

In Memory of Tibor Frank (1948-2022)

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Humboldt Prize-winning historian Tibor Frank, professor emeritus of Eötvös Loránd University, full member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and corresponding fellow of the Royal Historical Society in London, passed away on 15 September 2022, at the age of 74.

First, a brief account of his family background: Tibor Frank came from a Jewish Hungarian family with a rich history. His ancestors included Mór Wahrmann, Hungary's first Jewish member of Parliament after the 1867 Compromise, and the initiator of the unification of Pest, Buda and Óbuda in the Pest Parliament. At the beginning of the 2000s, on the initiative of Tibor Frank, a small street in Új-Lipótváros was named after Wahrmann (when it became clear that the street which had once borne his name, but had since become Victor Hugo Street, could not be returned to its original name). At the same time, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences established the Mór Wahrmann Award, and in 2009, a collection of Mór Wahrmann's papers, collected meticulously by Tibor Frank, was published under the title *Honszeretet és felekezeti hűség* [Patriotism and Religious Loyalty], referring to the nineteenth-century politician's fundamental position and the dual commitments that were central to his political activities. As Wahrmann wrote, "One cannot be a true patriot without being true to one's creed, or a good citizen while neglecting religion. One's ardent patriotism must go hand in hand with unbreakable loyalty and devotion to one's faith."

Tibor Frank's great-grandmother, Vilma Adlerné Goldstein, was a famous chamber pianist as permanent accompanist and co-performer of the Hubay-Popper String Quartet. Tibor lovingly preserved the objects left by his famous great-grandmother, including her likeness as well as her Bösendorfer concert piano. In the 1950s, Tibor's grandmother was forced to part with this piano, but fifty years later, the historian and great-grandson found this marvellous instrument and had it repaired at considerable expense. It stood in the family living room. Tibor also collected his great-grandmother's documents, arranging them in the same closed cabinet they were originally housed in. The scores of the Hubay-Popper concerts are kept here in chronological order, alongside the posters announcing performances—including, for example, a poster for a performance from the 1890s, which shows not only the names of the quartet members and the pianist, but also that of the composer, who was also present at the concert (and who had several of his compositions premiered by the quartet), in the following form: "Dr János [Johannes] Brahms." Incidentally, Vilma Adlerné Goldstein was not only known throughout the city for her art, but also for the magnificent salon she ran for many years, which Tibor Frank wrote about in detail in his book *Szalonvilág* [The World of the Salon].

Thirdly, I mention an ancestor whom he knew personally, although only until he was five years old: this was his maternal grandfather, Dr Ármin Fleisch, a renowned paediatrician and the founder and director of the Madarász Street Children's Hospital. He was also the founder of Hungarian paediatrics. In his memory and to support Hungarian paediatrics, Tibor established a foundation and award.

Tibor Frank cherished the memory of his ancestors with great devotion, and collected various mementoes of them, including family documents. As a historian and descendent of the family, he considered it his duty to preserve their past in defiance of the destructive forces of history.

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And now about his work: from 1971 until his death, Tibor Frank taught at ELTE, though only doctoral courses in his final years, and he led the PhD programme in American Studies. Earlier in his career, he regularly taught at the Santa Barbara Campus of the University of California, and at Columbia University, New York.

He obtained his Doctor of Science degree from the Hungarian Academy in 1998; in more than 50 years of his academic career, he wrote 19 books and edited 28 collection volumes, for which he could claim 2,500 references. He won the Humboldt Prize in 2002, the Albert Szentgyörgyi Prize in 2005, the ELTE Pro Facultate Prize in 2014, and the Eötvös Ring in 2018. He was a corresponding member of the Royal Historical Society of London from 2006, was elected a corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 2013, and became a full member in 2019.

