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The Reception and Afterlife of the Works of Miklós Bánffy in Romania

(1926-1989)

Not long ago, the literature-loving audience of Cluj-Napoca had the opportunity to attend an afternoon literary gathering, where chapters of *The Transylvanian Trilogy*, the main works of Miklós Bánffy, were read out from the already published German, and the upcoming Romanian translations. I believe this was a remarkable moment in the vicissitudes of the afterlife of the Bánffy literary heritage, as it indicated that, finally, after having been published in English, French, Spanish, Italian, German and Dutch, the Romanian edition of the *Trilogy* was becoming a reality.

It might be of great interest then to take a look at the changing perception of the presence of the Bánffy body of works in Romanian literature. When and what was translated from his works and by whom? How were the works evaluated by the critics, publicists or literary historians?

I must state in advance that the Romanian feedback of the Bánffy-literature is rather poor on the one hand: during his life, only one of his novels (*Bilihandri, the Hot Water Miller*) was published in Romanian, translated by Ion Chinezu¹, although in the most prestigious literary journal of the time, the *Convorbiri Literare* in Iași. The next publication of a writing by Bánffy, titled *Farkasok (Wolves)*, only happened more than three-quarters of a century later, on the pages of *România Literară*, translated by Georgeta Hajdu². The presentation of the chapters of *The Transylvanian Trilogy* by Marius Tabacu at the above mentioned literary gathering thus filled a significant void.

On the other hand, the Romanian contemporary feedback on the reception of Bánffy and his literary works was much more abundant than we would expect on the basis of the aforementioned publications. It is not surprising though that this feedback was mainly (both in content and in frequency) concerned with his role in the Transylvanian literary life between the two world wars. Miklós Bánffy was a dominant figure of the Transylvanian Helikon writers' community. For example, he led the members of Helikon at literary evenings in

¹ Bilihandru, vraciul de la Apa Caldă. *Convorbiri literare*. 1938, 6-10. 230-232.

² Lupii. *România literară*. 2010, 36.

Bucharest, Braşov and Oradea. He also represented the community in talks with the Romanian Pen-Club to negotiate the formation of an independent Hungarian subdivision. As the chairman of the Erdélyi Szépművés Céh (Transylvanian Fine Arts Guild), Bánffy attended the Romanian book festival in Bucharest in 1935, and he also wrote the foreword to the five-volume-strong *Library of Romanian Playwrights*, which was a joint publication by the Pen-Club and the Erdélyi (Transylvanian) Helikon in 1936.³

To recount all his roles and activities, and even only his personal references, would be far beyond the limits of this study. Still, I would like to draw attention, even if briefly, to two writings, in which Miklós Bánffy himself explains to the Romanian audience the purposes and the principles of the Helikon community.

One of them was written for the introduction of the Helikon writers in Bucharest on 12 May 1928⁴, where the opening speech of the literary gathering was made by Miklós Bánffy, and which was published in one of the most important journals of the capital, the *Curentul*, edited by Pamfil Şeicaru⁵. In his speech, Bánffy acquainted

the audience with the Helikon writers' community, and he said: "This is a beginning and an endeavour: twenty persons, who convened out of their free will. I came here to speak about them, and the reason for this is that this modest group is guided by an ideal of universal interest – which is a significant symptom of our age: the desire to find in ourselves the bonds that draw us together, not the things that divide us and could make us enemies. And counting on and supporting one another in 'art for art's sake', we shall create the harmony of partnership." Then he went on to briefly mention the history of the ideas, from "Pax Romana" to the Encyclopédistes, that committed to the ideas of belonging and fraternity in human history, arriving at the 19th century Darwinian thesis of "struggle for life" and proceeding up to Hegel and Marx, Bánffy says: "There is nothing else we can do but regretfully realise that the fight between man and man is cruel and deadly. But perhaps it was exactly this tragic spectacle that inspired us, good-willing people, to unite and to appear before you: this modest little group, seeing past the differences, however fruitful and inspiring they may be, searching for the bonds that unite and make us a family."

