



The Problem of Transylvania in the Emigration Correspondence of Count Béla Teleki from the End of the Second World War to the Abolition of the Communist Regime¹

János Kristóf MURÁDIN

PhD, Associate Professor, Head of Department

Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania (Cluj-Napoca, Romania)

Department of International Relations and European Studies

e-mail: muradinjanos@sapientia.ro

Abstract. The aim of this study is to analyse the voluminous emigration correspondence of Count Béla Teleki in order to highlight his main thoughts about the future of Transylvania. Béla Teleki was one of the most important Transylvanian politicians in the middle of the 20th century. His political career reached its peak at the time when Northern Transylvania was regained by Hungary after the Second Vienna Award. At the end of the Second World War, Teleki was persecuted by the Secret Police of the new Hungarian Communist Regime. Starting from 1951, he lived in the United States until his death on 7 February 1990. During the decades of his life in emigration, he carried on a great correspondence with the leading personalities of the Hungarian emigration in the West, several members of the American Senate, and even with President Gerald Ford. In this way, Béla Teleki became one of the central personalities of the Hungarian emigration in the Western World. His opinion, his voice were determining. This study summarizes the most important theme Béla Teleki was preoccupied with, the future of Transylvania, as he imagined it, by making a short analysis of his correspondence consisting of thousands of letters.

Keywords: Transylvania, border, minorities, human rights, emigration, correspondence

¹ This paper was presented at the conference *Past, Present and Future of Central Europe*, organized by Budapest Business School and Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania in Cluj-Napoca on 20 November 2020 (online conference).

Introduction

The issue of Transylvania's belonging to one state or the other has already been at the forefront of Hungarian–Romanian relationships since the conclusion of the Trianon Treaty, but especially after the considerable frontier modifications operated as a result of the Second World War. During the last one hundred years, several scenarios have been elaborated for the future of this ethnically mixed region of the size of a country: it should belong to the Romanian state but receive wide self-determination rights; it should be brought back under Hungarian administration; it should be a region divided by several internal borders between Hungary and Romania; it should form an independent, sovereign state based on a federal structure, relying on the local autonomy of different ethnic groups, etc. So much has been said about this topic that at first glance it might seem that nothing new could be said about it.

However, the voluminous emigration correspondence of Count Béla Teleki reveals several interesting ideas to the researcher, new important elements reflecting the real situation of Transylvania, much of which I had the opportunity to study in Budapest, at the Manuscripts Archives of the National Széchényi Library before the COVID-19 pandemic. Feasible solutions arising from a real knowledge of the political, economic, and demographic situation are outlined in Béla Teleki's letters concerning Transylvania's future. During the 43 years of his life in emigration, there was an extensive exchange of correspondence between Béla Teleki, a Transylvanian aristocrat politician, and a number of leading personalities of the age. During the decades spent in Austria and then in the USA, Béla Teleki had gradually become one of the central figures and leaders of Hungarian emigration in the West. His opinion, his voice had gained significant importance regarding topics that most preoccupied both him and his environment. Among these, Transylvania and the future of Hungarians in Transylvania undoubtedly ranked first.

In this study, I attempt to summarize and present Count Béla Teleki's views on possible pathways for Transylvania's future and his ensuing plans, as he conceived them, drawing on his vast written legacy consisting of several thousands of letters.

Béla Teleki's Life and Public Activity up to 1944

Before turning to the analysis of his correspondence, I shall first present Béla Teleki himself. I came across his name approximately ten years ago, when I started to research the history of the dominant Hungarian political formation in Northern Transylvania between 1940 and 1944, i.e. the Transylvanian Party. This exploratory work resulted in an independent monograph on the topic (Murádin 2019). As President of the Transylvanian Party, Béla Teleki was one of the best-known politicians of his age. His appearance on the Hungarian political scene of

Transylvania was sudden and unexpected. Then, following a short period of glory (4 years), he disappeared just as suddenly after the regime change in 1944.

Count Béla Teleki of Szék was born in Kolozsvár (Cluj) on 16 May 1899 (Tibori Szabó 1993: 5–6). He was a true aristocrat coming from one of the most prominent families of the Hungarian nobility in Transylvania, the Szék branch of the very numerous Teleki family. He considered himself primarily a farming landlord, with his political self coming only in second place.² Yet, he was primarily appreciated for his political activity. The State Protection Authority's (*Államvédelmi Hatóság*, or ÁVH) report of 4 May 1956, in which a secret agent of the Hungarian secret police characterizes him as follows: 'a very talented, slightly aggressive politician. He is cultivated, speaks several languages, is broad-minded',³ and is very illustrative in this sense.

It can be stated that the personality of Count Béla Teleki was greatly influenced by his family background, which shaped his view of the world and, within it, his attitude towards the Hungarians of Transylvania. He still belonged to the generation of aristocrats and politicians fundamentally driven by public service in its noblest sense. In this respect, his maternal grandfather, Baron Miklós Wesselényi (the younger), the 'flood sailor',⁴ who saved many lives during the Great Flood of Pest in 1838, and his paternal uncle, Prime Minister Count Pál Teleki, who had a tragic fate, could have been his role models.⁵ Participation in public life and in society were not unfamiliar to his father, Count Artúr Teleki either. As lay Chief Curator of the Reformed Diocese of Transylvania, Vice-President of the National Hungarian Party (Sebestyén 2011: 455), and then president of the territorial organizations of the Transylvanian Party of Maros-Torda (Mureş-Turda) County and Marosvásárhely (Târgu-Mureş),⁶ he tried to act for the benefit of Hungarians at the level of both ecclesiastical and political institutions.

2 *Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára* (Historical Archives of the State Security Services, or ÁSZTL). 3.2.3. Mt-578/1. Munka Dosszié Galambos Edit. 49. Galambos Edit jelentése Teleki Béláról (Edit Galambos Work File. 49. Edit Galambos's Report on Béla Teleki). Budapest, 18 April 1957 ['Galambos Report on Béla Teleki'].

3 ÁBTL. 3.2.5. O-8-001/1. Objektum Dosszié. „Farkasok” Magyar Nemzeti Bizottmány. 37. Dunai Lajos feljegyzése Teleki Béláról (Object File. 'Wolves' Hungarian National Council. 37. Lajos Dunai's Note on Béla Teleki), Budapest, 4 May 1956 ['Dunai Note on Béla Teleki']. The quotation was translated by the author.

4 Ibidem.

5 Országos Széchényi Könyvtár (National Széchényi Library, or OSZK). Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 2. doboz. 125. pallium. 1. l. Teleki Béla levele az *Életünk* című folyóirat szerkesztőjének, Pete Györgynek (Manuscripts Archive, Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 2. Pallium 125. 1. l. Béla Teleki's Letter to György Pete, the Editor of the Periodical *Életünk*). New York, 10 October 1979.

6 Count Artúr Teleki was elected with great enthusiasm as President of the Transylvanian Party in Marosvásárhely. *Kolozsvári Estilap* 24 October 1941: IX.241:3.

Through her mother, Baroness Ilona Wesselényi,⁷ Béla Teleki was the heir of the famous Wesselényi castle in Zsibó (Jibou). But he did not spend most of his childhood in this huge castle from the Szilágyság region (Sălaj) but partly on his father's estate in Tancs (Tonciu) and in the other family castle near Marosvásárhely and partly in his birth town, Kolozsvár, in the Teleki Palace.⁸ His youth was marked by World War I, which also forced him to suspend his legal studies began at Ferenc József University in 1917, because due to his origins he was expected to volunteer for military service. He served in the war, holding the rank of ensign for more than a year, between 1917 and 1918, as officer of the 7th k.u.k. Hussar Regiment (Botlik 2020: 517). After the collapse caused by World War I, he settled in Zsibó, and meanwhile, between 1920 and 1922, he earned a doctoral degree in agricultural sciences at the University of Debrecen.⁹ At that time, farming was still his aspiration, and he devoted all his time to it. He created a model farm in Zsibó, achieving considerable success particularly in the field of livestock farming and seed production. He had four children from his marriage with Anna Benz, celebrated in 1930: Miklós (1931), Éva (1933), Ilona (1937), and Pál (1942) (Teleki 1995: 4, 174).

