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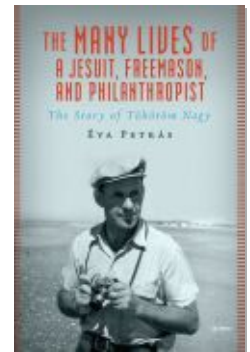
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The life of Töhötöm Nagy (1908–1979), Jesuit, Mason, and secret service agent, offers fascinating insights into interwar Hungary, the Catholic Church and Vatican diplomacy, Freemasonry, and the activities of communist state security service. As a young Jesuit Nagy was one of the leaders of a successful Catholic youth movement in interwar Hungary. After World War II he played an important role acting as an intermediary between the Vatican, the Red Army, and the Hungarian Catholic Church. After being sent to South America, he was attracted by liberation theology, but left the Society of Jesus, joined the Freemasons, and did social and philanthropic work in the slums of Buenos Aires. However, in the late 1960s he agreed to work for the Hungarian state security service in return for his repatriation. This latter period is reconstructed from the files of the Historical Archives of State Security in Budapest. Éva Petrás writes with empathy but with a sense of distance of the courage and restless energy of her subject. Her discussion of the limits of free choice and Nagy's intense struggle to live a meaningful life make this biography breathtaking.

“In this much-anticipated biography, Éva Petrás presents us with the adventurous life of the Hungarian Jesuit Töhötöm Nagy. Tracing the twists and turns of his life, the reader simultaneously delves into the 20th century history of Hungary, the Hungarian Catholic Church, Freemasonry, South America, and communism. Painstakingly researched in the Vatican and three continents, and written in a beautiful, readable style, Dr. Petrás's book is not only an important contribution to historiography but can also be recommended wholeheartedly to readers sensitive to history and human destinies.”

JUDITH KESSERŰ NÉMETHY, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, New York University

“Töhötöm Nagy was one of the most colorful figures of modern Hungarian Catholicism. The central issue of his life was the practice-oriented examination of the possible frameworks and forms of social policy to support the underprivileged, economically and socially exploited strata of society. This is what he sought as a Jesuit priest, as a Freemason, and as an agent of the communist secret service in Hungary, Rome, and South America. Nagy was both a hero and perpetrator, true friend and traitor, patriot, and citizen of the world.”

ATTILA PÓK, chairman of the Academic Council of the European Network of Remembrance and Solidarity, and senior researcher at the Institute of Advanced Study, Kőszeg, Hungary

About the Author

ÉVA PETRÁS is a historian, and Senior Research Fellow at the Committee of National Remembrance, in Budapest, Hungary. She has been working on the social policies of the 20th century and on the history of the Hungarian Catholic Church for more than two decades.

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