The other article, that is worthwhile to touch upon even in this limited framework, is an interview by Costa Carei from 1936⁶, which was prompted by the Budapest book festival in that year. The author, who later became known as the Romanian translator of Hungarian poets, in the first part of the article introduces the subject of the interview to the Romanian readers of the Bucharest journal: describing briefly Miklós Bánffy's biography and works, detailing his role in the Hungarian artistic and literary life, and mentioning his successful staging and directing of the play *The Tragedy of Man* at the Open-Air Theatre Festival of Szeged. Then he asks Bánffy about his experiences at the Bucharest book festival that took place just a while before. In his response, Miklós Bánffy praises the invitation by the organising body, the Romanian Royal Foundation, and he calls it "a friendly gesture towards the Hungarian writers", then he lists the distinguished writers of Bucharest who visited the stall of the Transylvanian Fine Arts Guild. The visit of King Carol II gets a special mention, and the fact that during his talks with the leaders of the Romanian Royal Foundation a plan was emerging concerning the Romanian translation of the works of Hungarian writers. He states, "These are good signs towards détente and the cultural partnership of Romanians and Hungarians, as these two nations, in the bosom of Transylvania, are bound together. Just like us, Hungarian writers,

³ The foreword written by Bánffy to the *Library of Romanian Playwrights* was published in Romanian, too, in the article of Leonard Paukerow: *O realizare frumoaşă a Pen-Clubului roman* (Rampa nouă ilustrată, 1934/5036. 25 octombrie). The Romanian literary connections of the Helikon writers' community and those of Miklós Bánffy can be thoroughly traced in the letters and notes of the detailed volume of *A Helikon és az Erdélyi Szépművés Céh levelesládája. 1924-1944.* by Ildikó Marosi (Kriterion, Buk. 1979. I-II). Recently Enikő Olcar wrote in great length about the Romanian connections of the Helikon writers and the Romanian reception of their initiations, including details of the role of Miklós Bánffy (*Relațiile literare și culturale româno-maghiare în perioada interbelică*. Editura Dacia XXI, Cluj, 2011.) See especially Chapter III. *Fenomenul transilvanismului* on 223-374.

⁴ For the full programme see: Román sajtóhang a Helikon bukaresti felolvasó estélyérl. *Ellenzék*, 1928/110. 16 May. We know the programme of the evening held at Victoria Square in Bucharest from this journal mentioned above: after the welcoming words of Sándor Nagy, a reformed pastor of Bucharest, Miklós Bánffy introduced the event, then János Bartalis and Lajos Olosz read their poems, Géza Tabéry presented a short story, Imre Kádár read some of his translations of Romanian folk poetry. In Sándor Makkai's absence a short story of his was read out. Also present at the event were Liviu Rebreanu, the president of the Romanian Writers' Society, Nichifor Crainac poet and Victor Eftimiu, the president of the Romanian Pen-Club. "In general, there is an air of peacefulness and reconciliation in the room – writes the reporter –. There doesn't seem to be a drop of hatred in our souls, in the Hungarian and Romanian psyche. That is the wonder of literature."

⁵ Contele N. Banffy: Spre unitatea spiritual. *Curentul* (Buch) 1928/123. 18 May. The opening speech by Miklós Bánffy was presented in French at the literary gathering of the Helikon writers in Bucharest, and translated into Romanian by the *Curentul*. The main themes of the speech can also be found in several other Bánffy-writings (see Miklós Bánffy: *Emlékezések – Irodalmi és művészeti írások*. Collected by Gyula Dávid. Cluj: Polis Kiadó, 2013.)

⁶ Costa Carei: *De vorbă cu contele Banffy Miklos, la ziua cărții maghiare, despre impresiile dela ziua cărții românești*. Rampa nouă ilustrată, 1935/5231 (23 July).

in the framework of *Helikon*.” He also adds: “*The approaching and mutual understanding of one another cannot be imagined without the authentic and thorough knowledge of intellectual achievements of other nations.*”

But let’s get back to the Romanian reception of the works of Bánffy.

