



# **The Voice of the Martians: Hungarian Scientists who Shaped the 20th Century in the West**

*George Marx*

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Budapest, in the period of the two decades around World War I, proved to be an exceptionally fertile breeding ground for scientific talent. It is left for historians of science to discover and explain the conditions that catalyzed the emergence of so many brilliant individuals" - Stanislaw Ulam has written, himself a member of the Manhattan Project to make the atomic bomb. Fritz Houtermans, who first recognized the nuclear origin of stellar power, has offered an "explanation": "The galaxy of scientific minds, that worked on the liberation of nuclear power, were really visitors from Mars. They found it difficult to speak English without an alien accent, which would give them away, and therefore they chose to pretend to be Hungarian, whose inability to speak any language but Hungarian without a foreign accent is well known. It would be hard to check the above statement, because Hungary is so far away" In the 1990s the world commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the first man-made nuclear chain reaction in Chicago, the fiftieth anniversary of the explosion in Hiroshima, and the fiftieth anniversary of the electronic computer. The "story of the atomic bomb" was told repeatedly by citizens of various nations. Leo Szilard, author of *The Voice of Dolphins* once said: "I am going to write down all that is going on in the Uranium Project, not for anyone to read, just for God" - Hans Bethe then asked: - "Don't you think God knows the facts" - whereupon Szilard replied, - "Maybe he does, but he does not know my version of the facts" Well, this is a Hungarian version of the human quest of nuclear power, for fast information processing, for a scientific understanding of life, based mostly on interviews with the participants involved. The author knew most of these men and interviewed them personally; he journeyed to Chicago and Alamogordo, to Los Alamos and Livermore, to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to Chelyabinsk and

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