By the 1930s, Béla Teleki had become one of the most prestigious farming specialists in Transylvania, eloquently illustrated by his election, together with Dr Pál Szász, as Vice Chair of the Transylvanian Hungarian Economic Association (*Erdélyi Magyar Gazdasági Egyesület*, or EMGE) in 1936 (Demeter–Venczel 1940: 20). As a result of the Second Vienna Award of 30 August 1940, similarly to Transylvania, which was divided between Hungary and Romania, the EMGE was also divided into two. Béla Teleki became President of the Northern Transylvanian EMGE functioning under the authority of the Hungarian state (Fülöp–Vincze 1998: 131). With the financial support of the Hungarian state, he started his significant organizational work, initiated the establishment of the farmers' clubs, started successful farming courses, and held major events related to seeds and animals, all of the above having contributed to the consolidation of his reputation in political circles as well (Tibori Szabó 1993: 24). He became a Member of Parliament selected from Transylvania in October 1940, and one month later, on 12 November 1940, he became one of the vice-presidents of the Northern Transylvanian independent parliamentary group.¹⁰ From there, the way was paved to his election as President of the Transylvanian Party formed in December 1940 by members of this independent group. He held this function starting from the constituent assembly of the Party,

7 ÁBTL. 3.2.3. Mt-578/1. Munka Dosszié Galambos Edit. 17. Galambos Edit jelentése a Teleki családról (Edit Galambos Work File. 17. Edit Galambos's Report on the Teleki Family). Budapest, 13 March 1958.

8 ÁBTL. Galambos Report on Béla Teleki.

9 ÁBTL. Galambos Report on Béla Teleki.

10 The Transylvanian members of the Parliament formed an independent parliamentary group. *Ellenzék* 1940, 61/261 (14 November), 5.

organized on 28 May 1941, until 24 August 1941, when this political formation ceased to exist (Murádin 2019: 53–241).

Béla Teleki was one of the most active Transylvanian members of the Hungarian Parliament. During his nearly four-year mandate, he held 8 speeches in the Hungarian Parliament although his work was seriously impeded by the temporary cessation of parliamentary sessions from 4 May to 21 October 1943 (Pritz 2011: 127) and then, by 1944, by an increasing loss of political power of the Parliament in the Hungarian political life. As president of the Party, he was the one to announce in the parliament the formation of the Transylvanian Party on 17 June 1941 and to present the programme of the Party.¹¹ Then, on 28 November 1941, after the start of the military campaign against the Soviet Union, he presented the external and internal political position of the Transylvanian Party in this radically changed situation.¹² Among Teleki's most important speeches, it is worthwhile to mention his interpellation of 3 December 1941 addressed to the Minister of Economy and Transport, in which he requested the acceleration of construction works of the Szeretfalva–Déda (Sărățel–Deda) connecting railway, of key importance for access to Szeklerland,¹³ as well as his speech given on 15 March 1942, in which he summed up the most important external and internal political guidelines of the Transylvanian Party after the Kállay government had taken office.¹⁴ His speech given on 25 November 1942, in which he presented the expectations of Hungarians in Northern Transylvania, drawing attention to the situation of the Hungarian minority in Southern Transylvania and at the same time to the need for a solution to the nationality problem in Northern Transylvania, was also a resounding success.¹⁵ Béla Teleki's parliamentary speech given one year later, on 30 November 1943, in which he already speaks about post-war Hungary, urging comprehensive reforms at the political, administrative, and economic level, also detailing his later highly proclaimed view of the common destiny of peoples living in the Danube Basin, demonstrates his farsightedness and strategic thinking.¹⁶ Furthermore, in his other parliamentary speeches, he also addressed the question of relationships with Romania, the need for social reforms, and certainly the question of economic development opportunities so dear to him.

His important political activity did not stop him from performing his duties undertaken as a business leader. He remained committed to his duties as the President of EMGE. He participated in farmer's days and village house inaugurations, held

11 *Erdély a magyar Képviselőházban* (Transylvania in the Hungarian House of Representatives). Kolozsvár: Az Erdélyi Párt kiadása. Minerva Nyomda Rt. 1942: 5–9.

12 Idem: 10–22.

13 Idem: 59–60.

14 *Erdély a magyar Képviselőházban II* (Transylvania in the Hungarian House of Representatives II). Kolozsvár: Az Erdélyi Párt kiadása. Lengyel Albert Könyvnyomdája. 1943: 5–11.

15 Idem: 12–33.

16 *Erdély a magyar Országgyűlésen III* (Transylvania at the Hungarian National Assembly III). Kolozsvár: Az Erdélyi Párt kiadása. Minerva Nyomda Rt. 1944: 7–29.

presentations at farmer's clubs, and managed his model farm in Zsibó. Meanwhile, he became better known as a politician and agrarian specialist, gradually turning into an important public figure.

Within a short time, however, the German invasion of Hungary on 19 March 1944 caused a major disruption in his career. After that, Béla Teleki gave up his parliamentary activity because, on the one hand, he did not see the meaning of it in a country that had lost its sovereignty, and, on the other hand, he did not want to assume a political role in this new regime that was servile to the Germans. A few months later, in June 1944, he was offered the position of Minister of Transylvanian Affairs, without portfolio,¹⁷ but he refused it (Szász 2012: 102). After a short hesitation, he joined the left wing of the Transylvanian Party organized around Imre Mikó and Sándor Vita, and he tried to establish relationships with leftist intellectuals from Northern Transylvania (Balogh 1992: 110). Following Romania's changing sides on 23 August 1944, his main goal was for Hungary to withdraw from the war, and thereby he hoped that the re-annexation of Northern Transylvania would persist. After the cessation of the Transylvanian Party, he took part in the Transylvanian Hungarian Council (*Erdélyi Magyar Tanács*) established on 29 August 1944 by leftist leading personalities, church leaders, writers, trade union leaders, and Hungarian intellectuals from different fields – he presided until 9 October (Szász 2012: 102). As one of Transylvania's most important opinion leader politicians, he participated at the Budapest Crown Council of 10 September 1944, where he argued for withdrawing from the war (Balogh 1992: 110). He contributed to the elaboration of the memorandum of 12 September addressed to Horthy, in which the regent was requested to give up the military defence of Transylvania. He attained the military evacuation of Kolozsvár without any fight, and thereby he protected the capital of Northern Transylvania from meaningless destruction (Filep 2008: 161).

Béla Teleki's Persecution and Emigration in 1944–1945

A few days before the Soviet and Romanian troops entered Cluj, on 9 October 1944, Béla Teleki and his three colleagues – István Szász, EMGE director, central cashier of the Transylvanian Party and one of the vice-presidents of the Cluj County party organization; Sándor Vita, Member of the Parliament; his personal assistant, Béla Demeter – had been admitted to the Department of Internal Medicine managed by Professor Dr Imre Haynal of the Cluj university hospital (Gróf Bethlen 2019:

17 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár. Országos Levéltár (Hungarian National Archives. State Archives). P 2256. No. 117. *Teleki Béla iratai 1942–1944*. 1. csomó. 267. tétel. Dr. Páll György központi főtitkár jelentése Teleki Béla pártelnöknek (*Béla Teleki's Documents 1942–1944*. Bundle 1. Item 267. The Report of Secretary-General Dr György Páll to Party Leader Béla Teleki). Kolozsvár, 7 June 1944. 2.

244). Shortly after the entry of the Soviet and Romanian troops, on 17 October, all four were forcibly taken away based on anonymous denunciations. As the front line moved forward to the West, they were moved along, either on open trucks or on foot. This is how they reached Debrecen and then, two weeks later, Budapest through Tiszalök, Salgótarján, and Dunapentele,¹⁸ where they were incarcerated in the Markó Street Prison. There, István Szász and Béla Demeter were set free, but Béla Teleki and Sándor Vita were taken to the Esterházy Castle in Bernolákovo (Cseklész), near Bratislava (Pozsony), in February 1945.¹⁹

Meanwhile, with the intermediation of Bishop of the Reformed Diocese János Vársárhelyi, Teleki's family turned to Edgár Balogh, prominent leftist Transylvanian publicist, to seek their liberation. Balogh wrote a letter to Marshal Rodion Yakovlevich Malinovsky, military commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Front that occupied Cluj, in which he described Béla Teleki's role in the resistance. This letter was signed by several prominent leftist leaders, but Communist party members refused to sign it (Balogh 1978: 362). It is now impossible to establish whether to the effect of this letter or – as once again later – due to the impossibility to press charges, but Count Béla Teleki was released in Bratislava by the Soviets on 25 April 1945. However, he could hardly enjoy his freedom as he was arrested again, on the same day, by the new Hungarian secret police, the Political Police Department (later renamed State Protection Authority).²⁰ First, he was taken together with Sándor Vita to Budapest, to 60 Andrássy Avenue, the interrogation centre of the political police, then they were transported to the collecting prison on Fő Street, and then to the Markó Street Prison. Here Béla Teleki was found ill, wherefore he was taken to a separate ward within Rókus Hospital. There, his relatives could talk with him under police surveillance, in exchange for certain gifts. Finally, at the end of October 1945, he was handed over again to the Soviets, who placed him into custody in one of the villas on Városligeti Fásor. After two or three weeks, in lack of concrete charges, he was set free by the Soviets together with Sándor Vita (Tibori Szabó 1993: 28–29).

