

ABSTRACTS

Béni L. Balogh

■ *The Question of Arbitration in Hungarian-Romanian Relations in the Summer of 1940*

Keywords: 1940, Hungary, Romania, Transylvania, Hitler's arbitration, Henrik Werth
 In the summer of 1940, Nazi Germany assumed a key role in the rivalry between Hungary and Romania over Transylvania. The Romanian government was confident that an eventual German intervention would favour its own position – which was based on the ethnic principle and a population exchange – rather than Hungary's territorial ideas that sought a radical change to the status quo. It was not coincidental that arbitration was first raised as a possibility by Romania at the talks in Berchtesgaden on July 26, 1940, where the German government rejected the idea. By way of its ambassador to Berlin, on August 21, the Romanian government requested Hitler's arbitration of the issue. Then, on August 27, it informed representatives of the Axis powers that it would accept a "true process of arbitration". As far as the Hungarian government was concerned, it sought to avoid being the first party to request arbitration by the Axis powers – because such a request would signal its consent in advance to the solution offered. In contrast, Henrik Werth, the Hungarian chief of staff told the Germans that Hungary would seek arbitration. Subsequently, however, the Hungarian government informed Berlin that this statement is diametrically opposed to the government's policy.

László Csorba

■ *István Széchenyi's Last Easter Day*

Keywords: Count István Széchenyi, legend, illness, suicide, evidences, sources
 People always had two images of Count István Széchenyi. One was the Széchenyi of legend, the infallible hero who knew everything, and always knew it in advance. He therefore had to be heeded in the same way that the faithful obey a saint. On the other hand, there is also the image of the flesh-and-blood man who wrestled with life, and, despite all the troubles and illness, he was a genius and

produced a brilliant life's work. Some people are captivated by the myth; others are more attracted by the image of the fallible man. Today both notions are part of the Hungarian past. Historians tend to fill in gaps by applying common sense to the probable motivation of an act. This is hard to do when the subject is mentally unstable, especially if we are ignorant of the specific nature of the illness. We know that the authorities were threatening to search Széchenyi's quarters and transfer him to one of the Austrian state lunatic asylums. Maybe these things had nothing to do with his suicide; maybe his mind simply "clouded over" again. But many people believe today, in fact, that the count was murdered. The study investigates the possible evidence and the facts conserved by the original sources.

Gusztáv Mihály Hermann

■ *Szekler-Consciousness – with and without Myths*

Keywords: Hungarian-speaking Szekler, ethnic block, Transylvania, military service, misbeliefs, huns of Attila

After geographically localizing the Hungarian-speaking Szeklers, living as an ethnic block in the south-eastern part of Transylvania, the author lists the misbeliefs associated with this area and group of people. In the past the group was held together primarily by the privileges received in return for their military services, in the present only by their history and myths. The most persistent of these historical myths is the belief in the descent from the huns of Attila. The science of history contests this categorically. This tradition is known to be present already in writings of Hungarian annalists in the Middle Ages, but, according to the author's opinion and data, provincial clerics and later teachers also played an important role in spreading this belief amongst people. These myths lived on and spread further in our days, in variants adapted for children, in newly published books and via electronic media, fact to which the author does not take objection. However, he considers the efforts aiming to the area's economic recovery, inner cohesion and image creation more important.

János B. Szabó

■ *On the Trails of Our “Legends of Mohács”*

Keywords: *Hungary, Ottoman Empire, Battle of Mohács, historical myths, medieval warfare, armies*

The defeat of Mohács (1526) is perceived as the most decisive event in Hungarian history by the historical consciousness of the general public. In the aftermath of the battle, the search for the causes and the accountable parties has immediately begun. Many of these explanations have exercised a decisive influence until today. However, the accounts based on the dissension and moral decay of the Hungarians have neglected several important factors. At the beginning of the 16th century, Hungarians had to face a threat like never before at the southern borders, presented by the army of the Ottoman Empire. Until the end of the next century, the amassing of such a military force has been beyond the possibilities of almost every European power. Compared to the Ottoman army, the Hungarian troops have indeed been small in numbers, but compared to the data of the previous centuries this has been, in fact, the largest Hungarian army ever amassed in the late Middle Ages. The clashes between the two armies only confirmed what was expected. Given the superior numbers of the Ottoman army, almost every other factor has lost its relevance.

