

TOWARDS THE QUESTION OF SZEKELY AND COUNT TELEKI PAL

Статья представляет собой рефлексию о судьбе Венгрии в XX в., восприятии этой страны западными политиками и историками. Пал Телеки (премьер-министр Венгрии в 1920–1921 и 1939–1941 гг.) – один из самых противоречивых представителей Венгрии, малоизвестный сегодня политический деятель, роль которого в период между мировыми войнами недооценена. Жизнь Пала Телеки была посвящена борьбе за права национальных меньшинств, восстановлению памяти об утраченном величии страны.

Ключевые слова:

Венгрия, Вторая мировая война, Пал Телеки, секеи, Туранское общество.

Few years ago, in Cluj-Napoca, once Kolozsvár, main city of Transylvania and once the oldest Hungarian university, a nationalistic romanian major ruined the statue of King Matyas Korvin, a pride disputed between Hungarians and Romanians, canceling the words: «of Hungary», as a bad trick against the Hungarian population there. This little thing can help to reflect upon old conflicts, that never disappeared on a continent, which now should be a strong and united Federation, the EU. The lack of historical knowledge is in my opinion one of the first factors, especially the wrong thought of many Western citizens who see central Europe as desert, after decades of Americanisation.

Talking about Szekely and Teleki we can't forget Armin Vambery, an important hungarian ethnologist of the XIXth century, who believed in common origins of Attila's Huns and Hungarians, supporting the Turanian concept, of a wide ancient common society from Volga to Mongolia, whose tribes would have conquered Europe in two waves. The first wave took place in the Vth century, led by Attila (the legend is that Pope Lion I would have gone alone towards him completely disarmed, with just a cross, and then we lose Attila's tracks); the second wave is supposed to have been the one led by Arpad in Xth century, who would have gone to establish his people in the same place of Attila, the Carpathian Basin, with its capital Aetzelburg, then Budapest probably. Arpad was defeated by Holy Roman Emperor at Lechfeld in 955, with the same lance which wounded Jesus Christ dying on the cross [31].

Hungarian speaking groups living on the Mures river, on the East side of Carpathian Mountains, Szekely, who call Transylvania Erdely, who represent a linguistc island, who were famous as fierce defenders of Habsburgic extreme border and speak a special more obsolete form of Hungarian, would proof Vambery's theory and thus, they could be the

descendants of Attila's soldiers, particularly violent, famous for burning everything where they passed, never getting off from their horses and for eating crude meat and drinking blood from enemies' skulls. All these include vampiristic suggestions for Bram Stoker.

Admiral Miklos Horthy's Hungary and USSR had great relations during the '30s, thanks to the two great diplomats Litvinov and Jungerth-Arnothy who worked on the common trouble: Romania, used by Great Britain and France as a muscle against Hungarian revisionism and Eastern Communism. After the First World War the Romanian Kingdom, despite of its growing antisemitism, received great regions as Transylvania and Moldova inhabited by many Jews and where Hungarian people were deprived of any civil rights for many years, as in Czechoslovakia. And many Jews killed by the Iron Guard and Hungarians were persecuted by the Maniu Guards, during WWII [24]. Probably the most suitable solution would have been anyway the great Danubian confederation proposed by romanian minister of Foreing Affairs Grigore Gafencu in late '30s.

Still in April 1941 a Hungarian mission to Moscow dedicated to Stalin the Hungarian translation of Shota Rostavelli's national Georgian poem and Stalin returned the historical flags and signs robbed by general Paskevich, from Hungarian rebels helping the Habsburgic repression of 1849 [23], still remembered by Lenin as one of the worst tsarist atrocities. A very remarkable jest from Stalin. In that period count Bethlen had secret meetings with Soviets, when Hitler declared war on the USSR Molotov tried to keep Hungary out promising help to maintain Transylvania as Hungarian territory at the end of the war and Rakosi, later communist dictator of Hungary, was left free to escape to the USSR. Just in December Horthy declared war against USSR, and just following a false Soviet bombing on Kosice, claimed by Horthy, in his memories, as a secret

72 plan conceived by Prime Minister Bardossy, Hitler and Luftwaffe [22].

A great supporter of Turanic idea was the geographer count Teleki Pal, a Hungarian from Transylvania, Pribekfalva, who really contributed to the foundation of the Turanian Society.

