Die ungarische Kerbschrift*, in *Bibliotheca Orientalis Hungarica* II, Budapest 1932, 84, VI pls.; *Les inscriptions du trésor de Nagyszentmiklós: Revue des Études Hongroises* VIII–IX(1933), pp. 5–38, XII(1934) pp. 126–136.

²⁹ *The runiform inscriptions from Nagy-Szent-Miklós and the runiform scripts of Eastern Europe: Acta Lingu. Hung.* XXI(1971), pp. 1–52.

³⁰ *Die Rätsel des Codex Cumanicus: ZDMG* LXVII(1913), pp. 577–608; *Zu den Rätseln des Codex Cumanicus: Kőrösi Csoma Archivum* II(1930), pp. 366–368.

³¹ *Die köktürkischen Grabinschriften aus dem Tale des Talas in Turkestan: Kőrösi Csoma Archivum* II(1926), pp. 134–143.

³² *Zur Erklärung der Orchoninschriften: Festschrift Friedrich Giese* aus Anlass des siebenzigsten Geburtstag überreicht von Freunden und Schülern, Die Welt des Islam

inscription.³³ At the same time he took always in his hand a new Turkish monument in the hope that it could offer some new data concerning the problems of the Turkish loanwords of the Hungarian language. This is reflected e.g. in his paper *The old Turkish loanwords in Hungarian and the Turfan documents*.³⁴

Despite the importance of the treasure of Nagyszentmiklós, its material was scanty and fragmental. To solve the early Hungarian–Turkish contacts, a greater amount of linguistic material was needed and Németh's idea developed in the 1920s was that the scattered onomastical material of the Western Turks has to be included. The impetus to these studies was certainly the works of Melich³⁵ and Gombocz,³⁶ in the first place the series of Gombocz' papers published in 1914 on the early Hungarian personal names of Turkish origin.

Németh was, of course, aware of the major difficulty in handling the onomastical material: the lack of meaning. He saw the way out in finding the rules, usage and system of the Turkish (and nomadic) appellatives. He restricted the material to the Turkish tribal and clan names and worked out in more steps a typology of them. The collection of the relevant material from the European Huns, (whom he considered to have a Turkish-speaking component) for up until the Hungarians most of the tribal and clan names of whom were of Turkish origin, remained from hitherto his central interest. And from these works arose his *opus magnum*, *The formation of the land conquering Hungarians* published in 1930.³⁷

The work, which had a similar impact on the study of early Hungarian–Turkish contacts and Hungarian prehistory as the *Die bulgarisch-türkischen Lehnwörter in der ungarischen Sprache* by Gombocz began with a description of

Sonderband, Berlin 1941, pp. 35–45, Turkish translation in *Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Türk Dili ve Edebiyat Dergisi* I(1946), pp. 53–61.

³³ *Zur Erklärung des Denkmals am Ongin: Kőrösi Csoma Archivum* II(1926), p. 198 (Under the pseudonym Johann Török).

³⁴ *Régi török jövevényzavaink és a turfáni emlékek: Kőrösi Csoma Archivum* I (1921), pp. 71–76.

³⁵ *Adatok hazánk honfoglaláskori s X–XII századi helyneveinek értelmezéséhez* [Materials to the interpretation of Hungarian geographical names of the time of the land conquest and the 10th–12th centuries]: *Magyar Nyelv* II(1906), pp. 49–58, 97–106, *Az Árpád-kori becéző keresztnevek egy csoportjáról* [On a group of pet names in the times of the Arpad dynasty]: *Magyar Nyelv* III (1907), pp. 165–176, *Néhány magyar néprnévről* [On some Hungarian ethnic appellatives]: *Magyar Nyelv* V(1909), pp. 292–303, 337–344, 385–393, 433–440, and many other papers, see the bibliography of Melich in: *Analecta Linguistica* VII(1977), No. 2, pp. 75–88.

³⁶ *Árpádkori török személynveink* [The personal names of Turkish origin in the time of the Arpad dynasty]: *Magyar Nyelv* X(1914), pp. 241–249, 293–301, 337–342, XI(1915), pp. 145–152, 245–252, 341–346, 433–438, separately with new pagination in: *Magyar Nyelvtudományi Társaság Kiadványai* 16, 1914, some of the etymologies were published earlier.

³⁷ *A honfoglaló magyarság kialakulása*, Budapest 1930, 350 p.

the system and typology of the Turkish tribal and clan names giving the methodological basis for the following. The second chapter dealt with the Huns, Bulgars and their relationship with the Hungarians, while the third envisaged the contacts among the Hungarians and the Turkish tribes in the Cis-Caucasian region, and the problems of the Onogurs, Sabirs, Turks and Khazars. The fourth chapter sketched the Hungarian tribal system, which Németh considered to be entirely of Turkish origin. The fifth chapter dealt with the paradox problem: how could a language of Finno-Ugric origin be maintained in a Turkish tribal system and with essential Turkish participation. The last chapter discussed the problem of the Hungarian groups that remained in or removed to the east, the *Magna Hungaria* and the *Savartoi asphaltoi* problem, as well as with the scattered Magyar ethnonyms in the east.