Then, for a short period of time, Béla Teleki stayed at his cousin's place, Géza Teleki, in Budapest. Meanwhile, in Romania, based on accusations made by nationalist elements, Béla Teleki was sentenced to 20 years in prison in absentia.²¹ Therefore, he could not return home. Not so much later, this important politician of the Horthy era was also sentenced to life in prison in Hungary. In the following

18 Stalingrad between 1951 and 1961, today Dunaújváros.

19 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 2. doboz. 154. pallium. Teleki Béla 1965 és 1987 között írott levelei Gosztonyi Péternek (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 2. Pallium 154. Béla Teleki's Letters Written to Péter Gosztonyi between 1965 and 1987).

20 ÁBTL 3.1.9. V-63925. Vizsgálati dosszié gr. Teleki Béla és tsa. ügyében. 3. Őrizetbevételi utasítás (Investigation File in the Case of Count Béla Teleki and Others. 3. Arrest Order). 25 April 1945.

21 ÁBTL. 2.2.1. I/5.8. Operatív nyilvántartás. Teleki Béla (Operative Records. Béla Teleki). Budapest, 16 July 1965.

two years, between 1945 and 1947, he was forced to hide in rural Hungary. First, he lived under extremely difficult circumstances in Rácalmás in Fejér County and then in Bodrogkisfalud in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County until October 1947, when he finally managed to flee to Austria.²² He temporarily settled in Innsbruck, and then in June 1951 he left for the United States of America.²³ He found a new home in New York, where he first worked as a real estate agent and then as manager of an independent real estate office for a long time.²⁴

Béla Teleki, Leading Personality of the Western Hungarian Emigration

Upon his arrival to Austria, Béla Teleki immediately joined the political life of the 1945 Western European, conservative Hungarian emigration embracing right-wing values. After the death on 3 March 1948 of Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer, renowned leader of the Hungarian emigration and former Minister of Internal Affairs, his role was mainly assumed by Béla Teleki, who became one of the key political actors of the Hungarian emigration from the West.²⁵ The then established conservative Hungarian Union movement strived to bring together Hungarians living in Western Europe around traditional civil and Christian values.²⁶ The voice of his movement, the emigration paper entitled *Union* started in June 1950,²⁷ was also devoted to this aim.²⁸

Teleki had already participated in the Hungarian National Council (*Magyar Nemzeti Bizottmány, or HNC*) since its establishment in 1949. The principles of the HNC, which propagated the unity of the Hungarian nation, excluding both right-wing and left-wing extremists and opposing the Communist regime in Hungary

22 ÁBTL. Galambos Report on Béla Teleki.

23 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1. doboz. 13. pallium. 1. l. Teleki Béla levele Bánffy Vicának (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 1. Pallium 13. 1. l. Béla Teleki's Letter to Vica Bánffy). New York, 9 May 1986.

24 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1. doboz. 69. pallium. 16. l. Teleki Béla levele Bonczos Miklósnak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 1. Pallium 69. 16. l. Béla Teleki's Letter to Miklós Bonczos). New York, 9 February 1971.

25 ÁBTL. Galambos Report on Béla Teleki.

26 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1. doboz. 39. pallium. 1. l. Teleki Béla levele Baranyai Lipótnak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 1. Pallium 39. 1. l. Béla Teleki's Letter to Lipót Baranyai). Rum (Austria), 30 April 1949.

27 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 2. doboz. 127. pallium. 1. l. Teleki Béla levele Falcione Árpádnak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 2. Pallium 127. 1. l. Béla Teleki's Letter to Árpád Falcione). Fribourg (Switzerland), 5 August 1950.

28 ÁBTL. 3.2.3. Mt-655/11. Munka Dosszié Dunai Lajos. A magyar emigráció általános helyzete Ausztriában és Nyugat-Németországban. Dunai Lajos összefoglaló jelentése (Lajos Dunai Work File. The General Situation of the Hungarian Emigration in Austria and West Germany. Lajos Dunai's Summary Report). 181–182.

– considering itself as some sort of Hungarian emigration government –, resonated with Béla Teleki's fundamentally national Christian political views in many respects. Through his active involvement in the HNC, he developed closer relationships with its leaders, Béla Varga, György Bakách-Besseney, Aladár Szegedy-Maszák, and especially Tibor Eckhardt, whom he highly esteemed.²⁹ He worked with the latter for years, also holding the position of Vice-President of the Defence Commission within the HNC beside him.³⁰

From the same year already, beginning with 1949, Béla Teleki also became involved in the activity of the International Refugee Organization (IRO) as well, which was the predecessor of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). As Head of the IRO headquarters in Switzerland,³¹ he went to great lengths to ensure that the Hungarian refugees receive migration aid, and he was also instrumental in ensuring that the IRO would advance the travel expenses of those who wanted to settle on the American continent. Thus, he made it possible for many fellow sufferers to emigrate to the USA, and later, in 1951, his own emigration became possible in this way.

Count Béla Teleki, former national President of the Transylvanian Party and politician of the Horthy regime sentenced to life in prison in Hungary and to death in Romania, could not return home, but in spirit he had never been uprooted from Transylvania. Nothing illustrates this better than the establishment of the American Transylvanian Federation³² – whose president and board member he remained until his death in 1990 at the age of 90 – one year upon his arrival to New York, in 1952, when he was in serious financial distress (Várdy 2000: 541). Furthermore, he was editor of the periodical entitled *Transsylvania*, published in the USA on a quarterly basis for three decades, from 1959 to his death, in which he sought to inform the American public opinion about the current situation in Transylvania and the main issues related to it (Tibori Szabó 1993: 7).

Béla Teleki, who learnt English gradually and only started to realize an income starting from 1953, had the Transylvanian problem and the efforts to bring together the Hungarian emigration from the West at heart.³³ Therefore, he co-founded

29 In this respect, see Béla Teleki's eight letters written to Tibor Eckhardt between May 1950 and January 1951. OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 2. doboz. 115. pallium (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 2. Pallium 115).

30 ÁBTL. 3.2.5. O-8-001/1. Objektum Dosszié. „Farkasok” Magyar Nemzeti Bizottmány. A Magyar Nemzeti Bizottmány Elnökétől. Varga Béla körlevele (Object File. 'Wolves' Hungarian National Council. From the Chairman of the Hungarian National Council. Béla Varga's Circular Letter). New York, 21 July 1948.

31 ÁBTL. Galambos Report on Béla Teleki.

32 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1. doboz. 73. pallium. 2. l. Teleki Béla levele Botár Istvánnak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's legacy. Box 1. Pallium 73. 2. l. Béla Teleki's Letter to István Botár). New York, 16 January 1976.

33 The interview of the author with Pál Teleki, Béla Teleki's son. Budapest. 7 October 2019. Property of the author. ['Pál Teleki Interview'].

Társaskör (Club) within the Hungarian House of New York together with Dr István Szentpály, and he continuously assisted the American Hungarian Library and Historical Society (Borbándi 1997: 450–451), of whose board he was also member in 1964.³⁴ Since the fifties, he put all his efforts into bringing together – on a broad national basis – the Hungarian emigration and especially into strengthening the relationships between Hungarian emigrants from Transylvania, just as he had done before within the framework of the HNC in Austria. Therefore, he also assumed the position of President of the Transylvanian Administrative Committee (*Erdélyi Intézőbizottság*) established in 1965 as the forum linking different immigrant groups,³⁵ and he did not reject old immigration organizations either such as the American Hungarian Federation, of which he became a vice-president in 1968.³⁶ Moreover, the Hungarian Human Rights Foundation (HHRF) – of which he was one of the initiators – may be considered one of the greatest achievements of his enthusiastic organizational efforts. Through its activity of monitoring the legal situation of the Hungarian minority living in communist Romania, then in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union (Subcarpathia), as well as of credibly informing the US Government and the Congress, this human rights organization established in 1967 was of enormous help to Hungarians living in minority in the Carpathian Basin, outside the borders of post-Trianon Hungary. Today, the HHRF still performs its activity in line with Béla Teleki's principles, i.e. by silent but consistent everyday work, as well as constant, credible information instead of noisy campaigns, hoping to improve the situation of Hungarian communities living in minority.³⁷

Béla Teleki lived to witness the regime change in 1989, and then in a few months, on 7 February 1990, he died of liver cancer in his New York home, fully aware and conscious.³⁸ His ashes were put to rest in Alba Regia Chapel in Berkeley, West Virginia.³⁹

34 ÁBTL. 3.2.4. K-182. „B” Dosszié Nagy Klára. 41. Hévízi Klára jelentése Teleki Béláról („B” Nagy Klára File. 41. Klára Hévízi's Report on Béla Teleki. Budapest, 4 December 1961).