He is also the author of the Carte Rouge, representing the large groups of Hungarians remaining out of new Trianon borders, drawn with fantasy by Great Britain and France on the 4th June 1920. Trianon reduced Hungary to one third of its one thousand years historical borders, losing 3 of its 5 historic old universities. As Miklos Barffy, Gyorgy Bethlen and Janos Esterhazy, Teleki, descendant of an important explorer of Africa and a decaying old noble anti-habsburgic family, dedicated his life to civil rights of Hungarian minorities beyond new borders: Transcarpathia, Southern Slovakia, Voivodina, all regions Hungary asked back, as former territories of «one thousand years Hungary». At the same time he deeply and bitterly understood the Western aim to keep a contest of troubles in middle Europe instead of creating a great Danubian confederation on the Habsburgic example. He also saw the drift of Revisionism and the danger of affairs with nazi Germany, when he was called Prime Minister by Horthy in February 1939 and he remembered the great tradition of tolerance and chivalry of his country, and how much was shameful to spread feelings of hatred and receive money from Germany, as hungarian nazis did, protected by his predecessor Imredy. He wrote to his close friend Gyorgy Barcza, ambassador in London, that if situation would have become dishonoring he just would have shot himself [5]. So he did when Horthy managed to conquer Yugoslavia in alliance with Germany, the 3rd April 1941. He tried till the last moment of his life to work with diplomacy in order to avoid an alliance with Hitler even if Horthy surrounded him with nazi ministers. He was also a rare supporter of social and land reform in Horthy's Hungary [1].

Teleki seems something as a last Szekely hero, dedicating himself to a memory of glory and greatness, interpreting the phrase: wrong or right, my country. Reading about altruistic suicide in the ancient asiatic tribes, reading Durkheim, when in very difficult moments the chief is called to sacrifice killing himself to protect his tribe with his soul, we can imagine him. Personification of that verse of '20s poet Endre Ady «God might not have piety, I born Hungarian», Teleki felt himself so deeply Hungarian and felt so deeply his responsibility to represent his country, in such a period, that we can think about this suggestion. It is also remarkable his hostility to militarists as

general Werth and to Szalasi's green shirts, emerged also by his private letters and really well showed during the re-occupation of Transylvania in September 1940 when he told in his public speech in Cluj: our joy can't be their sadness, sorrow and fear now [6]. He was a fine scholar who travelled all around the world universities to advocate the Hungarian cause. In his fatherland he was the advocate of land reform and healthcare public system.

Kurds still remember him for the Mosul episode, when in 1924 he was called by the Society of Nations as expert to draw Iraqi borders with Turkey and he built a neutral zone for Kurds under british protection, giving them the due to protect and help Kurd culture. He had then experience as refugee too, as many of his colleagues in the Hungarian Parliament (one third of its members were born over new borders), he lost all his properties and lived for teacher's salary in a modest apartment full of books. A bourgeois man among military uniforms, a past patriot among modern nationalists. He was against generals of WWI, repressed the white terror in 1920 and he disagreed with the military administrations in redempted territories during WWII.

Hungary hosted about 100,000 Polish and Jews, but slovaks too, during the WWII, escaped through Transcarpathia, many went to join the Allies. When at the beginning of new millennium a disputy exploded inside hungarian Parliament about the settlement of a Teleki statue (made by the slovak hungarian sculptor Tibor Rieger) on Buda hill, the commitee for the statue then decided to settle it on Balaton lake in Balatonboglar, where last polish lyceum in Europe had been active during WWII, thank to Teleki (<<Uj Ember>> 04.04.2004). He remained through decades a hero for Polish, kurds and Hungarian over Trianon boundaries. An accuse moved against him is to have done first antisemitic hungarian law with numerus clausus of 1920, which reduced, proportionally to their percentage in population, jews and other minorities access to university. A law then never really applied because of minister of Education Klebelsberg made it soon inactive. We have also to think and understand, without excusing, the difficult situation of that period in Hungary, with refugees, extra-population, hunger, unemployment and no economic help from victorious countries. Many jews always remained near Horthy for all his two decades, many were protected in Budapest, thank to its special status until 1944, as some Allied soldier [10]. After 1938 Anschluss in March english spies and some austrian jew escaped from Wien through Budapest. Hungary has a tradition

of tolerance since Turda Diet of XVI, or even before if we remember first King Geza «slogan»: it is bad in a country to speak only one language. Budapest was told Judapest in the XIX [17].