We find the first reaction of literary interest in 1926 – around the time of Miklós Bánffy’s return to Transylvania – on the pages of the *Rampa nouă ilustrată*.⁷ It is likely that the publication of this article was related to the widespread interest in the press that followed Bánffy’s arrival and his application for Romanian citizenship. Understandably, it was a peculiar event where a former foreign minister of Hungary returns to Transylvania and swears an oath of allegiance to King Ferdinand I. The contemporary Hungarian and Romanian press wildly speculated about the real reasons behind the move and the political roles awaiting him in his homeland. The author, simply noted as N. F. in the *Rampa*, mentioned not only Bánffy’s literary and artistic merits but also his political and diplomatic careers. However, he was mainly concerned with Bánffy’s satirical comedy titled *Maskara (Masquerade)* that appeared on stage shortly prior to the publication of the article, at the Renaissance Theatre in Budapest. According to the writer of the article, the playwright “... has a serious purpose with the piece: he intends to demonstrate that people usually hide behind masks that give them certain roles, and they wear certain masks – out of various motives – that are not compatible with their true selves; but for this exact reason, they are doomed in their attempts...” Otherwise, he feels the play is more of a puppet-show (and in this aspect he also refers to the series of cartoons about the League of Nations). Finally, he mentions the was speculation in the Budapest press concerning the identity of those represented by the masks, which politicians of the recent past were behind certain roles (Mihály Károlyi, Béla Kun?) or who could be the “Soviet count” or the lady from high society.

A few days later, another Bánffy-play caught the attention of the Romanian press: the occasion was the premier of a piece titled *Martinovics* in Oradea⁸. However, the article on the first page of the Oradea journal was not so much concerned with the literary merits

⁷ *O premieră modern la Budapesta. „Farsă neroadă” în trei acte de contele Nicolaus Bánffy la Teatrul Renaissance*. *Rampa nouă ilustrată*, 1926/2525. (27 March).

⁸ (as): *Literatura contelui Bánffy*. *Gazeta de vest*. 1935 (1477) (9 May).

of the play as with the political message. According to the journalist, who marked himself with the letters (as.) “*It’s easy to realise that the conflict refers to the present situation of the Hungarian population in Transylvania. There are certain sentences in the play that encourage the Hungarians not to serve two lords, two interests at the same time, but to only work for the advantages of the Hungarians. In this way Bánffy’s aim is to alienate the Hungarians from the Romanian state’s authority.*” Finally, he closes the article, saying: “*So you think that we are so dumb that we wouldn’t realise this? Count Bánffy has arrived in Transylvania with a secret agenda and this requires us to scrutinize his activity in the field of literature.*” This is the origin of the conspiracy theory that followed in the 1970s-80s, further developed and refined among others to provide an argument against the republication of Bánffy’s works, by the voluntary “advisors” of the Romanian Securitate.

In 1930 in Cluj-Napoca a book by Ion Chinezu was published: *Aspecte din literatura de maghiară ardeleană*. This book consists of only 152 pages, but it succeeds in summarizing the Hungarian literature and the literary movements of Transylvania in the first decade under Romanian authority. This kind of synopsis had not been published until then, not even in Hungarian. The author had been closely observing contemporary events⁹ of Hungarian literature from the early 1920s, and later, in the 1950s (while blacklisted for political reasons) he contributed a great deal as a translator towards the awareness of Hungarian literature in Romania¹⁰. He dedicates a whole page to Bánffy’s 1927 novel *Reggeltől estig (From morning till the evening)*. Naturally, Chinezu also reflects upon the previous events of the novelist’s (not exclusively) literary career: He states, “*He left behind premier political and cultural positions in Hungary... and he also brought with him a well-defined literary reputation, some of his plays were put on stage at the most prestigious theatres in Hungary, so in our homeland, he takes up a very significant position in Hungarian intellectual life, also being the president of the Erdélyi Helikon*”.¹¹ Then he goes on to enumerate the characters of *Reggeltől estig*, drafts the plots and events, and emphasizes the “sophisticated structure” of the novel, the coherence and visual aspects of the plot made out of the mosaics of seemingly insignificant events and

⁹ *Literatura maghiară modernă. Adevărul literar și artistic*. 3 April 1921.