Using the relevant Greek, Latin, Arabic, Persian, Russian and other sources Németh gave a coherent sketch of the history of the Western Turks from the times of the Huns until the 9th century and placed the history of the Hungarians within this framework.

Németh's basic concept on the pre-history or more exactly early history of the Hungarians underwent some changes in his later works. However to understand this we have to review the change in Gombocz's opinion.

In his fundamental work of 1912,³⁸ Gombocz expressed the opinion that the early Turkish loanwords of the Hungarians had been borrowed from the Volga Bulgars after the beginning of the 7th century, as he put it: «alles scheint aber darauf hinzuweisen dass die Bulgaren wenigstens nicht vor dem Anfang des VII. Jahrhunderts in ihre spätere Heimat an der mittleren Wolga angelangt sind» (*op. cit.*, p. 205). In a note he rejected the opinion of Munkácsi, according to whom the original homeland and the place of the first Hungarian—Turkish contacts was in the south. Munkácsi's opinion was based on the so called Aryan and Caucasian loanwords of the Finno-Ugric languages,³⁹ and Gombocz rejected Munkácsi's hypothesis as methodologically insufficiently founded.

³⁸ *Die bulgarisch-türkischen Lehnwörter in der ungarischen Sprache: MSFOu XXX*(1912), 252 p. An earlier Hungarian version was published in vol. III(1907) of *Magyar Nyelv*, and separately in the *A Magyar Nyelvtudományi Társaság Kiadványai 7*.

³⁹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 204—205, On Munkácsi's views see e.g. *Die Urheimat der Ungarn: Keleti Szemle VI*(1905), pp. 185—222. On p. 185 Munkácsi writes: «In meiner Abhandlung über die «Alanischen Sprachdenkmäler im ungarischen Wortschatze» glaube ich auf Grund historischer und sprachlicher Belege des Näheren erwiesen zu haben, dass die ältesten Wohnsitze der Ungarn in den nördlich vom Kaukasus gelegenen Gefilden zwischen den Flüssen Wolga, Terek und Kuban zu suchen sind» After having discussed the theories which place the original homeland of the Hungarians to the north, Munkácsi stressed: «Alldiese Annahmen, welche den nördlichen Ursprung der Magyaren voraussetzen, stossen auf eine unüberwindliche Schwierigkeit an jener Wahrnehmung, dass im Wortschatz des Magyarischen und der damit verwandten Sprachen sich in beträchtlicher Anzahl *kaukasische und alanische* Elemente vorfinden, und zwar auch für solche

Later in 1921 Gombocz changed his view.⁴⁰ He then assumed that the Hungarians had moved from their original homeland around the Byelaya and Kama to the south earlier and the Bulgarian influence had begun in the middle of the 5th century A.D., and lasted during the times of the Great Bulgarian Khanate and ceased in the 7th century when the Bulgars moved to the north and the west.

In 1930, Németh also rejected the late beginnings of the Bulgarian—Hungarian contacts. According to him, the Proto-Hungarians moved from their original homeland first to the east, to the Ural river and West Siberia. There they came under Bulgarian influence «in the first centuries A.D., but it is not impossible that it occurred only around the 5th century» (*Formation*, p. 126). The Bulgarians organized the Hungarians and they moved together to the south in the middle of the 5th century. From 465 until 800 the Hungarians lived on the territory to the north of the Azovian sea, along the lower Kuban river and in the vicinity of the Kerch-strait (*Formation*, p. 151). Before the 830s they moved to the northern shores of the Pontus and Maeotis, to the territory between the Don and Dnieper into Levedia, where they remained until 889 (*Formation*, p. 154).

From 570 A.D., the time when the Western Turks organized the Khazar Empire, the Hungarians — «perhaps with interruptions» — pertained to the Khazar Empire (*Formation*, p. 215). These more than four hundred and fifty years were decisive in the formation of the Hungarian people and provided the background for its Turkish cultural character, social organization and the Hungarian onomastical material of Turkish origin.

These main lines were elaborated in greater detail by Németh and others⁴¹ and basically accepted by Hungarian scholarship.

Begriffe, deren Ausdrücke jedenfalls aus den ältesten Zeiten der Sprachgeschichte stammen» (*op. cit.*, p. 189.).