Teleki spoke many languages and with no problem spoke Romanian to his Romanian electors in 1905. He was an erudite patriot who hated sloganistic and violent politics of '90s generation that took progressively power in second Horthy's decade, he refused parties system and general suffrage as dangerous arm in the hands of populist violent forces. He was a shy scholar casually called to politics by his country's fate, but he always hated politics and in 1940 tried to resign. In Teleki's opinion to preserve one thousand years Hungary meant to preserve those features of tolerance and high civility and chivalry, though Entente destroyed a great historical country with many economic offerings and chances for that part of Europe, and Successor States destroyed hungarian symbols and cultural institutions.

I give you another Szekely heroic example. In First World War Szekely Red Army led by habsburgic Szekely general Aurel Stromfeld made the heroic sacrifice stopping Romanian and Czechoslovakian troupes on Tisza river[7].

In that same period Teleki is one of the leading figures of counter-revolutionary Government in Szeged that will conquer Budapest national government on the 16th November 1919, with an anachronistic march of horsemen wore in the 1848 patriotic aristocratic uniforms. A tragicomedy of two decades, before the nightmare of Communism.

Sacrifice of Teleki was then useless, as cynically remembered by lord Winston Churchill in his memories, but the disputation about his statue was foolish and just done to hide social-democrat Prime Minister Gyurcsany's scandal about false economic data in order to enter EU. Churchill himself admitted Teleki's useless sacrifice cleans Hungary's destiny. As Imre Kertesz, Hungarian Jew philosopher survived to holocaust said: for the middle class christian hungarian the most important topic is to establish if the responsible of hungarian holocaust was more Teleki or Szalasi, but anyway everything finished in Auschwitz.

About a complex man as Teleki a serious researcher should abandon and refuse rigidity in judgement and hateful final assertions, in my opinion, as Jankelevitch said about Death: at the end of one life research you can not say you know it better or you know something more, you just research and add informations, your opinions, maybe your sensations, but difficult controversial men like Teleki have many points in their lives in the area of don't-know-what, their lives make you unsure in your rigid

convictions, because we should remember that extreme times ask to live between heroism and compromise, to an everyman like him.

About Romania of those years I want to remember the famous pogrom of Jassy, June 1941, one of the best modern Italian writers was there, Curzio Malaparte, of Polish origins, whose reports in his Kaputt let italians know about the tragic facts happened in Eastern Europe during WWII, where he was as reporter. Count Constantin Caradja, one of the probable descendants of Dracula and diplomat, worked a lot to save many Jews and he is recognized as Right by Israel. Not all Romanians were antisemitic then, for example, even if Romanian Orthodox Church was spreader of antisemitism, one orthodox priest, called Resmerita, wanted to be shot with a group of jews in Jassy, and there are other cases. Interesting are the works of Gheorghe Samoila and about antisemitism in Romania I recommend Emanuela Costantini's works. Romanian Communism did not help Romania to escape from antisemitism: if it's true that in his conquest of power Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej had many faithful men of Moldovan Jew origins as Nikolski, founder of Securitate, Rautu or Chisinevski, they were anyway excluded after Stalin's death as Stalin's men, in an aim to favour romanian-american relations, as Party members like Foris, Ana Pauker or Vasile Luca, were expelled as cosmopolitan Jews. For the period of communist terror in Romania I recommend Dennis Deletant, Victor Frunza and Vladimir Tismaneanu.

J. Kadar, leader of Hungary in the last three socialist decades, from 1956 to 1988, after dark Rakosi's years, talked again about Hungarian minority in Transylvania, the injustice of Trianon, Hungarian historians of '60s reevaluated Habsburgic era and the idea for a Danubian Confederation and in January 1978 Usa President Carter gave St Stephen Crown back to Hungary. But Kadar, faithful ally of Brezhnev, never really managed in practice to defend Hungarian minorities rights in Ceausescu's Romania or in Husak's Czechoslovakia, never neither obtained a Consulate in those Hungarian regions, never seriously advocated them in order not to create divisions inside Warsaw Pact, but Hungarians never forgave him for this cowardly. (R. Gough, A Good Comrade, 2006).

