**Jaap Scholten, *Comrade Baron*:**

***The Lost World of the Transylvanian Aristocracy 1949-2009***

**Atlas Contact, narrative literary non-fiction, 422 pages.**

**~over 25.000 copies sold in The Netherlands~**

**Shortlisted for the VPRO Bob den Uyl Prize for best travel book 2011**

**Winner Libris History Prize 2011**

On 3 March 1949 the Transylvanian aristocracy were arrested in their beds and loaded into lorries. That same day the Romanian Workers’ Party was pleased to announce the successful deportation and dispossession of all large landowners. Under the terror of Gheorghiu-Dej and later Ceausescu the aristocracy led a double life: during the day they worked in quarries, metal works and carpenters’ yards; in the evening they gathered secretly and maintained the old rituals. Communism demanded the destruction of these ultimate class enemies, but the party brutes were unable to break the caste and thus the aristocracy became a symbol of indomitability. Jaap Scholten travelled through Romania and Hungary and spoke to the descendants of the once so distinguished aristocracy about the horrors of the past. He spoke to the youngest generation about the restitution of assets and the future. How to rebuild something in a country that finds itself in a moral vacuum?

Jaap Scholten was born in 1963 in Enschede and has written widely praised novels including *Eighty*, *Morning Star* and *Spengler’s Law*. His stories and travel writing have been published in a series of books entitled *The Adventures of Jaap Scholten*.

**Press quotes:**

‘There are many wonderful things about Scholten’s book. In his introduction he writes that he wants to record the stories of a disappearing world, particularly those concerning the Transylvanian aristocracy, but he also captures the spirit of Old Europe, the pride in the past, the assumptions, the ideals, the worldview, the superiority. Scholten’s book is full, colourful, occasionally gruesome, often astonishing, and beautifully written. By beautiful I mean: fast-paced, with passion and a good feeling for details.’ *Het Parool*

‘Comrade Baron can be characterised as a mixture of travel writing, oral history, and personal perception. Many of the stories have been confided to the writer only after months or even years of insistence, simply and solely on condition of anonymity.’ Financieel Dagblad

‘Stories about injustice, humiliation, exclusion and worse, but the effect is that the reader shudders at every testimony. […] “At school everyone received a biscuit containing iodine, except for me and my sister because we were leeches.”’ Vrij Nederland

‘The destruction of the aristocracy had many more far-reaching consequences than the eradication of a social class; it had radical consequences for society as a whole, as Scholten illuminates in his book. It was the aristocrats, of all people, who felt a great sense of responsibility towards the community, who cared for their employees, who enriched society with their knowledge and manners, their international outlook and long-term vision.’ *HP / De Tijd*

‘This is a classic in the lines of Patrick Leigh Fermor and should be on the shelves of anyone interested in Mittel Europe.’

Norman Stone