⁴⁰ *A bolgár kérdés és a magyar húnmonda* [The Bulgarian problem and the Hungarian legends on the Huns]: *Magyar Nyelv* XVII(1921), pp. 15–21, see also *A magyar őshaza és a nemzeti hagyomány* [The Hungarian primaeval homeland and the national tradition]: *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények* XLV(1917), pp. 129–194, XLVI(1923–1927), pp. 1–33, 168–193.

⁴¹ From the immense amount of literature I would quote only one work which was the best comprehensive monograph on Hungarian prehistory: *A magyarság őstörténete* [The prehistory of the Hungarians] edited by L. Ligeti in 1943 with contributions of K. Czeglédy, J. Deér, B. Gunda, M. Gyóni, I. Kniezsa, B. Kossányi, T. Halasi Kun, Gy. László, L. Ligeti, J. Nemeskéri and M. Zsirai. This volume is a publication of the Institute of Hungaryology and contains a printed version of a series of lectures. On the major contributions to Hungarian prehistory after 1943 see the Introduction in: *Magyar őstörténeti tanulmányok* [Studies in Hungarian Prehistory] edited by A. Bartha, K. Czeglédy and A. Róna-Tas, Budapest 1977, pp. 9–13. At the present time there is no un-animously accepted theory on the route of migration of the Proto-Hungarians from the

Later in his life Németh returned to the first theory of Gombocz. In 1972 he wrote: «Die Theorie der westsibirischen Urheimat, die Wiklund mit bemerkenswerten Gründen zu beweisen suchte, und die in den urgeschichtlichen Theorien in Ungarn in der letzten Zeit eine grosse Rolle spielte, ist nicht aufrechtzuerhalten. Die Linie der Wanderungen der Ungarn ist die folgende: Finnisch-ugrische Urheimat in der Gegend der Kama und der Wolga — die Ungarn kommen mit den Bulgaren in Berührung — um 800 wandert die Mehrheit des Volkes in die politische Sphäre des Chasarischen Reiches, wo eine zweite Berührung mit bulgarischen Völkern beginnt. Das sind die Grundthesen der ungarischen Geschichte der zweiten Hälfte des I. Jahrtausends.»⁴² What was the cause of the change in Németh's opinion? Since the publication of the *Formation* Németh always had in mind a new edition of his book. In 1960 he wrote: «Vor dreissig Jahren, i. J. 1930 ist meine Arbeit über die Herkunft der Ungarn der Landnahmezeit erschienen. Ihre Veröffentlichung in irgendeiner Weltsprache gehörte von jeher zu meinen Lieblingsgedanken, wozu sich dann auch der Plan einer neuen Ausgabe in ungarischer Sprache gesellte.»⁴³ For this reason he collected the material scattered in Turkological literature with great zeal. At the beginnings of the 1950s with the backing of the Hungarian Academy he launched a major project of working up and publishing a comprehensive bibliography of Soviet Turkology. He spent a lot of time in the libraries of the Soviet Union and gained rich material from his Soviet colleagues.⁴⁴ He was aware of the fact that new material was badly needed. Although many factors contributed to the change of his concept, the basic impetus was certainly the work of R. Kuzeev, published in 1957 on the historical ethnography of the Bashkirs.⁴⁵ He wrote in 1966: «Das Werk von Kuzeev hat mir die Möglichkeit gegeben, nach neuer ungarischen Stammesnamen bei den Bashkiren zu suchen und auf der Grundlage der neu gefundenen Namen von wichtigen Etappen der ungarischen Urgeschichte ein neues Bild zu entwerfen.»⁴⁶

The Bashkir problem was for a long time one of the crucial problems of Hungarian pre-history. Two facts, differently interpreted, pertain here. In several sources of the Middle Ages, the Hungarians are called Baschkirs and friar Julian found a Hungarian speaking population in the Volga Bulgarian

middle of the first millennium B.C. until their last place before the land conquering. The question mostly debated is the territory or territories and time of the early Hungarian-Turkish contacts.

⁴² *Acta Lingu. Hung.* XXII(1972), p. 16.

⁴³ In the preface to *Sovieto-Turcica*, Budapest 1960, p. 5.

⁴⁴ See the same preface pp. 5–10.

⁴⁵ *Očerki istoričeskoj étnografii baškir* I, Ufa 1957. Since then two other important works of Kuzeev were published: *Baškirske šejere*, Ufa 1960 and *Proischoždenie baškirskogo naroda. Ėtničeskij sostav, istorija rasselenija*, Moskva 1974.

⁴⁶ *Acta Lingu. Hung.* XVI(1966), p. 8.