I hope with this tiny contribute to have worked in the best direction of History, that is in my opinion to shorten chronological and geographical distances and to help people to consider past as something alive in our lives but also something closed not to be judged or excused but understood, the disputation about Teleki's statue was not a good example.

- [1] Ablonczy B. Pal Teleki (1879–1941), the life of a controversial Hungarian Politician. – Budapest, 2007.
- [2] Ambri M. I falsi fascismi. – Jouvence Roma, 1980.
- [3] Apponyi A. Justice for Hungary. – Londra, 1928.
- [4] Basciani A., Ruspanti R. La fine della Grande Ungheria, 1918–20. – Beit Trieste, 2010.
- [5] Ban A. Hungarian-British Diplomacy, 1938–41 – the attempt to maintain relations. – Londra, 2004.
- [6] Balogh B.L. The Second Vienna Award and the Hungarian-Romanian Relations, 1940-44. – Budapest, 2012.
- [7] Basciani A., Ruspanti R. La fine della Grande Ungheria. – Trieste, 2010.
- [8] Biagini A. Storia dell'Ungheria Contemporanea. – Bompiani Milano, 2006.
- [9] Bogdan H. Storia dei Paesi dell'Est. – SEI Torino, 2002.
- [10] Braham R. Politics of genocide. – Columbia University Press, 1981.
- [11] Carteny A. Il secolo breve della minoranza ungherese di Transilvania. – Università di Teramo, 2002.
- [12] Circovic S. I Serbi. – ECIG Genova, 2007.
- [13] Cornelius D. Caught in the cauldron: Hungary in World War Second. – Fordham University, 2011.
- [14] Dumitru I. Spionajul maghiar in Romania. – Bucarest, 1990.
- [15] Duroselle J.B. Storia diplomatica dal 1919 ai giorni nostri. – LED Genova, 1998.
- [16] Engle E., Paananen L. The Winter War. – Washington, 1992.
- [17] Fejto F. Requiem per un impero defunto. – Milano 1990
- [18] Ferrara A., Piancioli N. Letà delle migrazioni forzate. – Il Mulino Bologna, 2012.
- [19] Giannini A. Uomini politici del mio tempo. – ISPI Milano, 1942.
- [20] Griego A. Figlie della stessa lupa. – Fuoco Roma, 2009.
- [21] Hale Ch. I carnefici stranieri di Hitler. – Garzanti Milano, 2012.
- [22] Horthy M. Una vita per l'Ungheria. – Roma, 1956.
- [23] Kolontari A. Hungarian-Soviet relations, 1920–41. – Budapest, 2010.
- [24] Lazar I. Transylvania. – Budapest, 1997.
- [25] Lukowski J., Zawadzki H. Polonia. – Beit Trieste, 2009.
- [26] Mason J.W. Il tramonto dell'Impero Asburgico. – Il Mulino Bologna, 2000.
- [27] Mazower M. L'impero di Hitler. – Mondadori Milano, 2011.
- [28] McDonogh G. 1938. – Mondadori Milano, 2011.
- [29] McMillan M. Sei mesi che cambiarono il mondo // Biblioteca Storica. – Giornale Milano, 2003.
- [30] Motta G. Vincitori e vinti. – Nuova Cultura Roma, 2011.
- [31] Nemeth Papo A., Nemeth Papo G. Storia e cultura dell'Ungheria. – Rubbettino Cosenza, 2000.
- [32] Piahana A. Slovak-Hungarian Relations in the mirror of Soviet-German conflictive alliance. – Belarusian State University, 2012.
- [33] Romsics I. Hungary in XX. – Budapest, 2008.
- [34] Santoro S. L'Italia e l'Europa Orientale-Diplomazia culturale e propaganda 1918-43. – Franco Angeli Milano, 2005.
- [35] Teleki P. La Hongrie Occidentale. – Budapest, 1920.
- [36] Teleki P. Short notes on the economical and political geography of Hungary. – Budapest, 1919.
- [37] Teleki P. Ungheria ed Europa. – Berlino, 1931.
- [38] Teleki P. Transilvania. – Budapest, 1940.
- [39] Tokes R. Bela Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic. – New York, 1967.