¹⁰ See Gyula Dávid: *Ion Chinezu erdélyi magyar irodalomtörténete*. In *Találkozások. Tanulmányok a román-magyar irodalmi kapcsolatok múltjából*. Kolozsvár: Dacia. 1976. 173-184.

¹¹ *Aspecte din literatura maghiară ardeleană*. Editura revistei „Societatea de mâine”. Cluj. 1930. 123.

gestures. He also highlights how much the novelist Bánffy is also a noteworthy illustrator.

A few years later, a summary written by Ion Chinezu about the Hungarian literature in Transylvania in the 1930s was published in the journal of the Romanian Royal Foundation¹².

Chinezu wrote about the “gradual strengthening” of Transylvaniam, the mixed reception of Transylvanian literature in Hungary, and “*the danger of disrupting the unity of the Hungarian intellectual scene*”: the schism-debate. He referred to the history of Hungarian literature written by Antal Szerb that received a Helikon Prize, and spoke about the emerging translation-literature, thanks to which the works of the Romanian Eminescu, Blaga, Arghezi, Ion Pillat, Mihail Codreanu and Nichifor Crainic became known to Hungarian readers. He also mentioned briefly the novels of Aladár Kuncz, Sándor Makkai, Mária Berde, Géza Tabéry, Károly Kós, and the poems of Sándor Reményik, László Tompa, János Bartalis, Lajos Olosz, Jenő Dsida and Jenő Kiss, “*and the Székely writers, who brought entirely new aspects to Hungarian literature*”: József Nyirő and Áron Tamási.

He had this to say about Miklós Bánffy’s novel *They Were Counted* that was published shortly before: “...it is instructive even for us to see how he (Bánffy) recalls the years around 1905, when the explosive storm was already brewing, but somehow, due to some miraculous lack of intuition, the Parliament in Budapest did not have the faintest idea. On the periphery of the novel – Chinezu goes on – there is the figure of Timișan, the Romanian representative, portrayed with respectable likeability, who was an advocate in the Memorandum-trial; and who is the only one in the great chaos who can see clearly into the future”.¹³

Parallel to this, numerous reviews were penned with regards to the publishing of the volumes of *The Transylvanian Trilogy*. Perusing the April and May issues of the journal *Nyugat* in 1935, Teodor Murășanu cited two Hungarian critiques of *They Were Counted*: the opinions of Lajos Nagy and Antal Szerb, without adding any further commentary¹⁴. Then later, after the publication of the second volume of *The Transylvanian Trilogy* (*They Were Found Wanting*), Corneliu Codarcea (at the time the teacher of Romanian language at the Bethlen College in Nagyenyed and the devoted translator of contemporary Transylvanian poets) wrote an article that, from the title appeared to be about the whole of Hungarian literature in Romania, but was in fact, only about Bánffy’s novel¹⁵.

In the first part of his article, Codarcea emphasizes the social criticism of the novel (also referring to the upheaval that its publication caused): He wrote that Bánffy’s characters “...*these pompous magnates held lavish balls, they gained or gambled away great fortunes in one night, they spent their lives indulging and pleasure-seeking, their political activity was exhausted in minor disputes with Vienna concerning legal and national questions of prestige, while they were oblivious to the catastrophe that was approaching. Hungary was heading for collapse, even though it was governed by a firm leader like Tisza.*” Then later he added: the author “...*is proving to be an intelligent and level-headed observer, who can clearly see the flaws and anachronism of the magnates of his era.*”¹⁶

However, the best part of Codarcea’s article is dedicated to the ample Romanian references that he also deemed to be incredibly interesting. Looking at the scene in the novel when Abády, the count is walking around the mountains of Mócvidék (Motzenland), he observes that the count “*notices not only women, race-horses and scenery... but also the sandal-wearing vlachs*”¹⁷. The people deeply rooted in the wild nature who respond with reflexes of centuries long humility when they meet a count. However, Codarcea warned that the writer also noticed that there was also another type of attitude: the suppressed hatred of the pope’s son towards the humility of his predecessors, and the unspoken judgement that was depicted on the walls of the local village church, where the devils all wear the attire of Hungarian noblemen, while the angels wear the costumes of peasants of the village.

