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László Teleki, the diplomat of the Hungarian war of independence*

Abstract

This paper gives an overview of the political career of László Teleki, the leading diplomat of the Hungarian war of independence. Based on the topics discussed in this volume, his efforts as a writer of literature will also be mentioned here, though his theatrical pieces met just modest popular acclaim. Teleki joined politics, and became a well-known and successful politician in support of reformists. Later, before the war with Austria, he was appointed to act as the ambassador of the independent Hungarian government to Paris. He had a key role in shaping Hungarian foreign policy, wanted to secure the independence of the country both during the war of independence and in emigration. This paper focuses on this latter period, when his correspondence clearly reflected his political commitment and approach, as well as changes in his personal relations.

Keywords: László Teleki, Hungarian foreign policy, emigration of 1848-1849

This paper makes an attempt to answer the question why the educated and clever Count László Teleki (1811-1861), who had been born into an aristocratic family, turned active in public life, and become a popular politician and socialite during the Hungarian Reform Age, folded up his political relationships in emigration until he found himself in solitude. In an overview of his political career, those key events will be in the focus that increasingly made him lose hope, and also changed his political habitude. Teleki had good aptitude, talent for politics, was in possession of the abilities that were necessary for the professional pursuance of diplomacy. Nevertheless, his self-sacrificing activities in favour of

Hungary's struggle for freedom did not bring about much success for the cause he was standing for.

I. 'Nothing more dreadful to me than an empty theatre'¹

Before Teleki entered politics, he had the chance to try his talent in other fields, too. He felt attraction to the theatre. His sole completed theatrical work, titled *The Favourite* [*Kegyenc*], a drama of five acts, was published as a book in 1841, and then staged by the National Theatre of Pest in the autumn of the same year, but the performance was little resounded. Since his childhood, the author had been writing poems, comedies and even dramas for home presentation. He characteristically turned to subjects derived from history. The family was fond of the theatre, and financially supported domestic theatricals. At home, they often organized performances, and the family members were ready to take part in them. The adult Teleki kept his interest and sponsoring role in theatrical life.

His father, Count László Teleki Senior (1764-1821) was also a man of letters, as a young person he wrote dramas, poems, played music, and later he dealt with sciences, too. His essay on education remained just a manuscript, but during his life he witnessed the publication of his works on language cultivation, the organization of a scientific society and poesy. Three sons and a daughter were born from his first marriage. His elder half-siblings also took part in the education of László who had become an orphan at an early age: especially József (1790-1855), who later acted as his guardian, and had strong ties with László. József Teleki was a similarly educated man, he was appointed the first president of the Hungarian Academy, held the title of the governor general of Transylvania from 1842, and wrote the great work of history, *The Age of the Hunyadi Family in Hungary* [*Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*], which eventually grew into a 12-volume piece. The mother of the playwright, Baroness Johanna Mészáros (1784-1844) was the daughter of a cavalry general, married to László Teleki in 1801. Later, as a widow, together with the male descendants of the Teleki family she decided to donate her late husband's library of books and manuscripts to the Academy – being herself a founding member –, and she was similarly willing to grant funds for the development of literature, the translation of written works and the staging of theatrical performance. Her younger child, Auguszta (1813-1876) was

married to Count Ottó Degenfeld-Schomburg (1801-1849), gave birth to two sons, but became a widow at a young age.

László shared his childhood among the family's palace in Pest, as well as the residences in Gyömrő and Szirák. Belonging to the Reformed denomination, the family spoke excellent Hungarian, still correspondence within the family was frequently written in German and French. Primarily, it was his private tutors who taught László, and later he became a student at the Sárospatak College (1828-1830), where he attended courses of law.² Teleki tried his hands on several dramas, but only *The Favourite* was completed. In 1826, he wanted to write a four-act drama under the title of *Battle of Mohács* [*Mohátsi ütközet*], and then in 1832 he read out excerpts from his drama about the rebellious Chief Kupa (Koppány). He was also planning to write a drama with the title of *The Betrayer* [*Az áruló*], and while in emigration he was preoccupied with the idea to expand a tragedy about the age of the Hunyadi family.