35 ÁBTL. 3.2.5. O-8-2001/18. Amerikai Magyar Szövetség. 71. Jegyzőkönyv az Erdélyi Intéző Bizottság (EIB) első rendes üléséről (American Hungarian Federation. 71. Minutes of the First Regular Meeting of the Transylvanian Administrative Committee. New York, 24 January 1966 [‘Minutes of the First Regular Meeting of the Transylvanian Administrative Committee’]).

36 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1. doboz. 69. pallium. 16. l. Teleki Béla levele Bonczos Miklósnak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 1. Pallium 69. 16. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Miklós Bonczos). New York, 9 February 1971.

37 The interview of the author with Zsolt Szekeres, President of the HHRF. Budapest, 13 September 2019. Property of the author.

38 Pál Teleki Interview.

39 Count Béla Teleki of Szék's obituary. Property of his descendants.

Béla Teleki's Emigration Correspondence

Béla Teleki had already started his extensive emigration correspondence during his stay in Austria, at the end of the 1940s. The part concerning Transylvania's future is the main topic of our study. The several thousand letters written by and addressed to Béla Teleki, copies of which are kept in the Manuscript Archives of the National Széchényi Library, stand for his extensive network of pen friends, and bear a great value as a historical source. At that time, different immigrant groups were essentially keeping contact through correspondence, which most of the time resulted in exchanges of letters built on direct, personal acquaintance. Furthermore, Béla Teleki continuously corresponded with important personalities from Transylvania and Hungary, which is also a very important source for a historian. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to fully research this immense correspondence legacy, but from researching its significant part it is now clear that it spans over four decades, covering Béla Teleki's entire life spent in emigration, from his arrival to Austria to his death in 1990.

The earliest letter pertaining to this legacy was dated 24 April 1949, and it was written by Teleki from Rum, Austria, to an old colleague of his, Dr Dezső Albrecht, former Executive Vice-President of the Transylvanian Party, who was by then already living in Paris. The latest level I studied was written in New York on 3 December 1988, a little more than a year before Béla Teleki's death, and it was addressed to Pál Péter Domokos, an ethnographer living in Transylvania. All his letters were written in Hungarian, but, as a clear proof of his broad education and knowledge of foreign languages, he also addressed his non-Hungarian pen friends in English, German, and sometimes even in French. Except the early years full of hardships, most of his letters were written on a typewriter and then from 1987 on electronic typewriter. This not only reflects Béla Teleki's gradually improving financial situation, which was very difficult at the beginning, but it also demonstrates his keeping up with the times, as getting acquainted with the use of electronic typewriters and their regular use is an impressive performance for an old man over 80. And it is a joy for the researcher, as the text of the letters – even of the handwritten ones – are clearly legible.

In line with the extent of this correspondence, the circle of pen friends covers a rather large social spectrum. It is beyond the scope of this short study to list the names of all the persons he was in correspondence with; therefore, taking into consideration only the most important social categories, we shall only highlight some of the very important pen friends. Certainly, there are several politicians among them: Miklós Bonczos, Minister of Internal Affairs, Dezső Sulyok, Tibor Eckhardt, Jenő Padányi Gulyás, Gusztáv Kövér, Sándor Vita, and Dezső Albrecht (the last three former politicians of the Transylvanian Party, Members of the Parliament). He was in correspondence with diplomats (György Bakách-Besseney, ambassador), economists (Lipót Baranyai, President of the Hungarian National Bank), and

military officers (General Lajos Dálnoki Veress, formerly Commander of the IX Corps of Cluj and then Commander of the 2nd Hungarian Army) concerning important political, social, and economic matters. Always very interested in Transylvanian matters, Béla Teleki was in permanent contact with Hungarian intellectuals from Hungary and Transylvania living in emigration, striving to promote the cause of Hungarians in Transylvania. Thus, among his pen friends, we find writers and poets (Tibor Flórián, Gábor Görgei, Domokos Gyallay Pap), linguists (Ádám Szabó T.), ethnographers (Pál Péter Domokos), and especially historians (Péter Gosztonyi, Ildikó Lipcsey, András Ludányi), as well as renowned gastronomists (Pál Kövi). Consequently, his voluminous correspondence amounts to a rather special legacy in terms of cultural history.

Béla Teleki's Main Goals in Emigration, in the Light of his Letters

After he had been forced to leave Hungary and his return to Transylvania had become impossible, Count Béla Teleki channelled all his energy into the political organization of emigration. By reading his letters, it can be stated that Teleki's main goal since 1947 up to his emigration to the USA, i.e. during his entire stay in Austria, was to bring together the Hungarian emigration from Western Europe on a broad, national, and Christian basis. He would have liked to manage – under the leadership of the highly respected former President of the Independent Smallholder's Party (*Független Kisgazdapárt*), Tibor Eckhardt, with whom he was on extremely good terms – to integrate the entire Hungarian emigration from Western Europe adhering to right-wing values into a unitary organization. As he formulated it, its basis would have been provided by 'the sound middle line of the national side'.⁴⁰ In the beginning, he urged the expansion of the HNC,⁴¹ and then later he campaigned for a new unity. But all his efforts to this end were unsuccessful. It was impossible to bring together the Hungarian emigration deeply divided by individual conflicts of interest and personal conflicts. Not even the HNC was able to do it.

When his financial situation became critical and he was compelled to emigrate to the USA, Béla Teleki was in fact pursuing the same goal, only this time he was doing it in the interest of Hungarians living in America. He tried to engage in the activity of the American Transylvanian Federation (*Amerikai Erdélyi Szövetség*) established soon after his arrival for every non-extremist Hungarian immigrant

40 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Béla Teleki hagyatéka. 2. doboz. 127. pallium. 3. l. Teleki Béla levele Falcione Árpádnak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 1. Pallium 127. 3. l. Béla Teleki's Letter to Árpád Falcione). New York, 19 June 1954.

41 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1. doboz. 59. pallium. 1. l. Teleki Béla levele Bíró Benedeknek (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 1. Pallium 59. 1. l. Béla Teleki's Letter to Benedek Bíró). Fribourg (Switzerland), 10 August 1950.

from Transylvania (Hermann 2011). A little more than a decade later, in 1956, he was already building an entire network by trying to unify three already existing organizations from the USA, grouping Hungarians from Transylvania: the American Hungarian Federation, the Transylvanian Committee (*Erdélyi Bizottság*) established in Cleveland in 1955, and the Movement for the Protection of Transylvania (*Erdély Védelmében Mozgalom*), newly established in 1965 under the aegis of the Transylvanian Administrative Committee, of which he became president. His plans reveal unfailing ambitions, which went well beyond his individual environment. He had a vision of universal solidarity between Hungarians from Transylvania when he initiated the establishment of a global network based on the Transylvanian Administrative Committee. He considered that bringing together Hungarian emigrant groups dispersed all over the 'free world' was possible even during the Cold War, in the eventful second half of the 1960s. Through his letters, he was searching for partners to this end in the United States of America, Canada, Brazil, Australia, and Western Europe.⁴² His aim was to lay down some uniform principles as well as to take a common, global action for Transylvania and Hungarians from Transylvania every time the Hungarian minority community was subjected to discrimination or even persecution by the Romanian state. Béla Teleki was convinced that this was the only way to actually help Hungarians who were left at home, in Transylvania, considering that it would have an even greater impact and it would yield better results if an entire global network were to sustain their well-elaborated memorandums addressed to the United Nations and to Western democratic great powers instead of only one person or group. It was not up to him that this far-reaching plan could not be realized.