Empire in 1235. In his *Formation* Németh summarized the then relevant three opinions: 1. Hungarians were never in Bashkiria, the oriental authors confused the names of the *Baġyır(d)* and the *Maġar* (Vámbéry, Marquart), 2. The Hungarians lived in Bashkiria, hence the confusion, but they are not identical with the Kipchak-Bashkirs (Gombocz, Munkácsi), 3. The Hungarians and the Bashkirs were originally one and the same people (Chwolson, Pauler).⁴⁷ According Németh in 1930, the origin of the ethnonym Bashkir is *beš ogur* i.e. Five Oghur and the *-d* is a Hungarian suffix.⁴⁸ It was originally one of the self nomination of the Hungarians, the bulk of which moved to the south, some of them remained however on their old «greater» homeland (Magna Hungaria) and the newcomer Kipchak tribes took over their name (*Formation*, p. 314). The main argument in favour of this was that two Bashkir clan or tribe names *Yurmatı* and *Yeney* are identical with two Hungarian tribe names of the land conquering Hungarians: *Gyarmat* and *Jenő*. In the new book of Kuzeev Németh found three other names: *Negmen*, *Kese* and *Yulaman*, which he identified with the Hungarian tribe names *Nyék*, *Keszi* and the early Hungarian title, later personal name *Gyula*. To this he added the earlier known ethnic appellatives both prevailing in the area, *Mišer* and *Možeryan*, the first being identical with the Hungarian tribe name *Megyér*, the other with the self nomination of the Hungarians: *Magyar*.⁴⁹

Now, the presence of seven «Hungarian» tribal or ethnical group names meant according to Németh that: »Ich halte es für wahrscheinlich, dass die Urungarischen Stämme ungefähr auf dem Gebiete gesiedelt haben, wo heute ihre Reste zu finden sind also auf dem westlichen Teile Baschkiriens». ⁵⁰ Here began the contacts with the Bulgars in the 5th century while it continued later in the Don-Caucasian region. He left open the question of when the Hungarians left Magna Hungaria, but thought it to be likely that it happened in the first decades of the ninth century. The Kipchak tribes migrated into the

⁴⁷ *Formation*, p. 300.

⁴⁸ In 1966 Németh gave up his etymology for the ethnonym Bashkir. He wrote: «Der Name mit dem die Bashkiren sich benennen: *bašqırt* ist unbekannter Herkunft» (*Acta Lingu. Hung.* XVI(1966), p. 19).

⁴⁹ The question of the «Hungarian» tribe names in Bashkir is far from being solved. I would quote here only Ligeti's two papers: *Gyarmat és Jenő: Nyelvtudományi Értekezések* 40, Budapest 1964, pp. 230–239; id., *A magyar nép mongol kori nevei (magyar, baskir, király)* [The names of the Hungarians in the Mongol period: Bashkir, Magyar, Király]: *Magyar Nyelv* LX(1964), pp. 385–404; I. Vásáry, *The Hungarians or Moğars and the Meščers/Mišers of the Middle Volga region: Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* I(1975), pp. 237–275; I. Vásáry, *A volga-vidéki magyar töredékek a mongol kor után* [The Hungarian split groups in the Volga region after the Mongolian period]: *Magyar őstörténeti tanulmányok*, Budapest 1977, pp. 282–290, and I. Mándoky's remarks in *Tiszatáj*, 1976, 10, pp. 41–44.

⁵⁰ *Acta Lingu. Hung.* XVI(1966), p. 18.

territory in the late 9th century, when the bulk of the Hungarians were already far from their older homeland.

Németh concluded: «Ob wir dann dem Umstand, dass sechs oder sieben ungarische Stammesnamen bei den Baschkiren in Magna Hungaria nachzuweisen sind, berechtigt sind, so weitgehende Schlüsse zu ziehen, wie ich oben gezogen habe: diese Frage muss man natürlich aufwerfen. Ich glaube wir sind berechtigt».⁵¹ For this he gives the following reasons: 1. Here — somewhat to the north — was the Finno-Ugrian and Ugrian home-land; 2. Here the Volga Bulgars lived in the close vicinity, having a considerable cultural influence on the Hungarians and on the Hungarian tribal system; 3. Here, according to the Old Hungarian tradition, was the original homeland; 4. Here, did friar Julian find a Hungarian speaking population; 5. This place is mentioned in historical sources as Hungary of the north; 6. Here most of the Hungarian tribal names could be found with typical Bulgarian traits.⁵²

Accordingly the *Formation* had to be rewritten, but the basic method of approach, the use of the testimony of the onomastical material remained unchanged. Németh worked until his death on the revised edition of the *Formation*. Unfortunately the manuscript remained unfinished and it will be a major task to bring to light the rich material scattered on the slips of his notes.

It was already clear for Gombocz and Munkácsi that between the two basic layers of the Turkish loanwords in Hungarian the Chuvash-Bulgharian and the Ottoman there did exist a third one not pertaining to either. Although this layer is in no respect homogeneous, from historical reasons it seemed likely that its strongest component had to be of Cumanian origin. Németh dealt with this chronologically second layer in more of his papers and tried to find the linguistic criteria for separating the Kipchak traits. He termed these words in the title of a paper published in 1921 «*The middle layer of the Turkish loanwords of Hungarian*»⁵³ pertaining to the Kabar-Cumanian-Pecheneg group. In fact in his Kipchak and Cumanian studies he continued the aim which he set himself in his school years, the clarification of the origins of the Hungarian Cumans.

