

Victor-Lucien Tapié

The world community of Central European and Habsburg scholars lost its most prominent French member with the death of Victor-Lucien Tapié. Professor emeritus of the Universities of Lille and Paris and a member of the Institute (Academy of Moral and Political Sciences), Tapié died in Paris on September 23, 1974.

Born at Nantes on July 24, 1900, Tapié first encountered central European history immediately after the end of the First World War when he studied in Prague in 1920-1921. His academic experience in Prague was to influence his entire scholarly career. During the Second World War he served three years as visiting professor in Rio de Janeiro. While there he wrote a *Histoire de l'Amérique latine au XIX^e siècle* (Paris, 1945); thereafter he returned to his earlier attachment: the history of the Bohemians and of the Habsburg monarchy and their connections with France. His familiarity with baroque culture in Bohemia led naturally to the study of French baroque and classicism. He then traced the eventual spread of baroque culture across all Europe, as far as England, Russia, Spain, and Portugal, and from the last two countries to Central and South America. His baroque studies were his epochal *Baroque et classicisme* (Paris, 1957; 2nd enlarged ed., 1972; English edition, entitled *The Age of Grandeur* [London, 1960]) and the widely circulated booklet *Le baroque* (1961; 2nd ed., 1963; Japanese and Spanish eds., 1963); in addition to these, he gave numerous lectures, wrote articles, and contributed to collective works in the baroque field.

As a fellow of the Rockefeller Foundation in 1933-1934, Tapié studied under the great Czech historian Josef Pekař. Pekař's book on Wallenstein had established him as a renowned scholar, and he made a deep impression on the young Frenchman.

Between the wars Tapié published several political works on Bohemia. His first sojourn in Prague in 1920-1921 resulted in the publication of a historical essay in 1922 on "La France et les pays tchèques au XVI^e siècle, Zerotin et Henri IV," in the *Revue Française de Prague*. His second visit to the city in 1933-1934 produced his book on the Bohemian United Brethren and his great work, *La politique étrangère de la France et le début de la Guerre de Trente Ans (1616-1621)* (also published in a Czech edition), which received prizes from both the French and Czechoslovak academies. Just before the outbreak of the Second World War Tapié also wrote a considerable number of works on Bohemian history and politics, among them a book published in 1936 on the quarrel between Poland and Czechoslovakia over Teschen.

In 1947 Tapié began to lecture at the Sorbonne on the history and civilization of the Slavs. In 1952 he was appointed to the chair in this field and continued to cultivate the lines of research and the numerous scholarly and personal relations that tied him to the former lands of the Crown of St. Wenceslaus. He became professor of recent history in 1955 and began to devote himself to another field, although he never forsook his fondness for Bohemia and the Czech people. In the early 1960's he increasingly occupied himself with the history of the whole Danubian area and the Habsburg monarchy. Shorter studies and essays on Maria Theresa, Francis Joseph, Francis Ferdinand, and the nationality problem in the Habsburg monarchy and his lectures on the possessions of the House of Habsburg in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were almost prologues to his last books: *Monarchie et peuples du Danube* (1969; Italian ed., 1972; American ed., entitled *The Rise and Fall of the Habsburg Monarchy*, 1971; German ed., entitled *Die Völker unter dem Doppeladler*, 1975) and *L'Europe de Marie-Thérèse. Du baroque aux lumières* (1973).

At the end of his preface to *Monarchie et peuples du Danube* Tapié expressed his gratitude "to the academies of science, to the professors of the Universities of Prague, Vienna, Graz, and Budapest, those of yesterday as well as those of today, and to numerous colleagues, personal friends, or witnesses the benefit of whose cooperation will be recognized on many pages." The book on Maria Theresa, on which he gave his last public lecture in May, 1973, at the French Institute in Lobkowitz Palace in Vienna, was dedicated to "my personal friends in Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, whose noble, bourgeois, or peasant ancestors were subjects of Maria Theresa." These words of appreciation and the dedication of his last work seem in retrospect to have been a presentient farewell to his many friends in the lands of the former Danubian monarchy. They suggest the unchanging element of Tapié's personality. A scholar of significance, he was also the inimitable cultivated gentleman, the amiable man of learning who knew how to act the host with ease, grace, and dignity. His many academic honors, especially those from Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, gave sincere pleasure which he never denied or concealed; but Tapié was above all a charming, lovable person whose memory will be venerated by all who were fortunate to know him.

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