Tibor Szócs

■ *A Medieval Hero: Titusz Dugovics*

Keywords: *Titusz Dugovics, Hungarian historical remembrance, siege of Belgrad, 1456, historical fiction*

A medieval hero, Titusz Dugovics, is the embodiment of self-sacrifice in Hungarian historical remembrance. When in the summer of 1456, Sultan Mehmed II laid siege to Nándorfehérvár (today: Belgrad, Serbia) on July 21, Titusz Dugovics, one of the defenders of the castle, got involved in a confrontation with a Turk soldier, who

had climbed a tower and wanted to put on the Ottoman flag. As he was unable to prevent him from doing so in any other way, Dugovics dragged the Turk down with himself, and they both fell to their deaths. Nevertheless, the act was documented only in one medieval source, in Antonio Bonfini's chronicle, where an anonymous soldier is mentioned. The name was invented by Imre Dugovics in 1821, when he presented three false documents about it. A recognised scholar of the period, Gábor Döbrentei, had been deceived by these false documents, and published them. With this Titusz Dugovics soon became a part of Hungarian historical consciousness, although this name is an early 19th-century fiction.

Gábor Várkonyi

■ *Between Cult and History: Interpretations of the Life of Erzsébet Báthory*

Keywords: *Erzsébet Báthory, Transylvania, legend, László Thuróczi*

The legend of Erzsébet Báthory was born in the 18th century. In his book, László Thuróczi, while describing the town of Csejte, mentioned her tragic story, and thus created the myth of the mistress of the manor who bathed in the blood of young girls. Throughout the centuries this judgement barely changed, and she has become the cultic protagonist of a horror story. Not even scientific research could defy this legend until the 1990s, when some major contradictions were pointed out. Although depositions were examined carefully, some weirdness remained around them. It seems that the accusation is based on ten people's statements, and none of them had proof. The roles of the palatine and the clerk are also questionable. The story is complex not because of its horror, but because it is almost impossible to find out all the motivation of its characters. This study would like to aim at solving this impossibility by analysing the sources more closely and investigating the story from a new aspect

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Támogatók



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„... ma alapvetően két Széchenyi-kép él a magyar emberek gondolatvilágában. Az egyik a mitikus Széchenyi, a tévedhetetlen hős, aki mindent tudott, és mindent előre tudott, és akit úgy kell követni, ahogy a hívő követi a szentet. Nem kétséges, hogy a modern szent kultuszának nagyon pozitív szerepe is lehet egyes közösségek életében és működésében. Ám napjainkban némely honfitársunk mély missziós hevülettel prédikálja a mitikus Széchenyi új evangéliumát. Ha hívő keresztény az illető, akkor minden bizonnyal lenyűgözi az a különleges párhuzam, hogy amiként a szent hagyomány szerint egykor a Megváltót meggyilkolták a gonoszok, látszólag ugyanígy ölték meg a magyarok Messiasát a bécsi udvar úgnőkei. Számára így a halál tényeit fölülírja a hitelmény nagyszerűsége – új valóság keletkezik, amelynek híveként nem hatnak rá a tudomány igazolta tények. A másik kép a történelmi Széchenyi alakja, egy hús-vér emberé, aki az életnek – kedvenc költőjével, Berzsenyi Dániellel szólva – „megcsokolgatta rózsáját, megizzadta vaspályáját”. Sokszor bizonyult gyarlónak, sokszor hibázott, ezek miatt gyakran – nemegyszer túlságosan is – ostromozta önmagát, ám egyben kivételes zseni is volt, a magyar polgári átalakulás első programadó egyénisége. Ráadásul még beteg is volt – ám ez a beteg ember mégis a legnagyobb emberi tette volt képes: bebizonyította, hogy nincs olyan emberi nyomorúság, amelyből ne lehetne valami értékeset tenni azért a közösségért, amelyhez tartozunk.”

(Csorba László)

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