¹² Literatura maghiară de azi. *Revista fundațiilor regale*. 1935, 2. 179-183.

¹³ Work cited. 183. A few years later, yet again, it was Ion Chinezu, who published a full, detailed summary of Bánffy’s life and his literary career (*N. Bánffy. Notă bibliografică*. Preocupări literare, 1939. 136-137.) It was most certainly prompted to satisfy the increased and widespread interest in Bánffy’s personality and his “return” to politics after his appointment to be the president of the Hungarian People’s Alliance in Romania (Români ai Magyar Népközösség), which was the Hungarian subdivision of the National Renaissance Front (Frontul Renașterii Naționale), created during the royal dictatorship. In this, to the extent of two whole paragraphs, he introduced the two published volumes of *The Transylvanian Trilogy*: “*The Transylvanian Trilogy*, this marvellously rich landscape of the life in the pre-war Austro-Hungarian Empire, brings to life numerous characters (representatives and typical situations in the life of the Romanian population of Transylvania, journalists, peasants, forest rangers etc.) on the whole, with due understanding, what’s more, sometimes even with empathy.”

¹⁴ Revista revistelor. *Nyugat. Pagini Literare*, 1935. 108-111.

¹⁵ Literatura maghiară din România. *Revista fundațiilor regale*. 1936, 5. 420-425.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 420.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 421.

Codarcea reflected in great detail upon one of the Romanian characters of the novel, the nature of solicitor Timișan, who played a part in the Memorandum-trial. Codarcea cites the episode where Abády turns to him asking for help, in the interests of the Romanian peasants who were fighting the Romanian bank. Timișan refused to help Abády, and Codarcea cites the reasons of refusal: “*Your Lordship, centuries ago – says Timișan – this country was conquered by swords of your ancestors and so the great Hungarian-owned estates were formed. In these days we have to find other means of getting what we want. We need a wealthy middle class ... we have therefore decided that, no matter how, we must create a wealthy middle class. The bank furnishes the original funds.... Naturally these people have to deal with poor Romanian peasants, and that is only natural...*” Seeing the well-meaning efforts of young Abády – Codarcea adds – the Romanian readers will subconsciously ask: is this the purpose of the writer, to make the Hungarians seem more caring and considerate towards the Romanians than their own Romanian leaders in Transylvania? However, Codarcea also concludes that “*the writer (Bánffy) would not give in to such an exaggerated and ridiculous concept, however appealing it may be for certain other Hungarian novelists. On the contrary, Mr. Bánffy’s book actually indirectly demonstrates that this kind of casual, spontaneous act of kindness that Abády allows himself between two foreign trips and a love affair, cannot be taken as a serious solution in such a complicated matter as the issue of nationalities*”¹⁸ But another perspective is also introduced: when the vulnerable peasants realise that even Count Abády is unable to help them, they set the building of the bank on fire, and their proofs of debt are also consumed by the flames. Eventually, Codarcea summarizes his judgement: “*‘They Were Found Wanting’ was written with eyes open to reality. The researchers of Transylvania’s past will find values in this huge body of works that will be difficult to deny, even if they don’t agree with Mr. Bánffy. And we, who don’t want to live with closed eyes and plugged ears, must show an interest in other people’s opinions. Those who are really strong can always allow themselves the luxury that is expressed in the Latin adage: Audiatur et altera pars!*”¹⁹

Right before the Vienna Award an article by George Sbârcea was published in *the Țara nouă*²⁰ in Cluj-Napoca. The author – who later became a well-known music critic – referring to the last chapters of

Antal Szerb’s history of Hungarian literature, outlines the Hungarian literature between the two world wars in order to prove how generous the Romanian minority politics was during that time, and highlights how much freedom it provided, compared to the modest and provincial Romanian literature in Transylvania that was allowed to exist in the decades of the monarchy. He refers to the writers’ community of Helikon, the flourishing journalistic life in Transylvania, and mentions the poetry of Sándor Reményik, Lajos Áprily, the novels of Sándor Makkai, Károly Kós, Miklós Bánffy, the Székely writers Áron Tamási and József Nyirő, whose novelist careers were encouraged in the “Romanian Transylvania”.