Béla Teleki's deep anti-communism stemming from the period between the two world wars represented one of the cornerstones of his worldview. Thus, he believed that in the new world order created after 1945 neither the Transylvanian issue threatening to change existing power relations nor, beyond that, the situation of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania represented in itself a priority for the Soviet Union, which had a dominant position over Eastern Europe.⁴³ Therefore, in line with the logic of the Cold War, there was no other possibility than convincing the leading politicians of Western great powers of the unsettled character of the Hungarian issue. During his long decades spent in emigration, Teleki has made several attempts in this regard. Certainly, he was most likely to draw the attention of leading political powers in the USA, where, making use of all his personal contacts – as, for example, in 1965 –, he was able to provide a copy of his memorandum

42 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1. doboz. 4. pallium. 1. l. Teleki Béla levele Adorján Ferencnek (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 1. Pallium 4. 1. l. Béla Teleki's Letter to Ferenc Adorján). New York, 20 December 1965.

43 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 2. doboz. 156. pallium. 7. l. Teleki Béla levele Görgey Gábornak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 2. Pallium 156. 7. l. Béla Teleki's Letter to Gábor Görgey). New York, 31 March 1977.

on the repression of Hungarians in Transylvania to every single member of the Congress. Of these, two members of the Senate and eight members of the House of Representatives also delivered speeches in support of the case of Hungarians in Transylvania. Due to tensions created by the Cold War, no further steps could be taken at that time, but, certainly, this also contributed to a somewhat more lenient minority policy applied by the Ceaușescu regime, which was trying to win over the goodwill of the USA in the second half of the 1960s.

However, Béla Teleki was aware that this more moderate minority policy towards Hungarians was only a façade in communist Romania, so he soon went even further and proposed a plan concerning the resettlement of Hungarian immigrants from Transylvania, which in his opinion could be realized in Canada, a country with sufficiently large free land and with an appropriate climate. Seeing that the continuous and increasing emigration of Hungarians was practically unstoppable, Teleki's aim was in fact to provide them the opportunity to remain a community and keep their national identity in the new world.⁴⁴ But the Canadian government did not embrace this plan,⁴⁵ which rendered it one of the very hopeful but never realized emigration utopias.

Of the Western European great powers, Béla Teleki established good relationships with the political leadership of the German Federal Republic and France. He had close relations especially with the top management of the CDU in the German Federal Republic. There he managed to ensure – along the shared Christian democratic line – that decision makers received his memorandums. He was successful in Paris as well. His 1965 memorandum was handed directly to President Charles de Gaulle.⁴⁶ But all this was of little effect. None of the great powers was in a position to substantially change the direction of Romanian internal policies embedded in the Soviet sphere of interest, and, moreover, the time was not right for it either. Neither Bonn – which was considering opening up to Eastern Europe, burning with the fever of Ostpolitik – nor Paris – confronted with serious social problems that led to student riots a few years later – considered it timely or politically productive to force the Hungarian issue. Then, when in 1968 Romania had apparently turned against the Soviet Union and refused to participate in the internationalist repression of the Prague Spring, every memorandum criticizing the Ceaușescu regime or urging action against it fell on deaf ears in the West.

44 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1. doboz. 4. pallium. 1. l. Teleki Béla levele Adorján Ferencnek (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 1. Pallium 4. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Ferenc Adorján). New York, 20 December 1965.

45 ÁBTL. Minutes of the first regular meeting of the Transylvanian Administrative Committee.

46 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 2. doboz. 132. pallium. 3. l. Teleki Béla levele Felméry Lajosnak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 2. Pallium 132. 3. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Lajos Felméry). s.l. [New York], 27 April 1965.

Béla Teleki's Plans for Transylvania

By the second half of the 1960s, Béla Teleki was convinced that everything he only hoped for earlier had gradually become an absolute necessity: Transylvania should be separated from Romania. Otherwise, the assimilation or expulsion of Hungarians from Transylvania is inevitable, and therefore the liberation of Transylvania from Romanian domination should be promoted in every possible way.⁴⁷ Teleki's letters clearly reveal that essentially he identified five possible approaches to Transylvania's future. The one regarding Transylvania born as an independent state based on a federal structure, which, however, could join the European construction process as member of the Danube Federation,⁴⁸ comprising both Hungary and Romania (Walachia, Moldova, and Dobruja),⁴⁹ was the most interesting. In his reasoning inspired by Lajos Kossuth and Oszkár Jászi's plans concerning a Danube Federation, Transylvania was conceived as an entity that was separate from both Hungary and Romania. But even Teleki admitted the utopic character of this thought when he stated that this solution would be very difficult to implement and only acceptable for Hungarians in Transylvania as a last solution, considering that Transylvania's majority population would nevertheless be Romanian. His feeling that in lack of enough power he could not initiate a modification of this magnitude was also right. This plan was only viable if at least one Western great power could be won over for the cause and that state could be convinced to take the initiative.⁵⁰ But in this regard Béla Teleki was in constant conflict with the extreme right-wing emigration, whose members all interpreted this as treason and considered that it would undoubtedly equal the giving up of the Transylvanian idea.⁵¹ Certainly, those who accused Béla Teleki of the latter did not know him well enough, as preserving Transylvania's Hungarian character was exactly his most important aim.⁵²

47 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1. doboz. 60. pallium. 2. 1. Teleki Béla levele Bíró Kálmánnak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 1. Pallium 60. 2. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Kálmán Bíró). New York, 25 March 1955.

48 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1. doboz. 7. pallium. 3. 1. Teleki Béla levele Albrecht Dezsőnek (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 1. Pallium 7. 3. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Dezső Albrecht). New York, 20 March 1954.

49 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1. doboz. 60. pallium. 1. 1. Teleki Béla levele Bíró Kálmánnak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 1. Pallium 60. 1. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Kálmán Bíró). New York, 30 October 1954.

50 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1. doboz. 7. pallium. 1. 1. Teleki Béla levele Albrecht Dezsőnek (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 1. Pallium 7. 1. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Dezső Albrecht). Rum (Austria), 24 April 1949.

51 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1. doboz. 7. pallium. 2. 1. Teleki Béla levele Albrecht Dezsőnek (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 1. Pallium 7. 2. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Dezső Albrecht). New York, 20 February 1954.

52 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1. doboz. 21. pallium. 1. 1. Teleki Béla levele Bakos Sándornak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 1. Pallium 21. 1. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Sándor Bakos). New York, 20 March 1954.

Nothing illustrates this better than a thought recurring in most of his letters, namely that Transylvania's re-annexation to Hungary would represent the best solution. However, with his inborn sense of reality, Béla Teleki always considered this second approach almost completely hopeless. In his opinion, there was perhaps a slight chance – and only under favourable circumstances – for bringing certain regions from the Partium inhabited by Hungarians under Hungarian administration.⁵³

He considered that dividing Transylvania again between Hungary and Romania would not perhaps be an optimal solution, but it would be easier to put into practice. In his opinion, this solution was acceptable in the long run, accompanied by a limited population exchange, yet he was also aware that it would in fact revive the Nazi-Fascist solution of 1940, and as such it could not be very attractive for any of the winning great powers.

The possibility of a census regarding Transylvania so often voiced among the emigration community recurred in Béla Teleki's letter as well, but he considered it a clearly negative scenario. In his opinion, this would be definitely detrimental because, due to the existing demographic situation, the votes of the Romanian majority would practically legalize the loss of Transylvania. And he considered this unacceptable from a Hungarian point of view.⁵⁴

Finally, he considered that the last and at the same time the worst solution was to leave the entire Transylvania under Romanian administration. In his opinion, this would lead to the gradual disappearance of Hungarians from Transylvania.⁵⁵ So far, different census results have basically confirmed this assumption.

Overviewing Béla Teleki's plans concerning Transylvania, it may be stated that – setting out from the concept of revisionism and drawing on the four-year-long experience of Transylvania divided by the Second Vienna Award –, in his opinion, border change was the only adequate solution. However, being fully aware of the political situation characteristic of the Cold War period, he modified it by taking into consideration the real power relationships in such a way as to render it attainable, even if the chances were slim. He believed that Hungarians in Transylvania and, at the same time, the ideal of Transylvania could be saved in this way. The following telling lines from one of his letters written in 1965 vividly illustrate both his sense of political reality and strategic thinking:

Hungarians in Transylvania could only be saved by separating Transylvania from Romania, but this may not be invoked today given that the Western

53 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1. doboz. 60. pallium. 2. l. Teleki Béla levele Bíró Kálmánnak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 1. Pallium 60. 2. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Kálmán Bíró). New York, 25 March 1955.

