

## REVIEWS

FUNDÁRKOVÁ, Anna. *BAROKOVÝ ARISTOKRAT. (A BAROQUE ARISTOCRAT)*. Bratislava: Veda, Vydavateľstvo Slovenskej akadémie vied 2018, 236 pages ISBN 9788022416948.

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Many historian, philosophers and sociologists have already asked the question: What is the moving force of history? Answers varied from poetic and more or less imaginative definitions, such as those of Homer, who saw an age-old conflict between freedom and inevitability, or Herodotus, who believed that the moving force of history was the envy of the gods, to more down to earth ideas, which, especially since the 19th century, have concentrated around two concepts: the individual and the mass. There was argument over whether the course of history is decided by the “great man” – in the understanding of Thomas Carlyle the “hero”, who leads the people and in the wider sense the creator of everything the people in general produce, or by laws that operate independently of the will of the individual, as Marxist theory taught us in our region. Perhaps we will not be far from the truth if we express the view that the will of the individual can succeed only with difficulty against the age, circumstances or the masses, but it may be able to give direction and shape to the route of the masses.

The author of the reviewed publication cites in the introduction to her work the view of Jan Romein from the study by the Austrian historian Thomas Winkelbauer, who states in his consideration of the “good biography”, that the subject of a biography must be “somebody who did something exceptional in the world and left significant traces” (p. 11). In relation to Paul Pálffy there is no doubt about this, but in other cases, it is possible to argue about this view. In his further text, Winkelbauer also states other views or definitions, which supplement and significantly correct Romein’s view. From the many possibilities, I could mention the miller Menocchio, the chief hero of Carlo Ginzburg’s book *The Cheese and the Worms*. Menocchio was not a thinker or a fighter, but according to the views of the time, a heretic, and he did not leave much of a legacy. In spite of this, he served Ginzburg as an excellent basis not only for depicting him as an individual, but the whole life of the Friuli countryside at the end of the 16th century, its mental world and life style. Therefore, for a good biography, it is important that the historian selects a person, who may not be exceptional, but for whom it is possible to present a more or less comprehensive picture of the combination of individual, society and historical events.

The main hero of Anna Fundárková’s work: the Baroque aristocrat Paul Pálffy is undoubtedly a personality who has long deserved the attention of historians as an opinion forming authority of the first half of the 17th century. He is not alone. It is only in recent decades that Slovak historiography has begun to “humanize” early history, especially concerning the medieval and early modern periods. Figures, who intervened in events in

our history and shaped our past, are gradually emerging from the formless and anonymous masses. Improved access to archives and especially the possibility to study abroad is the basis for the working out of modern and objective biographies, avoiding the aims of either romantic heroization or militant damnation of particular historical personalities. Cooperation with foreign historians, especially from Hungary and Austria, but also other countries, whose research enables understanding of historic events and the actions of protagonists in the framework of the overall history of the early modern Habsburg Monarchy, needs to be evaluated extraordinarily positively.

Paul Pálffy was born as the seventh child of the hero of Raab and anti-Turkish fighter Nicholas Pálffy and his wife Maria Fugger. In his case, as for the majority of early modern people, his childhood can be reconstructed only in rough outlines, but paradoxically thanks to the fact that his father was occupied with war and politics, his mother and household staff sent written news about events at home. The Hungarian aristocracy realized the importance of education for the career advancement of their children, and it was no different with the Pálffy family. The author succeeded in reconstructing the studies of the Pálffy boys, and devoting attention to the content of education as well as the places they frequented and schools they attended. The young Pálffys were fortunate enough to be able to prepare for the so-called *Kavalierstour*, a study tour abroad. The author thoroughly analyses both the content of this term and the specific course and purpose of travel, including its financing and the problems that sometimes occurred even in a rich family such as the Pálffys. Apart from parents, other relations and numerous household personnel participated in organizing travel. The importance of the *Kavalierstour*, as can be seen also in the case of the Pálffys, was to gain knowledge for real life, to build up a network of contacts and social position, which changed young, inexperienced and immature boys into adult men.

The second chapter of the publication is devoted to an important milestone in the life of every aristocratic man, who was not destined for an ecclesiastical career. As was usual in medieval and early modern times, a life partner was chosen according to strict criteria: She was expected to bring property, social and career advancement and enhanced prestige for the family. Around 1600 marriage also became a route to the integration of Hungarian aristocrats into the Vienna court, and the Pálffys were very successful in this. It is interesting to note how the marriage strategy of the family changed, and specifically the date and circumstances of the change of criteria and the beginning of finding brides from abroad. The author uncovers the extraordinarily interesting, tangled and sometimes surprising background of the choice of wives, with a great role played by personal contacts, for example, from sharing the hardships of camp life while campaigning against the Turks. The agreed unions were mutually advantageous and also involved relations from both sides. This chapter gives a well-rounded view of the tangled system of aristocratic marriage politics, as well as the strongly protective measures aimed at securing property rights, such as agreements between marriage partners.