As occasioned by the various publications and stage performances, a number of reputed critics appraised *The Favourite*, with some of them ranking it as one of the most significant creations of 19th century Hungarian dramatic literature besides Katona's *Bánk bán* and Madách's *The Tragedy of Man*. However, the majority of the critiques condemned the piece for its mistaken dramaturgy of the drama taking place in the closing period of the Roman Empire. According to unfavourable reviews, it was against nature and reason that after the Emperor, Valentinian III abused or tried to abuse Senator Petronius Maximus' wife, the offended husband offered his own spouse to the Emperor as part of the work of revenge, and then following the revenge he wanted to restore their intimate relationship. Maximus' plan was built upon the logic and dramaturgy of a game of chance. In his great gambling game, where he subordinated everything to retaliation, he did play a role, and while it was gradually clarified to the audience what he was up to, the characters in the drama were not able to see the final goal. Still, amid the rising tension of this game and the strong sense of machination, Petronius Maximus' motivation, the way he relied on intrigue and blackmailing to use all other characters to reach his own end remained mostly unseen. Finally, against his intentions, revenge swept away nearly everyone in his surroundings, and the drama also made it obvious that in addition to revenge Maximus was also moved by his ambition and intent to seize power.

For its theoretical construction, Teleki rather created a conceptual narrative that failed to work on the stage, and where characters were in-

sufficiently individualized, independent with less varied motivations. The text was also less structured by personal characteristics and acts, but rather a well-elaborated parable arranged in dialogues, while the tragic nature of the drama revealed itself principally through the interpretation of the underlying thoughts. Many critics opined that the hero was ill-conceived, with his character being implausibly exaggerative. The language of the piece lacked ease, the drama itself turned out to be exuberant and complicated, including a lot of detours, and therefore the text was later shortened, reworked. In certain parts, the author managed to sensitively reflect the states of a peaceless mind, for instance Julia's voice in her dialogue with Maximus was fairly expressive. Similarly, in other respects, Julia's character was generally seen as the most successfully elaborated personages of the drama, probably because her fate was the most distant from the destinies that the author could experience. One of the reviewers claimed that Teleki showed his true excellence in representing political ethics, and the drama was broadly interpreted as a piece written against all forms of authoritarianism.³

II. 'Europe has achieved freedom for us'⁴

Teleki's real talent evolved in politics. Having held offices briefly in the Council of Lieutenancy and the Chancellery, he went on a lengthy study tour to Western Europe that was set to close the educational project that had been designed by his father. As early as during his years as a student in Sárospatak, he visited the country assemblies of Zemplén County, and in 1830 he traveled to the Diet in Pozsony. Having returned home, he participated in the Transylvanian Diet of 1837-1838 as the delegate of the Fogaras District, where he intervened in the spirit of the opposition, which brought even his mentors into an embarrassing situation. In an atmosphere of political trials, the young man with his strong sense of justice stood up for the freedom of speech, the right of publicity and religious equality, but most of his speeches resounded the politics of grievance. Consequently, from 1837 he was regularly mentioned in the reports of secret police agents as one of the most active and extremist members of the opposition. He became entangled in a personal conflict with the Archduke Ferdinánd of Austria-Este, a candidate for the office of the governor general of Transylvania at that time, which put an end to his career as a government official. Still, at the next Transylvanian Diet he

represented Fogaras, but when his brother József was appointed to act as the governor general in 1842, he abandoned Transylvanian politics.

Hungarian political life, where reformists could better organize themselves, promised more success. Teleki was prevented from becoming a county delegate, and therefore in February 1840 he joined the group of young magnates led by Count Lajos Batthyány in the Upper House. He was a close friend of Batthyány, and in addition he became an illustrious member and keynote speaker of the Upper House, followed by his increasingly more important role in leading the entire opposition. In reform-related issues, he basically agreed with the majority of the liberal opposition, but for his relentlessly pressing reforms, intransigency and exaltation of his speeches, sometimes grossness, his political approach was regarded as radical. Teleki became increasingly well-known and popular, he forged a close relationship even with Count István Széchenyi, was a favoured patron of saloons, an educated person and spirited speaker. Besides the meetings of the Diet and Pest County Assembly, he actively participated in the social organizations of the opposition: in addition to Count Kázmér Batthyány, he was the vice-president of Védegylet, an organization established with the goal to protect Hungarian industry, as well as the president of the National Circle. When the National Circle was combined with the Pest Circle, he was again elected to be the president of the new organization called the Opposition Circle. This latter Circle served as the organizational background of the newly established Opposition Party, where Teleki contributed to the formation of the party and the elaboration of its program. He provided financial support to the issue of opposition publications, and collaborated with Lajos Batthyány to have Lajos Kossuth elected as the county-deputy at the Diet of 1847-1848.⁵