54 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1. doboz. 4. pallium. 1. l. Teleki Béla levele Adorján Ferencnek (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 1. Pallium 4. 1. 1. Teleki's Letter to Ferenc Adorján). New York, 20 December 1965.

55 Ibidem.

position and political climate is perhaps less favourable than the Eastern one. Today, this could only be invoked by someone who wishes to harm the Hungarians of Transylvania, as no result can be achieved today, but it would encourage Romanians to more ruthless repression, more intense denationalization, or the expulsion of Hungarians. However, if the entire free world keeps the issue of stopping the repression of and granting human rights to Hungarians on the agenda, this would perhaps give them enough time to survive until a more favourable moment comes, when a solution on the merits might be taken into consideration and achieved.⁵⁶

Fight for Transylvania in Emigration

Béla Teleki's voluminous emigration correspondence reveals that he did not get bogged down in planning, which was so typical of those living in emigration, but he wanted to actually do something in practice for the cause of 'Hungarian Transylvania'. He embraced Imre Filep's (Chief Notary of the Unitarian Church in Hungary) 1965 plan on a Central European Confederation, as his own plan regarding the future of Transylvania presented above could be integrated into it. In Filep's conception, a confederation would have entailed an extensive Central European cooperation as, besides Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Austria, of the Eastern Bloc it was supposed to include the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Transylvania, also as an independent state. The aim was to defuse the European Cold War confrontation on the one hand and the Central European ethnic conflicts on the other. Basically, this Central European confederation would have been based on neutrality, establishing partnerships with both Western European states and the Soviet Union and therefore ensuring the European balance of power.⁵⁷ This, however, went against the interests of the great powers, especially with the principle of Moscow's Eastern European dominance. Imre Filep's plan was not unequivocally supported by the West; hence, it proved unfeasible.

Nonetheless, it may be stated that if realized, this plan would have led to the rise of a new Central European power centre of which Transylvania would have also been part of and which would have been based on a single monetary, tax, and customs system, as well as a common army and external policy. In an independent Transylvania, integrated in such a community, national minorities could have enjoyed a wide administrative autonomy and the recognition of their mother

⁵⁶ Ibidem.

⁵⁷ OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 2. doboz. 137. pallium. 6–7. 1. Filep Imre levele Teleki Bélának (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 2. Pallium 137. 6-7. 1. Imre Filep's Letter to Béla Teleki). Splügen (Switzerland), 14 May 1965.

tongues as regional official languages.⁵⁸ Béla Teleki considered that this could be advantageous for Romanians as well, and therefore he hoped that the plan would succeed. It was not his fault that it was impracticable.

Besides embracing plans, Teleki tried for years to win over the US administration to the Transylvanian cause by a series of memoranda. He was one of the signatories of the memorandum submitted by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the American Hungarian Federation (AHF) to President Lyndon Johnson, the Congress, and the UN in July 1965, in which the oldest Hungarian organization in the US was requesting intervention to stop the persecution of Hungarians in Transylvania.⁵⁹ As a result of this memorandum, 51 representatives turned to Secretary of State David Dean Rusk in writing, detailing the persecution of Hungarians in Transylvania by the Romanian communist regime and requesting the intervention of the US Government.⁶⁰ Not exactly four years later, in March 1969, Béla Teleki is also one of the signatories of the memorandum written by the AHF, the American group of the Freedom Fighters Federation, and the Hungarian Lawyers' Association to President Richard Nixon, in which they requested 'the neutralization of the Danube Basin'⁶¹ under the pretext of the planned European conference on security,⁶² but without success, as by the end of the 1960s the Transylvanian cause was overshadowed by Nicolae Ceaușescu's apparent rapprochement to the West. Washington saw in the Romanian dictator the possibility of dividing the Eastern Bloc. It is no wonder then that the omnipotent *conducător* 'leader' could make two visits to the US. Béla Teleki and the leading personalities of the American emigration tried in both cases to intervene and persuade government circles to drop the idea of receiving Ceaușescu. They were unsuccessful again as neither National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, whom they approached in October 1970,⁶³ nor President Richard Nixon, to whom they

58 Ibidem.

59 ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/18. Amerikai Magyar Szövetség. 8. Beszámoló a hatvan éves Amerikai Magyar Szövetség tevékenységéről (American Hungarian Federation. 8. Report on the Activity of the American Hungarian Federation on its 60th Anniversary).

60 ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/18. Amerikai Magyar Szövetség. 11. Az Amerikai Magyar Szövetség vezetőségének körlevele (American Hungarian Federation. 11. Circular Letter of the American Hungarian Federation's Leadership).

61 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 2. doboz. 93. pallium. 1. l. Teleki Béla levele Dálnoki Veress Lajosnak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 2. Pallium 93. 1. l. Béla Teleki's Letter to Lajos Dálnoki Veress). New York, 8 December 1970.

62 Eastern-Western cooperation established later within the framework of the Conference on Security and Co-Operation in Europe (CSCE), functioning under the form of the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) since 1995.

63 ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-2001/201. AMSZ-memorandumok, levelezés, jegyzékek (1968–1972). 32. Az Amerikai Magyar Szövetség vezetőségének meghallgatási kérelme Henry Kissinger nemzetbiztonsági tanácsadóhoz (AHF memorandums, correspondence, lists (1968–1972). 32. The Hearing Request of the American Hungarian Federation Addressed to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger).

turned in December 1973, listened to their protest. Thus, Ceaușescu's visit could take place unhindered on both occasions.

The reception of the Romanian communist dictator caused enormous harm to Béla Teleki's silent war for Transylvania, and at the same time it had a great impact on the entire internal life of the Hungarian emigration in the US as well since it conveyed the feeling that nothing could be achieved in relation to the Transylvanian cause through steady and consistent work or reasonable persuasion alone, without flaunting slogans and spectacular campaigns.

Consequently, radical voices emerged within both the American and the Western European emigration. The Transylvanian World Federation was established in 1974 already under the leadership of István Zolcsák, who lived in Brazil, and two eminent personalities of the Hungarian emigration from the US, Albert Wass and János Nádas.⁶⁴ This new organization engaged in constant agitation in the interest of Transylvania's re-annexation to Hungary. However, their widely distributed propaganda materials and often superficially drawn up submissions did not yield significant results. They caused considerable annoyance to Béla Teleki, who continued to fight for the Transylvanian cause without highlighting his role but through scientifically well-founded memorandums transmitted, making use of his personal contacts, to the persons deemed most appropriate. He attacked the Transylvanian World Federation in several letters because he believed that its detrimental extremism did much more harm to the Transylvanian cause than good. Among others, Teleki sharply condemned two memorandums transmitted by Wass Albert to President Gerald Ford in 1975, which in his opinion could have given Hungarians an incentive to leave Transylvania by putting the emigration of Hungarians in Transylvania persecuted by the Romanian communist regime on the agenda.⁶⁵

While Albert Wass and his colleagues were mainly applying the principle of Hungarian-language publication dumping in relation to the Transylvanian cause, Béla Teleki was committed to fact-finding articles written in excellent English and published in the English-language press.⁶⁶ He was convinced that the competent power factors could only be genuinely and effectively persuaded through the presentation of exact, justifiable, and credible data, building primarily on a human-rights-based argumentation. The volume entitled *Witnesses to Cultural Genocide: First-Hand Reports on Rumania's Minority Policies Today*, published by

64 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 2. doboz. 147. pallium. 1. l. Teleki Béla levele Gábor Áronnak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 2. Pallium 147. 1. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Áron Gábor). New York, 25 September 1974.

65 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1. doboz. 73. pallium. 1. l. Teleki Béla levele Botár Istvánnak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 1. Pallium 73. 1. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to István Botár). New York, 1 January 1976.