A side-path of Németh studies was also connected to his Cumano-Hungarian studies. In 1957, A. Fekete-Nagy, a research-fellow of the Hungarian State Archives, found on the reverse of a document dating from 1422, a word list which he thought to be of Cumanian origin and sent it to Németh who was well known for his authority and interest in the language of the Hungarian Cumans. After thorough scrutiny, Németh disclosed that the word list was not Turkish, but pertained to the Yas people. It is known from Hungarian and

⁵¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁵² This means that the tribe names in question have sound forms which originally reflect a Chuvash type Turkish language and these forms were later adopted and fitted into the Kipchak-Bashkir phonemic system.

⁵³ *Török jövevényszavaink középső rétege: Magyar Nyelv XVII* (1921), pp. 22—26.

Russian sources that the incomer Cumanians were accompanied in the 13th century by the Iranian speaking Yas people or Yazigs as — with some confusion — the late Latin sources called them. The form Yas is of old Russian origin, where it came — perhaps with Bulgarian mediation — from the Iranian name of the people *As* related to the present Ossets of Caucasia.

The history of the Yas people in Hungary is more or less known and some personal names are preserved in old documents. However the famous Yasian word list of the Hungarian State Archives was and remained the only linguistic monument of this people. Németh, with the help of colleagues, published the list and with this also rendered a major service to Iranian studies.⁵⁴ Although some of the lemmata are not or are insufficiently deciphered it is of paramount importance and will also provide considerable work for Iranists in the future.

Already in the early 1920s Németh decided to elaborate the linguistical problems of the Ottoman connections, the third period of the Hungarian—Turkish contacts. We know that he had the plan to write a monograph on the Ottoman-Turkish loanwords in Hungarian which work was not accomplished. Németh's problem was to find the dialectological and historical background of the Ottoman loanwords and he came to the idea that the study of the Turkish dialects of the Balkan peninsula could offer assistance. Since 1927, he regularly spent the summer in various places of Bulgaria. In 1931, he met an old Turkish lady in the town Vidin who turned out to be an excellent informant. He returned to Vidin many times (1934, 1936, 1937, 1938) and with the help of Hasan Eren then just finishing his secondary school in Vidin, Németh prepared the description of the Turkish dialect of Vidin. The material and the results were published only in 1965⁵⁵ but many details appeared earlier.⁵⁶ The problem of the position

⁵⁴ *Egy jáász szójegyzék az Országos Levéltárban* [A Yasian glossary in the National Archives]: *I. Osztály Közleményei* XIII(1958), pp. 233–259 with an Addenda *ibid.*, pp. 485–486. *Eine Wörterliste der Jassen, der ungarländischen Alanen: Abhandlungen der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Klasse für Sprachen, Literatur und Kunst, Berlin 1958, 36 p., Spisok slov na jazyke jasov, vengerskich alan.* Ordžonikidze 1960, 16 p.

⁵⁵ *Die Türken von Vidin. Sprache, Folklore, Religion* (Bibliotheca Orientalis Hungarica X), Budapest 1965, 420 p.

⁵⁶ *Emphatische Formen in der türkischen Mundart von Vidin*: Scritti in Onore di Luigi Bonelli, Toma 1940, pp. 87–95; *La cérémonie du tewhîd à Vidin*: *Ignacz Goldziher Memorial Volume* I, Budapest 1948, pp. 329–335; *A mohamedán vallásgyakorlat népi formáinak ismeretéhez (a tevhit szertartás Vidinben)*: *Ethnographia* LIX(1948), pp. 1–4 (A summary of the former paper); *Die Zeremonie des Mevlud in Vidin*: *Acta Orient. Hung.* I(1950), pp. 134–140; *Ein türkischer Text aus Vidin über die Pilgerfahrt*: *Documenta islamica inedita*, Ricardo Hartmann viro de studiis islamicis meritissimo sacrum, Berlin 1952, pp. 273–277; *Le passage ö > ü dans les parlers turcs de la Roumelie nord-ouest*: *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* XVII(1951–52), pp. 114–121; *Die «Lebensrute» in einem türkischen Märchen von Vidin*: *Oriens* XV(1962), pp. 304–314, a Hungarian version of the latter in: *Ethnographia* LXXVII(1966), pp. 451–452.

of the Vidin dialect within the framework of the history of the Turkish dialects of the Balkan peninsula pushed Németh's interest forward and he tried to approach the question from two starting points.