The history of the Romanian reception of Miklós Bánffy’s trilogy spans across the post-war years too. Bánffy himself was forced to experience that the communist regime that was just about to expand and settle had the opposite agenda than what Codarcea thought was desirable: instead of appreciating the literary merits, understanding and reflecting on the message of the *Trilogy*, the only measure of value became what was possible to feed to the ignorant and uncultured party activists about the Count, who was once “the former foreign minister of Horthy”, “class enemy” and taking individual facts about him and shedding a politically one-sided, distorted light on them. Under the banner of “class conflict”, Miklós Bánffy/Kisbán also became a victim of that “social genocide” (the term was used by Vladimir Tismăneanu)²¹ that became prevalent in the rest of his short life, both in the public and literary life.

It is not worth mentioning names – although I would say a few words about how intelligent, literature appreciating people can become the conscious, malicious supporters of this “social genocide”. Because it may even be the natural course of events that the activists of the Ekésfront (The Ploughmen’s Front), in a “revealing” article written in the name of the

Communist peasants of Bonchida (Bánffy’s estate) in the heat of land redistribution, present Miklós Bánffy as “a collaborator with German fascists”, who set his own castle on fire and played his own stud and grains into the hands of the German army²². But it is less understandable that barely a year later, Bánffy would be attacked in the same spirit by a Romanian writer, who previously called

¹⁸ Ibid, 424.

¹⁹ Ibid, 425.

²⁰ Ceidouăzeci de ani ai literaturii maghiare din Ardeal. *Țara nouă* (Cluj), 1940, 67 (25 August).

²¹ Lupta de clasă ca rasism social. *Aposrof*, 2014/4.

²² Plugarul, 1945. Cited by Csapody, Miklós: Király utca 14. Bánffy Miklós utolsó kolozsvári éve (1944-1949). *Korunk*, 2011, 11. 45-53.

himself “the friend of Hungarian writers”, and was boasting that he knew Hungarian literature inside out to the minutest detail²³. In an open letter addressed to Gábor Gaál (who was the chairman of Romániai Magyar Írók Szövetsége [Alliance of Hungarian Writers in Romania] and the editor in chief of the journal *Utunk*), published in the pages of the Bucharest paper *România liberă*, the writer of the letter is indignant that “...the former foreign minister of Horthy, Count Miklós Bánffy, who is deluded enough to imagine himself to be a novelist, ... with the assistance of others – I don’t know for what reason – , and also with your support, you, who is the chairman of a union of progressive Hungarian writers – , can reappear in literary and public life” ... “especially after he was quite willing to take a seat in the Upper House in Budapest in the years 1940-1944, during the reign of Horthy, and thus pushing the cart of Horthy with a grin on his face.” Further into the letter he also adds: ... “a Count, who, with his forcible amateurish scribbles terrorized the literary and artistic world for many years...”²⁴

We cannot be surprised that after this Bánffy voluntarily withdrew from literary public life. It is no wonder either that in the following decades, this sort of attitude, conveyed by the evaluations of Emil Isac, would be predominant towards the trilogy of Bánffy.