66 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1. doboz. 9. pallium. 4. l. Teleki Béla levele Almay Bélának. New York (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 2. Pallium 147. 1. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Béla Almay). 24 April 1980.

the American Transylvanian Federation led by Béla Teleki and the Committee for Human Rights in Romania (CHRR) in 1979 in two thousand copies with György Schöpflin's foreword, is an excellent example.⁶⁷

On many occasions, Béla Teleki – who knew Albert Wass well but István Zolcsák less – reproached them in his letters that their policy regarding Transylvania was heading in the wrong direction, trying to substantiate his own vision and methods. Probably not knowing that – even if as a child – István Zolcsák had lived in Transylvania between 1928 and 1938, he fulminated to Lajos Felméri, as can be read in one of his letters written in 1973:

Those who have not lived in Transylvania between the two world wars, who are not perfectly familiar with the Romanian way of thinking and methods, who do not know exactly and in every detail how Hungarians live and strive in Transylvania today and how they are still trying to get along, to survive, do not have the right to express their opinion on this matter, and they do not have the right to make the situation of Hungarians in Transylvania even harder.⁶⁸

Besides justifying the authority of his own emigration actions with his Transylvanian political activity before 1944, Teleki was in fact afraid that, while unsuccessful in the West, this too noisy and less thought-out Zolcsák and Wass propaganda could encourage the Romanian communist leadership to repress Hungarians in Transylvania even more.⁶⁹ Furthermore, Béla Teleki considered that agitation practised from the comfort of Western well-being was deeply unethical towards those living in minority under the communist regime. This is also reflected in a letter written to the same Lajos Felméri in 1974: 'If they wish to work, they should work towards the Brazilian government and convince them, but they should not bluster in Hungarian newspapers from the safety of a shelter at the expense of Hungarians in Transylvania. Today, there is nothing that can be done anyway without causing harm. One shall therefore work for the future, secretly and in silence, as the Czechs did once.'⁷⁰

67 *Witnesses to Cultural Genocide: First-Hand Reports on Rumania's Minority Policies Today*. American Transylvanian Federation. Committee for Human Rights in Rumania. New York, 1979.

68 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 2. doboz. 132. pallium. 16. 1. Teleki Béla levele Felméry Lajosnak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 2. Pallium 132. 16. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Lajos Felméry). New York, 12 October 1973.

69 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1. doboz. 9. pallium. 2. 1. Teleki Béla levele Almayer Bélának (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 1. Pallium 9. 2. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Béla Almayer). New York, 21 June 1972.

70 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 2. doboz. 132. pallium. 18. 1. Teleki Béla levele Felméry Lajosnak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 2. Pallium 132. 18. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Lajos Felméry). New York, 3 June 1974.

Against the Ceaușescu Regime

Towards the end of his life, Béla Teleki believed less and less in the possibility of Transylvania's re-annexation to Hungary. Instead, he was more and more preoccupied with efforts to improve the situation of Hungarians in Romania and to decrease the intensity of their repression. As by the mid-70s the fate of Hungarians in Transylvania had started to worsen, Béla Teleki's attention became increasingly focused on minority issues. Thus, besides his inherent anti-communism, he became a bitter enemy of the Ceaușescu regime. The persisting Romanian domination of Transylvania, Romania's communist domination, and the anti-minority practices of the Romanian government all prompted him to take all the necessary steps against the Ceaușescu regime. He was also significantly motivated by his family's fate, the fate of his loved ones who remained at home, the dispossession of the Count Teleki family from their estates, the displacement of its members, and the ensuing deprivation, which had barely changed since the middle of the 1940s. Count Béla Teleki, who was then well over 70, was preparing for his last fight with the Ceaușescu regime.

He turned to his well-established tools, when in 1975 his organization, the American Transylvanian Federation, together with the Transylvanian Committee from Cleveland sent a new memorandum directly to President Gerald Ford.⁷¹ In this memorandum, he sharply criticized the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, which recognized the Soviet domination over Eastern Europe and stipulated the inviolability of frontiers, considering it a major mistake of the American diplomacy. He also condemned President Ford for his visit to Romania paid on 2–3 August 1975, finding it utterly reprehensible that he joined the public folk dance in Victory Square, Bucharest, together with Ceaușescu. In his opinion, this represented the validation of the Ceaușescu regime and his anti-minority policy by the US.⁷²

Béla Teleki viscerally rejected the politics of coexistence as well, maintaining his anti-communist position. He had fought against the Most-Favoured Nation clause granted to Romania since 1975, and his consistent efforts were finally rewarded in 1988, shortly before his death. Teleki's aim was to ensure that the increasingly intense commerce between the US and the communist states was governed by basic principles such as limiting the repression of national minorities and granting human rights, i.e. the beginning of the democratization process. Therefore, he was constantly lobbying with both Republican and Democrat members of the US Congress for respect for human rights through the Hungarian Human Rights Foundation.

71 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 2. doboz. 135. pallium. 2. l. Teleki Béla levele Ferenczi Tibornak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 2. Pallium 135. 2. l. Béla Teleki's Letter to Tibor Ferenczi). New York, 5 March 1975.

72 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 2. doboz. 142. pallium. 1. l. Teleki Béla levele Gerald Ford elnöknek (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 2. Pallium 142. 1. l. Béla Teleki's Letter to President Gerald Ford). New York, 19 November 1975.

When it became obvious that the spirit of Helsinki would give rise to a series of long transformations, the old Transylvanian count renewed his mobilizing efforts. On the pretext of the Madrid Follow-up Meeting of the so-called Helsinki process, held in Madrid between 1980 and 1983, he urged the Hungarian emigration to jointly step up against the Ceaușescu regime.⁷³ Although this initiative had failed, he did not feel discouraged, but in 1984 he turned directly to the European Parliament, perceiving its increasing role on the international scene. Through the Federal Union of European Nationalities, he submitted a draft Charter on National Minority Group Rights to the European Parliament.⁷⁴ In addition, he continued to publish quality written materials. The *Background Notes on Romania*, a joint publication of the American Transylvanian Federation led by him, the Australian Transylvanian Federation, and the periodical entitled *Nemzetőr*,⁷⁵ was published in 1986, and its aim was to sum up and factually present the true characteristics of the Ceaușescu regime, which was going through its darkest period.

It was perhaps due to the loud propaganda of Albert Wass that the Romanian secret services were not so much preoccupied with Béla Teleki. In all likelihood, the fact that he had never put himself forward was also a factor, and therefore he did not become a target of the Romanian communist regime's henchmen although all the chances were there in the second half of the 1980s. By that time, Béla Teleki had already established close relationships with the Hungarian underground movements in Transylvania, trying to obtain the most up-to-date information about actions against the Hungarian minority in Romania. He also used his acquaintances and friendships to organize collections and humanitarian aid operations for Hungarians in Transylvania. He was continuously sending clothes, food, and medicine⁷⁶ to Romania, facing shortages of basic necessities by then, and was also seeking to ease the sufferings of his relatives living in Transylvania.

Meanwhile, the loud propaganda of the Transylvanian World Federation continued, which was actually of help to Béla Teleki inasmuch as it shifted the focus away from his efforts. At the same time, however, the old conflict had also started to intensify, and in the September 1977 issue of the Hungarian emigration paper published in Canada and entitled *Krónika* (Chronicle) Albert Wass was actually

73 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 2. doboz. 157. pallium. 6. 1. Teleki Béla levele Gyallay Pap Domokosnak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 2. Pallium 157. 6. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Domokos Gyallay Pap). Geneva, 23 October 1979.

74 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 2. doboz. 505. pallium. 28. 1. Teleki Béla levele Vita Sándornak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 2. Pallium 505. 28. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Sándor Vita). New York, 17 September 1984.

75 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 2. doboz. 130. pallium. 1. 1. Teleki Béla levele Fekete Pálnak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 2. Pallium 130. 1. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Pál Fekete). New York, 18 February 1987.

76 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1. doboz. 30. pallium. 1. 1. Teleki Béla levele Balogh Elemérnek (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 1. Pallium 30. 1. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Elemér Balogh). New York, 13 October 1988.

accusing Béla Teleki of giving up on Transylvania. He blamed him for trying to avoid even the appearance of irredentism by which – *horribile dictu* – he was looking to seek the favour and goodwill of the Romanian government. According to Wass and his companions, Teleki's idea of an independent Transylvania was a mere pipe dream. Instead, all efforts should be made to oblige Romania to comply with its international commitments. According to them, the effectiveness of coercion lied in a campaign constantly raising the possibility of invalidating the international agreements guaranteeing the existence of the Romanian state.⁷⁷ However, Béla Teleki did not believe in this. With his sound judgement, he knew for sure that the power and influence of the Hungarian emigration was far too little for this and that the loud propaganda only incited the communist regime of Romania led by Ceaușescu to stronger resistance and further actions against Hungarians living in Transylvania.⁷⁸ In the last years of his life, he was vitally concerned about the Hungarian community in Transylvania. In his letter written on 27 January 1986, he confessed to Captain Miklós Korponay, Chief of Staff of the Community of Hungarian Fighters (*Magyar Harcosok Bajtársi Közössége*), who was also living in emigration, that: 'The cause of Hungarians in Transylvania is the most important Hungarian issue, which is sentenced to death if the Ceaușescu dictatorship can continue like this. In 50 years, there will be no Hungarians left in Transylvania.'⁷⁹

Afterword

In the last months of his life, Béla Teleki lived to witness the collapse of Eastern European communist regimes. He could see the news reports about the Polish round table discussions and the Pan-European Picnic as well as about the Hungarian regime change. He lived to see the fall of the Berlin wall, could see the photos of the Czechoslovakian Velvet Revolution that circulated the world media, and, last but not least, received the exhilarating news of the bloody collapse of the Romanian communist regime and the victory of the revolution. By the grace of fate, he did not live to see the pogrom against Hungarians in Marosvásárhely, the so-called Black March. He died on 7 February 1990 in the increasing solitude of his emigration to New York, thinking perhaps that his dark prediction from his letter cited above was no longer relevant.

