

**TAMÁS LÁSZLÓ VIZI, A SÉRELMI POLITIZÁLÁSTÓL A NEMZETI ÖSSZETARTOZÁSIG – TRIANON, REVÍZIÓ, HATÁRKÉRDÉS, NEMZETEGYESÍTÉS 1920–2010 [FROM OFFENCE POLITICS TOWARDS THE NATIONAL UNITY – TRIANON, REVISION, BORDER QUESTIONS, NATION-UNIFICATION, 1920–2010], BUDAPEST: CEPOLITI 2016, ISBN 9789638967442, 303 P.**



Professor Tamás László Vizi attempted (and succeeded) in formulating an objective and historically coherent work, concerning one of the most crucial issues of the tormented Hungarian 20<sup>th</sup> century history: the issue regarding the Hungarian response to its national tragedy, the treaty of Trianon (1920), which resulted in the loss 67% of its territory and 58% of its population. The author profoundly examines all the political solutions that Hungary gave between 1920 and 2010. The book is divided into five main chapters, which are the following: Chapter I: Trianon and the crisis management between the two World Wars; Chapter II: Paris and the repetition of Trianon; Chapter III: The silence of the dictatorships (1948–1988); Chapter IV: The advocacy of the national interest after the regime change (1989–2009); Chapter V: The national inheritance law for the unification of the nation (2010).

The author indulged himself into a highly complicated and controversial topic. During the communist regime, even talking about this issue was a criminal offence, while today the topic is still highly politicized and controversial. Hopefully, works like this one will channel this issue into the proper historical and scientific context. The author remains historically objective, giving the reader a clear and historically accurate picture regarding every era which followed the Trianon treaty of 1920.

Chapter I initiates with the Hungarian delegation arriving in Paris, right after the political turmoil that engulfed Hungary in 1919. Count Apponyi, who directed the Hungarian delegation, asked the Allies to implement the peace plans originally envisioned by US President Wilson. These plans called for a fair peace treaty and national borders coinciding with the ethnic borders. In this case Hungary would have obtained slightly corrected borders, better reflecting the ethnic distribution of the Hungarian people according to the situation of the year 1920. Sadly, the proposals of Count Apponyi were not taken into consideration.

The first chapter also contains Lord Rothermere's plan of 1927 for territorial revision. The British magnate, who openly criticized the abolition of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, declared in his newspapers that this event only caused further tensions in the region. He openly supported the restitution of certain lands to Hungary, where the Hungarians constituted the ethnic majority. Simultaneously, the author also presents the several plans proposed by the Hungarian irredentist groups, which were not the official Hungarian government opinion, as the "semi-official" opinion of the interwar Hungarian governments were basically a return to the 1918 status of the Hungarian Kingdom (so called "integral revision").

The book details the Hungarian territorial gains between 1938 and 1939, which were secured by Germany and Italy but weren't guaranteed by Great Britain and France (Allies). The political position of the Allied powers predicted the uncertain long-term sustainability of such territorial gains. The previously illustrated problems were absolutely obvious during the 1940 and 1941 territorial expansions of Hungary. The regions which were returned or recaptured by Hungary (Northern Transylvania



and Vojvodina respectively) were not recognized by the Allied powers, as they were at war with the Axis powers. Consequently, the long-term sustainability of these territorial gains was absolutely unrealistic. Above all, after the Hungarian territorial gains of 1941 (during which Hungarian troops occupied Vojvodina from the already disintegrating Yugoslavia), Great Britain terminated its diplomatic relationship with Hungary.

The author continues with Chapter II, in which he details the events that occurred after 1945. He details how Hungary (as a defeated ally of Germany) lost all territorial gains it managed to achieve between 1938 and 1941. In the same chapter the author illustrates the various plans the major powers (USA, Great Britain and USSR) had in mind for the post-war Hungarian state borders. It is interesting that the only major power that supported ethnically just borders for Hungary was the United States. This American approach mainly derived from the strong support of human rights, which included minority rights as well. The United States still maintained its position during the Paris peace treaty negotiations, but ultimately the Soviet — British version was adopted during the Paris Treaty, which reinstated Hungary behind the borders it had on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1937. Simultaneously, the author details the events of the 1946 peace treaty negotiations, and the plans and proposals of the Hungarian delegation. Needless to say, the possibilities for political maneuvers were fewer than in 1920.

In Chapter III, the author illustrates the political period between 1948 and 1988, so the period of the communist dictatorship. The Hungarian communist regime didn't recognize the problems of the Hungarian minorities in the nearby states, as according to the communist ideology, the "socialist internationalism" will resolve all ethnic problems. However, the result was that the Hungarian ethnic minorities were oppressed even more brutally compared to the 1920's and 1930's. The ideological stance of the Hungarian communist regime was the following: "*What we don't talk about, it doesn't exist*". This discipline was strictly controlled by the USSR. Even debating about the 1920 Trianon treaty was forbidden.

The author depicts the changes that initiated in the 1970's, when the Hungarian communist regime started to "soften". This situation was mostly triggered by the 1975 Helsinki Accords, which forced the communist states to respect human rights. Although the ethnic minority rights were not guaranteed, still this gave enough strength to opposition groups to demand greater recognition of the sufferings of the Hungarian minorities living in the neighboring communist states, especially Czechoslovakia and Romania. The situation gradually improved from the 1970's onwards in Hungary, but in the other communist states (especially Romania), the conditions were extremely negative until 1989.

In the last two chapters (Chapter IV. and V.), the author continues with the in-depth analyses of the post-1989 political situation, depicting in an objective way the different approaches of the conservative and socialist-liberal governments. While the conservatives advocated greater political and moral support for the Hungarian ethnic minorities living in the neighboring states, the socialist-liberals advocated for a greater European integration, which according to their opinion, would have ended ethnic tensions in the region. The author also illustrates the situation before and after the European integration, which occurred in 2004. In the closing part of his book, the author details the Hungarian government's historic decision taken in 2010, which

gave the opportunity to regain the Hungarian citizenship for those Hungarian people, whose ancestors lost their citizenship status after 1918, because of the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (and the disestablishment of the Hungarian Kingdom). This historical decision hopefully will settle the painful memory of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which tore apart the Hungarian people. After 90 years, without the use of weapons or war, the Hungarian nation was peacefully re-unified.

**Péter Illik**

