

Ablonczy Balazs, *Transilvania reîntoarsã 1940-1944 [Transylvania regained 1940-1944]*, translated from Hungarian by Anna Scarlat, Iași, Institutul european, 2014, 356 pp.

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On December 1, 1918, as a result of the Resolution adopted at Alba-Iulia, Transylvania became an integrated part of Romania. This event marked the beginning of the "Great Romania". The Trianon treaty, signed two years later, offered the juridical basis for forming the "Great Romania", Hungary finding itself in the position of having to consent to the cession of this part of its territory. This important event put a strain on the subsequent relations between the two countries. Both Romania and Hungary would come to strongly disagree in the next decades, in numerous aspects, such as the unequal treatment received, the policy and the measures applied to minorities, Romanian or Hungarian, depending on the case.

Far from being written in a vengeful manner, the work, signed by the historian Ablonczy Balazs, comes with the proposal of examining much more carefully the Magyars' projects on contouring the destiny of Transylvania. Hungary's provincial administration tried to create a concept in the population's collective mentality during 1940-1944: Transylvania - "a small Magyar universe" (p.15). These are the aspects that the author studies and writes about. Regarding the title of this book, the word "regained", as the author emphasizes, doesn't cover all the historical aspects of this problem. It is just a means of highlighting the feeling of the majority of Hungarians. It was an act

of historical adjustment - the expression of a higher authority and higher purpose, in which the natural order was re-established (p. 14).

Dedicating an entire chapter to the Magyars' conditions, living on Romanian territory during the inter-war period, the Hungarian historian presents - not very grimly - the (proven or unproven) abuses of Romania against the Magyar community living in Transylvania. It is worth noting that the Hungarian ethnic group was counting, after the Trianon episode, up to 1661000 people, namely 31.61% of the total population living on Transylvanian territory of Romania (p. 31). The political, economical and cultural discriminations were the main subjects of no less than 103 petitions released by the Magyar minorities to the League of Nations from Geneva between 1922 and 1939 (p. 41). The reclamations never achieved their purpose.

Referring to the decision of the German-Italian arbitral court, on August 30, 1940 - the Vienna Dictate- the author insists on the state of mind and spirit of the Hungarian representatives - one of satisfaction - an atmosphere that strongly contrasted with the despair existent in the souls of Romanians. Mihail Manolescu clearly summarizes the pain he had felt when reading the document which stipulated the tearing apart of Transylvania from Romania: "As I looked in all the horror of Transylvania's disintegration, I understood that my already weakened powers were leaving me completely. In that moment, I lost my consciousness". (Dictatul de la Viena/ Memorii iulie-august 1940, București, Editura Enciclopedica, 1991, p. 212).

The arrival of the Magyar troops in Transylvania, starting with September the 5th, generated strong reactions. The Magyar ethnics welcomed Hungarian soldiers with joyful manifestations (p. 64), whereas the Romanians' attitude was, naturally, a desperate one, close to helplessness. Most of them decided to hide in their homes, leaving to the church representatives the responsibility of welcoming the new leadership (p. 66). A new adjustment of the existent order came for the Magyar locals. Thus, there were numerous cases where priests, teachers, accountants - all Romanian- were victims of violence

(p. 75). As for the author's manner of presenting the Magyars' persecutions against the Romanians, it must be pointed out that even though he does not deny the atrocities committed by the soldiers and by the locals, he does indeed present it in a relative and simple manner. The method is quite easy: the justification of their actions.

What follows next is quite intuitive, but harder to accept. Along with the public employees brought in the territory, the Magyar authorities started an extensive process of Magyarization of the Transylvanian society. Out of the 56 Romanian newspapers existent before the annexation of the territory, only 9 remained afterwards (p. 85). There were measures adopted meant to change the style of ornamenting the Romanian houses (p. 92). Not even the churches – both orthodox and Greek catholic – escaped from the Magyars' revenge. Out of the 400 churches existent before 1918 – 1940, the majority of them have been attacked, destroyed, or deteriorated by the Magyar locals (p. 185). The schools and the educational system in general, has been the subject of a drastic transformation. The main objective was straightforward: the Magyarization of the teachers. In the school year 1942-1943, out of the 114 elementary schools functioning, only 8.1% of them had Romanian students (p. 191). During 1940-1944, this percentage was gradually decreasing, reaching a point of only 5% (p. 195). The number of teachers was also low. In the north of Transylvania, there were only 35 teachers. Moreover, another dooming anti-Romanian political measure cannot be overlooked. Born from the fear of Romanization and almost becoming an obsession, the only solution seems to be the transferring of the population. The place of the Romanian residents was meant to be occupied by the Magyars. The stopping of Romanization was thus energy consuming. It is also worth mentioning that annually, approximately 1600 persons were adopting a Magyar name (p. 210).

All in all, there were also many advantages too, as far as the legacy of the Magyars in north of Transylvania is concerned, the offer managing to render a more optimistic and opened view. The infrastructure, an eternal problem, became stronger during the

Magyar occupation. Railroads, streets, bridges, roads – all of these implied a lot of effort and money invested by the Hungarians. Tourism was also a sector to which the Magyars paid much attention to, so visiting the north of Transylvania became more like a patriotic duty (p. 240). The printing of touristic materials, the promotion of hotels and balneoclimateric resorts, such as Sovata, Borsec, Tusnad became a state policy. Obviously, the Jewish and Romanian hotels were sanctioned or closed. Hungarians, mostly the ones living beyond Tisa, were encouraged to visit the Transylvanian cities. The outcome was a positive one: “Transylvania has never been more present in the public opinion of Hungary than now.” (p. 254). The sanitary assistance of population, a troubling aspect up to now, had also been reformed. The protective Magyar spirit was felt as the treatments with “palinca, dried cow excrements and spider webs” (p. 269) were soon to be changed. The infantile mortality dropped and the perspectives seemed more optimistic.

Thus, there were further calculations, preparations and elaborations of new strategies and reforms. All of them were, though, to be abandoned. The Act of August 23, 1944, would end all of these futuristic projects. Only two months later, in October 1944, Transylvania in its entirety would be regained by Romania.

Juicy and well researched, written with talent and semi-objectivity to say the least, the work of the Magyar historian is not only the work of a drama (for Romanians), but also a thorough examination of a dynamic and complex society - Transylvania in times of war.