The first point of departure was the historical classification of the Turkish dialects of the Balkan or as they are also called the Rumelian Turkish dialects. In the years 1953, 1954, 1955 he made several study tours in Bulgaria accomplishing his earlier material, and in 1956 he published his results.⁵⁷ He divided the Rumelian Turkish dialects into an eastern and a western group. The border of the two groups runs from the east to Lom at the Danube to the south, it leaves to west Vraca, Sofia and Samokov, there it turns to the west and continues to the south of Küstendil. The main result of Németh's investigations was that the eastern Rumelian dialects show many common traits with the Turkish dialects of north-west Anatolia, while the western Rumelian dialects are closer to those of north-east Anatolia. Behind these facts he assumed detectable historical processes within the Ottoman Empire and its settlement policy. In many respects, the western dialects show interesting archaic features, which could help to reconstruct the ways of change in Ottoman linguistic history. Other features offer a key to the solution of some «irregularities» of the old Turkish inscriptions (mainly the use of consonants of the front series in back vocalic words).

In 1956, Németh visited Albania and investigated the Turkish dialects spoken there earlier. He stated that these dialects also pertain to the western Rumelian group and gave a detailed description of their characteristics.⁵⁸

Working further on the search into the underlying dialects of Ottoman spoken in Hungary in the 16th—17th century, Németh became more and more convinced that the Turkish dialects of Bosnia played an important role. In 1966, he visited Yugoslavia. Turkish was used in Bosnia for a long time as a second language and Németh investigated all kinds of sources (loanwords, Turkish texts in transcription, and Slavic texts in Turkish-Arabic script, etc.), the language of the Turkish speaking Bosnians and the dialect of Stari Bar.

At this point, joined the second group of sources which Németh used in clearing up the background of the Ottoman—Hungarian contacts. It is commonplace in Ottoman studies that the texts in scripts other than Arabic are of major importance in the reconstruction of Ottoman linguistic history. Already in the 1940s and 1950s Németh investigated the Turkish texts in the

⁵⁷ *Bulgária török nyelvjárásainak felosztásához* [On the classification of the Turkish dialects of Bulgaria]: *I. Osztály Közleményei* X(1956), pp. 1—60; *Zur Einteilung der türkischen Mundarten Bulgariens*, Sofia 1956, 74 p. (with many misprints; here the Hungarian version has to be used).

⁵⁸ *Traces of the Turkish Language in Albania: Acta Orient. Hung.* XIII(1961), pp. 9—29.

Hungarian—Latin transcription of Valentin Balassa,⁵⁹ an eminent Hungarian poet born in 1554. He could find some traces of the west Rumelian dialect in the Balassa texts. Another important source which Németh worked up was the so-called Illésházi Manuscript kept in the Hungarian National Library. The MS is a colligated work which not only contains Latin—Turkish glossaries, but also Turkish conversation-texts, a short Turkish grammar in Italian and all these from different hands. The MS also contains texts in Latin, German and Italian, and bears the date 1668. Németh summed up his results as follows: « . . . diese Handschrift enthält die Beschreibung einer osmanisch-türkischen Mundart, die in Ungarn gesprochen wurde. Das türkische Sprachmaterial dieser Handschrift vertritt das Bosnisch-türkische, eine bisher wenig beachtete und wenig bekannte westrumelische Mundart». ⁶⁰ And this Bosnian Turkish was — as the title of the book clearly reflects — «*Die türkische sprache in Ungarn im siebzehnten Jahrhundert*».

As can be seen the three main focuses of Németh's lifework, the early Turkish—Hungarian contacts, the problems of the «middle layer», the Cumanian-Pecheneg problem,⁶¹ and the Ottoman impact can clearly be distinguished in his studies. It has to be added that Németh was always aware of the fact that the problems of the Hungarian—Turkish contacts, how important they may be for the Hungarian Turkology, can be solved only in front of a greater background of Turkish history. It was clear to him, and he stressed this many times, that without the study of the basic problems of Turkology, without independent investigations of the questions actual to the gender of international Turkish studies, the research of Hungarian—Turkish relations will necessarily remain onesided and provincial.

⁵⁹ *Balassa Bálint és a török költészet* [Bálint Balassa and the Turkish poetry]: *Magyar Századok, Irodalmi műveltségünk történetéhez*, Budapest 1948, pp. 80—100; *Die türkischen Texte des Valentin Balassa: Acta Orient. Hung.* II(1952), pp. 23—61; *Bálint Balassa'nın türkçe manzumeleri: Tercüman* 1953; *Balassa Bálint török verseihez* [A contribution to the Turkish poems of Balassa Bálint]: *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* LVIII(1954), pp. 386—392; *Türkische Balassa-Texte in Karagöz-Spielen: Acta Orient. Hung.* V(1955), pp. 175—180.