The third chapter introduces the reader to the politics of Hungary by approaching the patron – client system of building relations between politicians on one side and their subordinates or clients on the other. Career advancement in Hungary was unthinkable without entering service at the court of a highly placed and influential aristocrat. Personal

friendship, based on private relations and sympathies, also had an important role, but formal friendships established to achieve common aims cannot be ignored. This also applies to the initiators of political groups or parties, held together by shared ideas about the political direction of the country. Paul Pálffy began in the context of rivalry with the extraordinarily successful Nicholas Esterházy, and he competed with the Archbishop of Esztergom George Lippay to the end. As chairman of the Hungarian Chamber, he was responsible for supplying and financing the anti-Turkish fortifications in Hungary. This was an especially demanding task in relation to the constant lack of finance. Apart from these concerns, he also had to defend himself against accusations, that he had used state money for private purposes.

According to the author, the reconstruction of Bratislava Castle under the supervision of Paul Pálffy is a clear proof of the combination of art and political propaganda, corruption, political pragmatism and negligent use of state resources. In connection with events in the present-day Slovak political scene, we naturally think that everything was already the same, but with different personalities and circumstances.

Paul Pálffy became the leading representative of the Hungarian political elite in 1649, when he was elected Palatine. Naturally, he had prepared for this position as a privy councillor, state judge and chairman of the Hungarian Chamber. He had the support of his brother in law Maximilian von Trautmansdorf. The author has succeeded in outlining in detail the behind the scenes cooperation between these two politicians, pointing out the tangle of political interests, and many hitherto unclear reasons for political decisions. Pálffy's conflicts and competition with the Chancellor George Szelepcsényi, and especially with the Archbishop of Esztergom George Lippay are again interesting examples of hidden struggles and intrigues. The author has successfully uncovered a multitude of hitherto unclear and unknown behind the scenes manoeuvres by which both sides strove to pursue their interests. The dispute between them eventually led to the emergence of two political groupings or parties, which continued to complicate political life in a very troubled country. When reading about the behind the scenes intrigues, partisanship, slander and gossip, the thought inevitably emerges that perhaps there really is a sort of Central European political culture or lack of culture, which has not been uprooted even after several centuries.

The author devotes great space in the fourth chapter to the problematic relations of the Viennese and Hungarian authorities with Transylvania. The negotiations of Palatine Pálffy do not hide the paradoxes flowing from his realistic view of the overall political and military situation. This is shown not only by his pragmatism, but also by his well-thought out policy, capable of some degree of compromise.

The last chapter is directed towards another interesting and important aspect of Paul Pálffy, namely as a patron and a person who loved luxury, opulence and comfort. Thanks to these characteristics, people today still have the possibility to experience some Baroque splendour because traces of his activities have survived until today. The author points to another face of Paul Pálffy – as a man who knew how to enjoy brief moments of free time, and to devote attention to his hobbies, especially horses.

The author's many years of research in archives and thorough knowledge of the latest expert literature has paid dividends in the form of deep analysis of political relations,

identification of behind the scenes movements and alliances, and understanding of the different forms of power struggle and striving for personal prestige. However, a complete view of the main hero should not lack a view of his court and property base, which to a large extent enabled not only his political rise, but especially his patronage and building activity. It is understandably a large task, if only in relation to the extent of the relevant archive materials. However, it should be possible to present with great exactness, the economic and property background, business activities, revenues, functioning and composition of the aristocratic court.

In conclusion, it is possible to say that Anna Fundárková's work on the Palatine Paul Pálffy is more than an ordinary biography: It is the first comprehensive sounding in Slovak historiography into the work of the highest political elite of the Kingdom of Hungary in the first half of the 17th century. The author's style of expression and ability of clear formulation makes a basically academic book also a readable work.

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KODAJOVÁ, Daniela – MACHO, Peter a kol. *JOZEF MILOSLAV HURBAN – OSOBNOSŤ V SPOLOČNOSTI A REFLEXII. (JOZEF MILOSLAV HURBAN AND HIS PLACE IN HISTORY)*. Bratislava: VEDA, 2017, 448 pages. ISBN 9788022416078.

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The Slovak national movement of the 1840s is always known as Štúr's group (Štúrovci in Slovak), and although its most important representatives are mentioned, it is usually in the trio: Štúr – Hurban – Hodža. Ľudovít Štúr is undoubtedly the most outstanding personality of this generation, but the life stories of the other personalities were at least as noteworthy and have an equal share for grasping the national concept in the geographical – cultural environment of the future Slovakia. This certainly also applies to Jozef Miloslav Hurban, who, in the words of Daniela Kodajová and Peter Macho, editors of the latest collective monograph devoted to him, stands in the middle of the trio, as if protected by the other two. However, Hurban was far from being a withdrawn personality in need of protection, quite the opposite.

The publication reviewed here clearly documents this with contributions from twenty two Slovak researchers, under the direction of the two above mentioned historians from the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Daniela Kodajová and Peter Macho. The publication is divided into six parts, which lead the reader through various aspects of the personality of the nation builder, as well as questions about his place in the national memory and the views of Hurban in later generations.

The introductory part with the title *Hurban and the age of nationalism* maps Hurban's rise and contacts in the mid 1840s, especially with regard to the culmination of the natio-