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HUNGARY, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest,
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Abstract

The author is a historian and research director at the French National Centre for Scientific Research, a specialist in the history of Central Europe, a professor.

The volume of the French Catherine Horel represents a valuable contribution, not only on the biography of an important personage of Hungarian history, but also on the history of interwar Hungary.

Keywords:

History of Hungary; Miklos Horthy; Regent Horthy; French Catherine Horel.

In the pantheon of significant figures in the history of Hungary, Miklos Horthy comes as an illustration of the old time conservatism, the image of the controversial state man, but whom embodied (at one point) the personalization of national irredentism. Horthy's entire educational-intellectual formation was reminiscent of the late Habsburg Empire, and (as he himself confessed) his formative model was Emperor Franz Joseph, the almost legendary sovereign, to whom he was a loyal supporter.

Horthy was a man of worldliness and good manners, an excellent husband and father, a Protestant with noble country roots, fluent in several languages, and passionate about sports and travel, like a modern adventurer.

Military and noble, chivalric and leader, had the grace of interesting conversation and possessed a natural religiousness, not at all rigid. The former admiral retained this grade, precisely because the nostalgic people of the Kingdom of Greater Hungary could not give up the idea that their homeland had lost any access to the sea, as long as Croatia (even with its increased autonomy status) was no longer between the borders of the Crown of St. Stephen. So - we are dealing with a more subtle interpretation,

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with a kind of living symbol of a geopolitical situation, to which the Hungarian nationalists continued to aspire.

The volume of the French Catherine Horel represents a valuable contribution, not only on the biography of an important personage of Hungarian history, but also on the history of interwar Hungary. The author is a historian and research director at the French National Centre for Scientific Research, a specialist in the history of Central Europe, a professor.

The restoration of the borders before Trianon will be the target of all the regimes and all the governments carried out in Budapest, even though this goal had not always been officially declared. But more than that, the sadness of the territories lost in 1920 would protrude as an acid in the deepest layers of the Hungarian collective mentality, turning into a major collective frustration.

The interwar Hungarian foreign policy was conceived having as an essential reference, the obsession with the territories lost to Trianon, and the government of the "fleet less" admiral Miklos Horthy, was circumscribed exactly to the same structural-national aspiration.

The fact that in the period 1938-1941, Horthy's Hungary recovered about 40% of the lost territories in Trianon, placed Horthy in full myth, his last nickname of "land collector", being, in this sense - perfectly explainable.

Horthy could declare himself relatively contended, as long as part of the great Hungarian revisionist plan was beginning to materialize, the alliance with Nazi Germany and Mussolinian Italy representing the only chance for Hungary to recover (or even partially) the territories lost to Trianon, in 1920. It was obvious that by its own forces, the country could never even hope for such a revival, because (if we consider at least a comparison in military terms with Romania) it was inferior to it, both in terms of human potential, as well as in terms of economic capabilities, without which the success of a military action remains strictly limited to the utopian sphere.

The regime of Regent Horthy had been one of the first which introduced anti-Semitic laws in Europe after the First World War, which caused a natural shock among the ethnic Jewish in Hungary, knowing that for the most part, they had not only integrated very well into the Hungarian society, but among their ranks there were factors influencing the public opinion, totally dedicated to the Hungarian national idea. And yet, part of the current Hungarian historiography considers that the anti-Semitic policy of Miklos Horthy was rather a tactical-formal one, in order to offer (first of all to Germany) the arguments of an ideological affinity with a pragmatic purpose. On the other hand, the representatives of the same historiographic

school try to diminish Horthy's responsibilities regarding the horrors committed in Hungary against the Jews, considering that these were mainly due to the representatives of the Party of the Crosses With Arrows - the Hungarian variant of fascism. Let us think, however, that after leaving Hungary (and by the end of his life, Horthy was financially supported by some Jewish businessmen as well ... Paradoxes of history and of his destiny...

In many ways, the Regent was an exponent of the dualist period and therefore he may seem somewhat anachronistic in terms of mentality, to many young radicals, eager to transform Hungary, into a great power, starting from the recovery of the territories it had lost in Trianon. He was an undeniable patriot, but his pace of action and sensibilities remained forever typical of the nineteenth century. He was a prudent legalist, a follower of lavish formalism, and an analytical decision-maker, and many of the excesses of his governing were either due to periods in which he seemed either distracted from the flow of events, or overtaken by them, or to the excessive zeal of his collaborators.

The odyssey of Miklos Horthy's exile was long and complicated, with his taking over by the units of the German army, with periods of internment in Germany, and then with the fear of not being extradited to either the Hungarian or Yugoslav Communist authorities, the latter insisting that the former Hungarian Regent be handed over to them, holding him directly responsible for the aggressions of the Hungarian armies on their country. The paradox in Miklos Horthy's fate lies in the fact that he has benefited from the discreet support of influential people (including the former US ambassador to Budapest at the time), or of Jewish businessmen, who did not cease to support him effectively even from a financial point of view. It can be said that until his death (occurring in 1957) Horthy kept his pay thanks to the help of these influential people. Salazar agreed to offer him political asylum, and the old fleet less admiral could (at least) escape from prison, or, perhaps, from the capital punishment. In those years he wrote his (published) memoirs, in which he portrayed himself as a loyal admirer of Emperor Franz Joseph and generally of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, one of the most glorious periods (in his opinion) in the modern history of Hungary. His biography is drawn on the general background of historical events, without which the Hungarian destiny cannot be decrypted, and the manner of writing is an attractive one, the admiral showing clarity and logic of expression. His "memories" can also be considered as an evocation of a world that had been lost forever, a world of vast refined lounges, of sumptuous balls, of rigorous etiquette and behavioural customs, rigid and impressive, with a medieval colour full of romance. A world that remained

only in his memories of exiled, and in the hearts of those who were now forced to face the new realities of Hungary.

Benefiting from an extensive archival and bibliographic documentation (to which an extremely attractive writing style is added) the author of this biography-fresco, finally manages to present us the complex portrait of a character, whom the current Hungarian political regime is trying to recover in a nationalist-propagandistic sense, often unjustified. Catherine Horel draws attention to the fact that the Hungarians themselves should learn to rethink Horthy, excluding any cliché. In any case, for the Transylvanian Romanians (in particular) the image of Horthy can only be received in predominantly negative tones, an absolutely justified perception, both from a historical and psychological point of view.

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