⁶⁰ *Die türkische Sprache in Ungarn im siebzehnten Jahrhundert*, Budapest 1970, p. 7.

⁶¹ To the Cumanian problem see among others: *Die Volksnamen quman and qün: Kőrösi Csoma Archivum* III(1940), pp. 95—109; a Hungarian version in: *Századok* LXXVI(1942), pp. 166—178, to the Pecheneg problem: *Zur Kenntnis der Petschenegen: Kőrösi Csoma Archivum* I(1922), pp. 219—225, Hungarian version in: *Magyar Nyelv* XVIII(1922), pp. 2—7; *Die petschenegischen Stammesnamen: Ungarische Jahrbücher* X(1930), pp. 27—34, his papers on the Nagyszentmiklós treasure and many of his etymological notes. I would add here that Németh dealt with the origin of another Hungarian ethnic group the Seklers (Székely) cf. *La question de l'origine des Sicules: Archivum Europae Centro-Orientalis* VI(1940), pp. 208—241, Hungarian version in: *Századok* LXIX(1935), pp. 129—156. The French version also separately in the series *Études sur l'Europe Centre-Orientale* 27, Budapest 1941, 34 p.

This «background» was dealt with in one of his most important papers the «*Probleme der türkischen Urzeit*». ⁶² On this problem he already gave a lecture in 1917 (unpublished) and later on he tackled it in 1928. ⁶³ The central topic was a methodological one. The various theories which placed the original homeland of the Turks in places ranging from easternmost Asia to the Altai mountains, or to the south of the Urals and to the north of the Caspian Sea, were based on contradictory arguments of historical sources, identifications with peoples of the old world or the situation of the present Turkish groups. Although some scholars dealing with the original homeland of the Turks also used linguistic arguments, Németh's point of departure was that: «Als wichtigster Wegweiser in unseren Untersuchungen dient uns die sprachwissenschaftliche Forschung». ⁶⁴ If we can reveal the earliest contacts of the Turks with the non-Turkish speaking people we can with more or less certainty give the place where these contacts occurred. The first step towards this aim was the classification of the relationship of the Turkish and Finno-Ugrian languages. The problem of the genetic relationship of the Uralic and Altaic languages is still an unsolved problem, where belief and sceptical views were and are expressed since Strahlenberg in 1730 put these languages together in one group. As can be seen, Németh was always sceptical about the genetic relationship of the Turkish and the Mongolian (and Tunguzian) languages, thus he separated the question of the Turkish – Finno-Ugrian or Uralic from the Ural-Altai problem.

After having investigated such problems as the vocalic harmony, some morphological and syntactical features, as well as 32 (in his paper of 1928) and later 27 words of the basic lexical stock Németh concluded: «Auf Grund dieser Entsprechungen ist das Verhältnis der uralischen und türkischen Sprachen als eine enge, verwandtschaftsartige, aber auf mehrere (vier-fünf) Jahrtausende vor unserer Zeitrechnung zurückgehende Verbindung zu betrachten». ⁶⁵ If so, then the original homeland of the Turks had to be somewhere in the vicinity of that of the Uralic people, i.e. in the vicinity of the Uralic mountains. Since there were some very early contacts among the Uralic and the Indo-European languages the following question was whether similar contacts could be detected among the Turkish and Indo-European languages. Németh, after having sampled the possible or earlier suggested Turkish-Indo-European parallels,

⁶² In: *Analecta orientalia memoriae Alexandri Csoma de Kőrös dicata* (Bibliotheca Orientalis Hungarica V), Budapest 1947, pp. 57–102, Hungarian version in: *Emlékkönyv Berzeviczy Albert urnak a M.T. Akadémia elnökének, tiszteleti taggá választása harmincadik évfordulója alkalmából*, Budapest 1934, pp. 158–174, (Chapters I and II – IV), in Turkish in *Ülkü* XV(1940), pp. 299–306, 509–518.

⁶³ *Az uráli és a török nyelvek ősi kapcsolata* [The ancient relationship between the Uralian and Turkish languages]: *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények* XLVII(1928), pp. 62–84.

⁶⁴ *Probleme*, p. 63.

⁶⁵ *Probleme*, p. 82.