77 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 2. doboz. 118. pallium. 4. l. (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 2. Pallium 118. 4. 1.). *Krónika*, September 1977: 3–6.

78 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 2. doboz. 147. pallium. 2. l. Teleki Béla levele Gábor Áronnak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 2. Pallium 147. 2. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Áron Gábor). New York, 5 October 1974.

79 OSZK. Kézirattár. Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 4. doboz. 244. pallium. 2. l. Teleki Béla levele Korponay Miklósnak (Manuscript Archives. Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Box 4. Pallium 244. 2. 1. Béla Teleki's Letter to Miklós Korponay). New York, 27 January 1986.

References

Archive Sources, Manuscripts

Historical Archives of the State Security Services – Hungary.

2.2.1. I/5.8. Operatív nyilvántartás. Teleki Béla (Operative records. Béla Teleki).

3.1.9. V-63925. Vizsgálati dosszié gr. Teleki Béla és tsa. ügyében (Investigation File in the Case of Count Béla Teleki and Others).

3.2.3. Mt-578/1. Munka Dosszié Galambos Edit (Edit Galambos Work File).

3.2.3. Mt-655/11. Munka Dosszié Dunai Lajos (Lajos Dunai Work File).

3.2.4. K-182. „B” Dosszié Nagy Klára (Klára ‘B’ Nagy File).

3.2.5. O-8-001/1. Objektum Dosszié. „Farkasok” Magyar Nemzeti Bizottmány (Object File. ‘Wolves’ National Hungarian Council).

3.2.5. O-8-2001/18. Amerikai Magyar Szövetség (1965–1967) (American Hungarian Federation, 1965–1967).

3.2.5. O-8-2001/201. AMSZ-memorandumok, levelezés, jegyzékek (1968–1972) (AHF-Memorandums, Correspondence, Lists, 1968–1972).

Hungarian National Archives. State Archives.

P 2256. No. 117. *Teleki Béla iratai 1942–1944*. 1. csomó (P 2256. No. 117. *Béla Teleki's Documents 1942–1944*. Bundle 1).

National Széchényi Library. Manuscripts Archive.

Fond 580. Teleki Béla hagyatéka. 1, 2, 4. doboz (Fonds 580. Béla Teleki's Legacy. Boxes 1, 2, 4).

Volumes of Documents

1942. *Erdély a magyar Képviselőházban* (Transylvania in the Hungarian House of Representatives). Kolozsvár: Az Erdélyi Párt kiadása. Minerva Nyomda Rt.

1943. *Erdély a magyar Képviselőházban II* (Transylvania in the Hungarian House of Representatives II). Kolozsvár: Az Erdélyi Párt kiadása. Lengyel Albert Könyvnyomdája.

1944. *Erdély a magyar Országgyűlésen III* (Transylvania in the Hungarian National Assembly III). Kolozsvár: Az Erdélyi Párt kiadása. Minerva Nyomda Rt.

Reference Books

- BORBÁNDI, Gyula. 1997. *Magyar politikai pályaképek 1938–1948* (Hungarian Political Profiles 1938–1948). Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó.
- BOTLIK, József. 2020. *Nemzetünket szolgálták. A visszacsatolt területek felsőházi és képviselőházi tagjai a magyar Országgyűlésben (1938–1944)* (They Served Our Nation. Members from Re-Annexed Territories in the Upper House and in the House of Representatives of the Hungarian National Assembly). Budapest: Keskenyúton Délvidéki Tragédiánk 1944–45 Alapítvány.
- DEMETER, Béla–VENCZEL, József. 1940. *Az Erdélyi Magyar Gazdasági Egyesület munkája a román imperium alatt* (The Work of the Transylvanian Hungarian Economic Association under Romanian Rule). Budapest: A „Pátria” Irodalmi Vállalat és Nyomdai Rt. Kiadása.
- FÜLÖP, Mihály–VINCZE, Gábor (eds.). 1998. *Revízió vagy autonómia. Iratok a magyar–román kapcsolatok történetéből (1945–1947)* (Revision or Autonomy. Documents from the History of Hungarian–Romanian Relationships). [Budapest]: A Teleki László Alapítvány kiadása.
- MURÁDIN, János Kristóf. 2019. *„Mindent Erdélyért!” Az Erdélyi Párt története 1940 és 1944 között* (‘Everything for Transylvania!’ The History of the Transylvanian Party between 1940 and 1944). Cluj-Napoca: Scientia Publishing House.
- TIBORI SZABÓ, Zoltán. 1993. *Teleki Béla erdélyisége. Embernek maradni embertelen időkben* (Béla Teleki’s Transylvanianism. Remaining Human in Inhuman Times). Cluj-Napoca: Nis Kiadó.
- VÁRDY, Béla. 2000. *Magyarok az Újvilágban. Az észak-amerikai magyarság rendhagyó története* (Hungarians in the New World. An Unconventional History of North-American Hungarians). Budapest: A Magyar Nyelv és Kultúra Nemzetközi Társasága.

Studies

- FILEP, Tamás Gusztáv. 2008. A „visszatért” magyarok és nem magyarok beilleszkedése, jogi helyzetük és magatartásuk (The Integration, Legal Standing and Behaviour of ‘Returned’ Hungarians and Non-Hungarians). In: Bárdi, Nándor–Fedinec, Csilla–Szarka, László (eds.), *Kisebbségi magyar közösségek a 20. Században* (Minority Hungarian Communities in the 20th Century). Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó – MTA Kisebbségkutató Intézet. 154–161.
- HERMANN, Gabriella. 2011. Az Amerikai Erdélyi Szövetség története, 1952–1977 (The History of the American Transylvanian Federation, 1952–1977). *Magyar Kisebbség* 3–4(61–62): 7–111.

- PRITZ, Pál. 2011. Magyar külpolitika – a csatlósság és a revízió között (Hungarian Foreign Policy – Between Vassalage and Revisionism). In: Pritz, Pál: *Az objektivitás mítosza? Hazánk és a nagyvilág: 20. századi metszetek* (The Myth of Objectivity? Our Country and the World: 20th-Century Cross-Sections). Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat. 123–130.
- SZÁSZ, István Tas. 2012. Pillantás az Erdélyi Magyar Gazdasági Egyesület utolsó éveire (A Look at the Last Years of the Transylvanian Hungarian Economic Association). *Korunk* 11: 100–106.

Chronologies

- SEBESTYÉN, Mihály (compiled). 2011. *Időtár III. Marosvásárhely történeti kronológiája 1919–1944* (Record of Times III. A Historical Chronology of Marosvásárhely 1919–1944). Marosvásárhely: Mentor Kiadó.

Memoires

- BALOGH, Edgár. 1978. *Szolgálatban 1935–1944* (On Duty 1935–1944). Bucharest: Kriterion.
1992. Hatalomváltás Kolozsvárt 1944-ben (Change of Powers in Kolozsvár in 1944). *Korunk* 10: 108–116.
- BETHLEN, Béla. 2019. *Visszaemlékezéseim. A cenzurázatlan és teljes változat* (My Recollections. The Uncensored and Complete Version). Budapest: Szépmíves.
- TELEKI, Éva. 1995. *Tölgy és repkény* (Oak and Ground Ivy). Cluj-Napoca: Minerva Könyvek 1.

Interviews

- Interview of the author with Zsolt Szekeres, President of the HHRF. Budapest, 13 September 2019. Property of the author.
- Interview of the author with Pál Teleki, Béla Teleki's son. Budapest, 7 October 2019. Property of the author.