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THE ROMANIAN HISTORIAN, ACCORDING TO WHOM TRIANON WAS UNJUST

Lucian Boia is today the most prestigious historian not only in Romania, but perhaps in all of Europe. In his newest book, in one swoop, he contradicts the false myths of his own homeland, the dictated bygone attitudes of the victors of the two world wars, and generally everything that we presently consider history. And he does this in an expert, flawless, well-written and readable style.

It is not the first time that this historian from Bucharest has scandalized the Romanian book-reading public, raised on the traditional nationalistic mythology. Two of his other books that caused an uproar: „*Történelem és mítosz a román köztudatban*” (*History and myth in Romanian common knowledge*) and „*Miért más Románia?*” (*Why is Romania different?*), have been translated into Hungarian. Thanks to the Cser Publishers, in his most recent book: “*Vesztesek és győztesek*” (*Losers and victors*), he swings his axe into an even greater undertaking: to turn the entire history of twentieth century Europe upside-down. Including that of Hungary and Romania.

The previous century began on the calendar in 1900, but it actually began in 1914, with the bullets in Sarajevo, which not only assassinated Franz-Ferdinand and his wife, but also many millions of people – and all that which was important to Europe for hundreds of years. Boia grasps the end of the work, feeling rightly that he must first of all set things right in people’s heads concerning the first world conflagration.

Who knew what?

His basic thesis is that, contrary to general belief, the World War was not unavoidable, and could not have broken out just because Berlin and Vienna decided so. For this, the will of the other side would have been necessary. Everyone was responsible, although not all to the same extent. According to Boia, two states were most anxious to light the fuses of the gunpowder in the barrels of the Europeans: Germany and Russia. Yes, Russia, about whom the writer notes that they were very lucky that they got out in time, before being brought before the judgment seat of History. Because in 1918, the war ended without them (moreover, they started out on the side of the victors) and their role in 1914 has become blurred in the mists of time. And, since that time, this mist has never dispersed. Although, according to Boia:

“The Empire of the Czar was not a small, innocent little state. On the contrary: the largest and one of the most rapacious empires, known to modern history.”

He condemns the German historians because, after 1945, not only did they voluntarily accept the responsibility for the outbreak of World War II, but also for that of World War I. I am the only one who notes that such an amateur opinion can only be held of the crimes of the Hitler era, that such a permanent remorse can only be generally accepted in an oppressive, sick atmosphere.

According to Boia, it is a fact that Berlin was one of the main initiators of the war, and he sees no reason to condemn Berlin for that. On the basis of what the German leadership knew about the world, one hundred years ago, this war had to be waged, as soon as possible. Because – and here is the most important thought in the book! – the decisions of the participants in the past should not be judged from the standpoint of the knowledge we possess today, but on the information that was available to them at that time. In Berlin, in the summer of 1914, it appeared that the war would be short, and even “a good game”. And they had every reason to go to war. They had no idea that this “game” would be very bloody, and its aftermath would last for decades.

Not only the Romanians had the right...

Conversely, but just as remarkable was Romania’s entrance into the war. Boia lists all the things that the leadership in Bucharest had to take into account – and on the basis of this he concludes that it was madness to attack the Monarchy. In the short run, the Romanians fell on their faces, the Hungarian foot-soldiers were

walking around in Bucharest --, and in the end History has been merciful toward them. Not only did they manage to annex Transylvania, the Partium and part of the Bánság, but when Russia collapsed and the Bolsheviks took over, they used the opportunity to take Bessarabia too. Even in the summer of 1918, nobody in the world would dare to admit this. Even so, it did happen and thus Ionel Bratianu, who stupidly took his country totally unprepared into war, is today considered to be one of the greatest Romanian statesmen.

And now comes the part that obviously interests us, Hungarians, the most. According to Boia, the Dictated Peace of Trianon was not just a huge stroke of luck for Romania, but it was a huge injustice for Hungary, especially for the Transylvanians. It takes not just a little courage for a Romanian historian to stroll into the rose-garden of the myth of the December 1, 1918, Great National Assembly of Gyulafehérvár, which has been elevated to a national holiday, and has been carefully preserved for more than ninety years. Boia does just that:

“The conditions of the Declaration, which took place without the will of the people, were not the best: the Romanian army had just occupied Transylvania. What is really conspicuous is that (...) the Assembly at Gyulafehérvár could not take the place of a referendum. For of course not only the Romanians had the right to decide on the future of Transylvania, but also the entire population of the region. About half of the people living there were not asked if they wanted to live in Romania.”

Then he piles it on. Boia believes that if the people of Transylvania had been allowed to decide whether they wanted to assimilate into Romania, or whether they wanted autonomy, the majority of the Romanians living there would have voted for self-determination. The huge national unity is also a false myth. The Transylvanian Romanians believed that:

“in contrast to the Bucharest of the Balkans, they represented Central Europe within the Romanian nation. They felt that they were more civilized, that they accomplished more in every area than the Romanians of the Regat (the old kingdom of Romania). (...) In the Regat, only the elite turned toward the West, whereas, in Transylvania, the spirit of the western culture had taken root more deeply and thoroughly.”

Boia reflects in length about how the majority of the Transylvanian Romanians had longed for the “liberation” of Bucharest, under the “thousand-year Hungarian oppression”, as the majority of the Romanian historians state, even today. Finally, he drops the atom bomb on the chauvinistic national myth:

“In Romania which barely existed, the Transylvanian Romanians, given the choice between a confederation of equal national minorities and the Hapsburg Monarchy, would have chosen the latter. (...) Only this choice could not take place for, at the end of the war, the only alternative was to unite with Romania.”

Obviously we cannot expect Lucian Boia, or any other Romanian, to curse Trianon and to say a mea culpa for the atrocities of the past century, and offer to return Transylvania to us. This would be an unconvincing, weak gesture. But sometime in the future such brave thoughts might pave the way for a more normal Carpathian Basin.

Lucian Boia: Vesztesek és győztesek

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http://alfahir.hu/a_roman_tortenesz_aki_szerint_trianon_nem_volt_igazsagos