came to the conclusion that no such material is at hand and this can mean only that in contrast to the early Uralic-Indoeuropean contacts there were no Turkish-Indoeuropean ones. This fact can be interpreted only in such a way that the ancestors of the Turks lived to the east of the Uralic people and the Indo-europeans to the west. Since Németh interpreted the Turkish—Mongolian parallels as loanwords indicating early contacts, he gained the following picture: the original homeland of the Turks was in West Siberia, somewhere around the Irtysh river adjacent to the east of the Uralic homeland which he placed — in accordance with the Uralists of his time — on the western slopes of the Urals. The Mongolians lived further in the eastern neighbourhood of the Turks, around the Altai and in the territory of the present Mongolian People's Republic, and the Tunguzians to the east of the Mongolians as far as the Koreans. This also had its consequences for the Ural-Altai problem. »Das Problem der ural-altaischen Sprachfamilie — und zugleich auch die erwähnten vermeintlichen Verwandtschaftsbeziehungen der ural-altaischen Sprachen einerseits mit dem Indogermanischen, andererseits mit den ostasiatischen Sprachen — werden auf diese Weise eigentümlich modifiziert. Auf Grund der bisher festgestellten Übereinstimmungen können wir keineswegs annehmen, dass die uralischen, türkischen, mongolischen und mandschu-tungusischen Sprachen auf eine in einer bestimmten Periode der Vorzeit und einer bestimmten Urheimat gesprochene Ursprache zurückzuführen sind, und noch viel weniger, dass etwa das Indogermanische oder das Koreanische aus dieser Einheit abzuleiten wäre. Für die Erklärung der vorzeitlichen Beziehungen der erwähnten Sprachen möchte ich eine sich von Osteuropa bis Osten erstreckende, ununterbrochene Einheit schliessen lassen. Unsere Betrachtungsweise lässt die Möglichkeit offen, dass auch zwischen solchen Sprachfamilien, die sich nicht unmittelbar berühren (etwa zwischen dem Indogermanischen und Türkischen, zwischen dem Uralischen und Tungusischen) Übereinstimmungen bestehen können. Wir sind auch — wie schon erwähnt — berechtigt, urzeitliche Wanderungen anzunehmen.«⁶⁶

One of the major merits of Németh's paper was also that he separated the earliest Indoeuropean-Turkish contact problem (where he was of negative opinion) from the later contacts among the Turks and the Indo-Iranians, Iranians and Tokharians. In these cases he was less sceptical and opened the way for further studies. On the other hand, he rejected the early (urzeitliche) Chinese—Turkish contacts proposed by Ramstedt, and thus the possibility of a more eastern homeland of the ancient Turks.

How long did the Ancient Turkish period last and when did the Turks separate and left their original homeland? According to Németh: »Wie und wann sich die Türkvölker aus ihrer westasiatischen Urheimat verbreitet haben, wissen wir nicht. Wäre es nicht zu gewagt, bei der jetzigen Lage der Forschung

⁶⁶ *Probleme*, p. 86—87.

eine Behauptung aufstellen zu wollen, würde ich meinen, dass die Türkstämme im ersten Jahrtausend vor Christi Geburt auseinandergesogen sind; es ist jedoch wahrscheinlich, dass sie schon früher ein sehr grosses Gebiet innegehabt und einzelne Gruppen bereits zu dieser Zeit eine ziemliche Selbständigkeit erreicht haben. Andernteils wurde die Einheit der Türkvölker infolge der ständigen Berührung und der häufigen Wanderungen gewissermassen auch nach der räumlichen Trennung bewahrt«. ⁶⁷

Németh also stressed in this paper that the forefathers of the Yakuts and the Chuvash were the earliest to separate from the other Turkish peoples. Although he did not abandon his earlier idea of grouping the Turkish languages into an *s*- and a *y*-group, in a note ⁶⁸ he already mentioned his reservations. Following Gombocz in this and his other papers, he described the Chuvash-type languages as «Bulgarian» or «Bulgarian-Turkish». The time of the separation of the Bulgars, their migration to the south of the Russian steppes was the link which connected his studies on the original homeland of the Turks and the early Hungarian – Turkish contacts. To know where and when the Turks and the Hungarians first met, we also have to know from where and when did the Turks come.

Németh's interest into methodological problems of Turkology was always connected with the study of the latest literature on general linguistics. He gained a sound neogrammarian schooling which he never abandoned. However he always followed up with the greatest interest the later developments in theory. In the 1920s he became acquainted with the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, which made a major impression on him. He made a commented Hungarian translation of the *Cours* and it is regrettable that this was not published, although the manuscript was ready for printing.

Németh's lifework was fundamental in the strict sense of the word : he laid down the fundamentals of a new epoch of Hungarian Turkology. In contrast to Gombocz, who synthetized with genuine critical strength what had been achieved before him and in this way reached a new stage of Turkological studies, Németh opened up new paths and indicated new approaches. Deeply rooted in the older tradition he took great steps in new directions. He was a scholar who always pondered over important questions. He was always able to change his mind, to learn from others. He not only handed over to his pupils and friends his immense knowledge, but also his doubts, not only his results and the way he gained them, but also those of his problems, which remained unsolved. He not only offered us new ideas, but also their critics. He never requested that we shall share all of his views, but always demanded to hear our arguments.

Together with his works, this of his stimulating spirit will remain with us.

⁶⁷ *Probleme*, p. 95.

⁶⁸ *Probleme*, p. 96.