Migration Studies were perhaps foremost among his many research areas; on the topic of Hungarian-American and European-American relations, he wrote two books of several hundred pages each, as well as 45–50 studies published in domestic and international journals. These studies deal with the immigration of the poor masses arriving at Ellis Island (including, among others, data concerning about 30,000 Hungarians from the ships' lists), and also provide a complex cultural history of the Hungarian intelligentsia, which was compelled to emigrate in two main waves. On the latter topic, two of his books were published by Peter Lang Press, under the titles of *Genius in Exile: Professional Immigration from Interwar Hungary to the United States*, in 2006, and *Double Exile: Migrations of Jewish-Hungarian Professionals through Germany to the United States, 1919–1945*, in 2009. Regarding Hungarian intellectual emigration, Tibor Frank claimed that the determined anti-Nazi attitude of those involved can be explained by the two-step emigration of the “[Jewish] Hungarian genius” (i.e. along the Budapest–Berlin–New York route). As a result of their escape from Germany, which was experienced as a “second trauma,” they virtually all became actively anti-Hitler—to such a degree that it had a direct influence on American (nuclear) weaponry, and indirectly contributed to the United States entering the war.

He dealt with the topic of the history of perception in two books and numerous studies, primarily examining and analysing the perception of Hungary and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as well as of Lajos Kossuth, which took shape in British and American public opinion.

Another field in which Tibor Frank specialized was the history of diplomacy. He published the papers and memoirs of John F. Montgomery, the American ambassador

in Budapest in the volume *Magyarország, a vonakodó csatlós* [Hungary: The Reluctant Henchman], with annotations requiring serious philological work. This book was published in three languages—Hungarian, English, and German—significantly helping to modify the “Hitler’s last henchman” image of Hungary. He also published the reports of the British diplomat R. B. D. Morier, later ambassador to St. Petersburg, on the preparation of the 1867 Compromise.

The key topics he examined earlier in his career included Lajos Kossuth’s exile, the activities Kossuth himself undertook in exile, and the operations of the Austrian secret service agents embedded in Kossuth’s circle. His study of Gusztáv Zerffi’s work as a secret agent and, more broadly, the entire Austrian secret service apparatus through nearly 2,000 reports, was published in the USA (Columbia UP), Austria (Böhlau Verlag), and Japan (Sairyusha) after its Hungarian publication in 1985, bringing serious international recognition to its author. In his book on Zerffi, Frank Tibor argued that the Austrian secret police served as a model for later secret services, including the Gestapo and of course—if the reader reads between the lines—the contemporary secret police in János Kádár’s Hungary.

Hungary after the 1867 Compromise was another field in which he specialized. In Tibor Frank’s interpretation, the Compromise was the result of a particular human and political attitude, which—if only briefly—led to a kind of “state of grace” in Hungarian history, when the political model of conflict management prevailed. The aforementioned work, *Patriotism and Religious Loyalty*, which included Mór Wahrmann’s collected speeches and articles, as well as studies related to him and his time, also dealt with this period.

Finally, we should mention his efforts to promote Hungarian history abroad, the outstanding exemplar of which is *A History of Hungary* (Indiana UP, 1990), which he edited together with Peter F. Sugar and Péter Hanák.

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In summary, it can be said that Tibor Frank’s work enriched both Hungarian and universal (mainly English and American, German and Austrian) history. This is partly due to the fact that he was a trilingual author who, in addition to Hungarian, wrote equally well in English and German. With his multilingualism, he significantly contributed to the cause of making Hungarian history known abroad, in which area—as is widely known—our shortcomings are painfully apparent.

His life’s work shows a particular coherence, not only because the various materials he worked with are connected to each other by a hundred threads, but also because his interpretation seems to come together in one grand narrative. After all, Tibor Frank usually talked about Hungarian history in a way that also helped to clarify the place of Hungarians in the world. On the other hand, we can also say that while looking out at the world, he never lost sight of the history and destiny of Hungarians.

Tibor Frank was a great scholar, an attentive colleague, a teacher who always cared for his students, and a loyal friend. We shall cherish and preserve his memory.