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Anton Czettler. *Pal Graf Teleki und die AuÖŸenpolitik Ungarns 1939-1941.* MÖ¼nchen: Verlag Ungarisches Institut, 1996. 276 pp. DM 65,- (cloth), ISBN 978-3-9803045-9-7.

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Modern Hungarian Hagiography

Pal Teleki is one of the enigmatic and historiographically disputed personalities of contemporary Hungarian history. Involved in conservative politics from the beginning of the century, he became a member of the Imredy government in 1938 and subsequently prime minister in February 1939 until his death in April 1941. Czettler, known for other studies on diplomatic history, intends to judge Teleki's foreign policy from an objective viewpoint, although he admits at the very beginning his subjectivity due to personal relations with the main character of his study (pp. 9-10). Already in the preface he takes an extremely critical position regarding the Treaty of Trianon of 1920 and its consequences for Hungary.

The dominant idea of Hungarian foreign policy after 1920 was the openly demanded revision of "Trianon." Teleki's aim was to peacefully acquire at least those former Hungarian territories where ethnic Hungarians constituted the demographic majority, without exposing his country to the influence and mercy of Hitler's Germany. Czettler analyses this political tightrope walk in detail, taking into account especially the relations between Budapest on the one hand and Berlin and Rome on the other. He strengthens the image of Teleki as a politician who foresaw the fate of the fascist regimes of the Axis and wanted to save Hungarian independence and neutrality in the contemporary system of alliances. Teleki became dissatisfied with the puppet role Hungary played in the Vienna Diktat in August 1940, arbitrated by Germany and Italy. Later, when the army and Horthy, the regent to whom Teleki was close, drifted to the side of the Axis in the spring of 1941 expecting additional territorial gains, the prime minister realized the failure of his policy. His sense of honor did not permit anything else but suicide.

Czettler's study must be welcomed since it enlarges the limited literature on this period that has appeared in a western language. Unfortunately, it reveals from the start an obviously pro-Hungarian, apologetic tone regarding the revisionist policy and everything Teleki and his government did. Furthermore, one may ask why all available sources concerning Hungarian diplomatic activities are treated at length, while the other side is not much more than summarized. See, for example, one of this book's central problems: the Second Vienna Diktat that led to the partition of Transylvania and the acquisition of a considerable part of the former territory of Romania by Hungary. I could not find a single citation of a scholarly publication on this problem from the Romanian side, although dozens have appeared since 1990. Consequently only minimal credit is given to Romanian contemporary views, although Romania's cession of territory turned out to by crucial for her immediate political future. Instead, we learn that the British government did an injustice with its restrained response to the Vienna Diktat, that the Hungarian public's satisfaction was well founded, that "Hungarian Christian traditions" ("ungarische christliche Ueberlieferungen," [p. 125] yet there is no explanation of this expression) enabled the country's elite to correctly judge the future victor, and–Czettler summarizes–that the result of the partition of Transylvania was just in terms of demography, ethnography, and international law (p. 126).

Remarkable is the strong concentration on diplomatic matters, thus avoiding mention of questionable aspects of Teleki's biography: his involvement in the counterrevolution in 1919/1920, his relation to the White Terror, or the anti-Semitic measures of the governments to which he belonged. This book is in any case an interesting historiographical example of unnecessarily cultivating and emphasizing the striving for national independence and martyrdom of a nation's representative. Teleki's story is well known; this study is based on published documents and secondary literature only, and no archival material is mentioned.

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