It first manifested in 1955, when following the death of Stalin, the ice of the cold war was “thawing”. The Party Committee of Cluj Province subjected the journal *Utunk* under investigation, scrutinizing “how the editorial team ensures the ideological purity of the journal’s content”²⁵. In this report, we can read the following: “The journal ‘*Utunk*’ committed serious errors in the past concerning the ideological purity of the content of the material presented on its pages. In the first years after its launch, writings of explicitly hostile nature were printed on its pages. Material that was written from the point of view of the so-called bourgeois reactionary ‘one Hungary’ theory, and articles, like the one written by the former count, Miklós Bánffy, under the pseudonym of Miklós Kisbán, bearing the title of ‘Let’s talk nothing’,

that mocks the achievements of our system of people’s democracy, and yearn for a bourgeois-landowner system that is gone now forever”.²⁶

This kind of attitude would still be typical during the winds of change, and in the limelight of the ideals of the Hungarian revolution and the re-emerging values of the era between the two world wars, the possibility of the re-publication of Miklós Bánffy’s works is raised²⁷, however, “in the second public sphere”, the official bodies will prevent the new editions of his works with the same “annihilating” reasons (thanks to the anonymous reports collected and preserved by the Securitate or signed “expert opinions”).

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Bánffy body of literary works would only get mentioned sporadically in Romanian, and only in the light of a one-sided, negative evaluation regarding his political role, strictly from politically approved authors whose opinions were very highly considered by the officials in charge of the Romanian book publishing and the supervising party representatives. In 1972 the monography of Emil Isac was published²⁸, written by the poet Ion Brad, who, at the time, was also the vice-president of the Council of the Socialist

²⁶ Ibid, 810.

²⁷ We are talking about an article titled *Közelmúltunk irodalma (Literature of our recent past)* by József Méliusz (*Utunk*, 1957/13) and the debate following it, during which one of the contributors, Péter Marosi mentioned that “the foreword is being written now, and the Trilogy is being planned for publication” (in: Mit ér Bánffy Miklós trilógiája? *Utunk*. 1957, 27). In reality, the ice will only break ten years later when in one of his studies, László Bányai brings to light the history of a secret diplomatic mission undertaken by Bánffy in 1943, that was supposed to work on the joint exit of Romania and Hungary from the war (*Contribuții privind misiunea contelui Bánffy Miklós la București în iunie 1943*. Studii, 1967. 709-724), and it seemed that, in the eyes of the potentates of censorship, the writer might become tolerable and acceptable again. At this time, the first volume of the Trilogy will be included in the 1974 agenda of the Kriterion Publishing House. However, the records of this initiation were only documented in two accusing reports and a letter from the chief-executive citing a prohibition from “the highest office”, preserved in the archives of Kriterion. The first Bánffy-volume consisting of two short stories, *Reggeltől estig* and *Bűvös éjszaka (From Morning Till Evening and Magical Night)* was in the end published in 1981 in the *Romániai Magyar Írók (Hungarian Writers in Romania)* series, but it was not followed by *The Transylvanian Trilogy*, but further accusing reports and “expert opinions”. In order for Bánffy’s main body of works to be published in a Romanian edition for the first time, a whole regime has to collapse and another twenty years to pass. (About this topic, see in detail: Dávid, Gyula: *Bánffy Miklós utóélete Erdélyben az elnémitástól a „felfedezésig”*. A lecture with the title of *Bánffy Miklós (utó)életei* at a conference in Cluj-Napoca, on 28 May 2014.)

²⁸ Brad, Ion: *Emil Isac, un tribun al ideilor noi*. Cluj: Editura Dacia. 1992. “*Frământat, chinuit o viață întreagă de nădejdea statornicirii unei dreptăți istorice între români și maghiari, Emil Isac nu putea vorbi decât cu mândrie, cu bucurie și admirație despre politica națională marxist-leninistă a Partidului Comunist*

²³ This self-evaluation of Isac was cited by Corneliu Codarcea, in an interview with Beke György (*Tolmács nélkül. Interjú 56 íróval a magyar-román irodalmi kapcsolatokról*. Bukarest: Kriterion. 1972. 87.)

²⁴ The article titled *Scrisoare deschisă d-lui Gaál Gábor* is cited in a 1946 issue of *România liberă* (without giving the exact location of the publication) by Brad, Ion: *Emil Isac – új eszmék szószólója*. Kolozsvár: Dacia. 1972. 393-394.

²⁵ *Cum asigură colectivul redacției „Utunk” puritatea ideologică a materialelor publicate*. In Andreescu, Andreea; Nastasă, Lucian; Varga, Andreea (eds.): *Minorități etniculturale. Mărturii documentare. Maghiarii din România. 1945-1955*. Ed. Centrul de Resurse pentru Diversitatea Culturală. Cluj. 2002. 810-816.

Culture and Education. In this volume, his letter from 1946, that was mentioned above, in which he evaluates Miklós Bánffy, was made known for a wide audience, proving Isac's adoration for the ethnic policies of the Romanian communist party and his exemplary perception with regards to the relations between Hungarians and Romanians. A decade and a half later, in 1988, another book was published about the centuries of Hungarian-Romanian relations²⁹, written by the novelist Francisc Păcurariu, who was also a significant character in the Romanian diplomatic life. In this book, the writer dedicates a whole chapter to the Romanian-Hungarian literary connections between the two world wars, with special emphasis on the years between 1940 and 1944. In his book, Păcurariu made only one acknowledging comment on Bánffy's literary merits ("in 1926, settling in Romania, he became the central figure of the Hungarian literary circles in Romania, and achieved a literary accomplishment worthy of attention"³⁰), but eventually he only gave discrediting evaluation of Bánffy's role in political life. Reflecting on his leading position in the Hungarian People's Alliance in Romania that formed during the time of the royal dictatorship, he put it down to the sign that "... the dictatorship of King Carol II pushed the masses of Hungarian people under the leadership of magnates and the wealthy capitalists, and this leadership was supported by a widespread revisionist activity that was formed underground in our country"³¹. Păcurariu was factual when he presented Bánffy's role in 1943-1944, even using Dániel Csatári's book *Forgószélben*, and citing whole pages from it, but then he refuted everything with the statements of the memoirs of Edgár Balogh and Pál Veress, where they reminisce about the September events of 1944. He especially leaned on Veress's statement, who apparently jotted down a remark by Géza Teleki (based on the recollections of Imre Mikó), when Teleki remarked on Bánffy's own account of his role in the events: "*The old liar*"³².

But even then, there are two sides to every coin, even in the history of the Romanian reception and afterlife of Miklós Bánffy's work. Simultaneously with the book of Păcurariu, another volume was being finished, that undertook the mammoth task of presenting

Român... O pasiune nobilă, o cinste și principialitate exemplară manifesta el, din nou, în tratarea acestei probleme cruciale a vieții și scrisului său..."

²⁹ Francisc Păcurariu: *Românii și maghiarii de-a lungul veacurilor*. București: Editura Minerva. 1988.

³⁰ Ibid, 405.

³¹ Ibid, 441.

³² Ibid, 513-516. The remark attributed to Teleki was cited by Veress, Pál: *Vajúdó évek, sorsdöntő napok*. Bukarest: Kriterion. 1981. 309.

the whole Hungarian literature in Romania in that time, and it also attempted the credible positioning and evaluation of the Bánffy body of work: this book was the 600-page long history of Hungarian literature in Romania, written by Professor Gavril Scridon³³. True, this book was not allowed to be published at the time, as the censorship wanted to remove a chapter on Károly Kós, who was declared a *persona non grata*³⁴ in the meantime, but the professor wouldn't allow this, even at the cost of his book's publication. He was not willing to make a compromise that would discredit the intention of his whole book, or to participate in the genocide that was not so much social any more, but more like an ethnic genocide.

Today, when we are pleased to hear the news of the preparations of the Romanian translation of the most significant Bánffy-novel, it is only fitting to revive the fading memories of the pioneers who knew what true literature was, and they were proud to stick to their opinion even in the face of various adverse authorities.

³³ *Istoria literaturii maghiare din România*. Cluj-Napoca: Editura Promedia plus. 1996.

³⁴ See Gyula Dávid: A betiltott centenárium. In Szabó, Zsolt (ed.), *Sztánai napok 2004*. A publication of the Szentimrei Alapítvány, Kolozsvár-Sztána. 2004. = Sztánai Füzetek 1.