After the political turn in March 1848, he did not undertake to occupy any office in the new government, such as that of the minister besides the King or the minister of religious affairs and public education, or the position of the Lord-Lieutenant, which was offered to him. He felt growing anger when seeing the moves of the Vienna policy-makers to hinder transformation. He joined the National Guards, and in spite of the restriction set forth in law he admitted Israelites in his unit. In April, with Pál Nyáry, he transformed the Opposition Circle, and several members of the Youth of March were elected into the board of the Radical Circle. On behalf of the Circle, he put forward a petition to the Government to require the prompt organization of an army of volunteers, because he perceived real dangers in the Croatian and Serbian movements that were

agitated by the Austrian bureaucracy slipping from power. Furthermore, he proposed that agents should be sent to enlighten and calm down people, especially nationalities.

At the first representative Parliament, he appeared as the representative of the Abony District, and in the debate of the address to the King he criticized the Government in relation to the Italian issue. He recognized Italian efforts for national unity and the goals of the national movements. Therefore, he took an accepting approach to Croatia's secession from Hungary in case it was wished by the Croatian nation as a whole, not just Jellačić, the 'agent of reaction'. Teleki argued that the country was to defend herself, and could not cooperate with the representatives of reaction and absolutism from Vienna, because that would put the alliance of the modernized, freedom-loving Europe at risk. In the debate about the army, he demanded the prompt establishment of the independent Hungarian armed forces, and that the legislative act having been passed by the Parliament on the responsible government should be made effective, with the Ministry to become a strong, independent and separate body of power. As it is expressed in the title of the subchapter, he reckoned that it was not us, Hungarians, but mankind that had achieved freedom for us, and therefore we were expected to become worthy of it, that is enforce our independence guaranteed by legislation.⁶

III. 'We are facing a harder duty than the French of '89 [...] Peoples now also want to live the life of nationalities.'⁷

On 29 August 1848, Teleki was appointed by Prime Minister Lajos Batthyány to represent Hungary in Paris, after he had ascertained the French government's will of acceptance. Having met László Szalay, the delegate of the Hungarian government in Frankfurt, the newly assigned diplomat arrived in Paris on 8 September. His principal task was to earn France's official recognition to Hungary, and cause the French to reciprocate the steps taken by Hungarian diplomacy. In the meantime, the conflict between Austria and Hungary sharpened, and therefore the Austrian chargé d'affaires delegated to Paris prevented a French ambassador from being sent out, and then early in September Austria objected to the establishment of independent Hungarian foreign services. Teleki was received cordially by Jules Bastide, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cavaignac, interim Prime Minister, who he informed in relation to the situation at

home, the relationship of the Hungarian to Austria and the nationalities, but as a consequence of the Austrian counteraction his situation as Hungary's foreign representative turned unworkable, and thereafter he was received only as a member of the Hungarian Parliament and just semi-officially. His mission was further aggravated by the fact that at that time French domestic politics were undergoing continuous changes.

Nevertheless, in this rather hopeless situation, Teleki was able to hold his ground excellently, mostly owing to his personal qualities, honesty, veracity, impulsiveness and individual skills. He tried to forge and maintain good relations with politicians, diplomats, representatives, he had access to circles of foreign policy, where he was considered to be a partner at negotiations, while his submissions were accepted. He also fostered significant social relations, he was a welcome guest to various saloons.

Due to his position, Teleki wished to rely primarily on the press to support the Hungarian cause and change the anti-Hungarian public sentiment. With the help of his colleagues, Frigyes Szarvady, József Irinyi and Doctor Mandl, he regularly had articles published in newspapers. Under the influence of de Gerando, who had already had imprescriptible merits in the preparation of Teleki's mission, *National* showed sympathy for the Hungarian cause. Gradually, other newspapers were brought around, such as the radical *Réforme*, Ledru-Rollin's newspaper and Victor Hugo's *Événements*, and even *Siècle* seemed to take a milder attitude. Teleki wanted the general European public to understand that the Hungarians were fighting for their freedom, and do not want to suppress nationalities. Owing to the articles published in the press, the anti-Hungarian sentiment of the French general public also weakened.

In Paris, he established contacts with Central and Eastern European emigrants, Polish, Romanian and south Slavic people, and in particular Prince Adam Czartoryski, who operated a diplomatic network. Teleki had a crucial role in convincing the Polish urging the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire that the Hungarian movement should be regarded as an ally rather than an enemy, and that they started to work out a compromise among the Serbian, Croatian and Hungarian. Teleki informed the Hungarian Government in relation to his proposal for alliances and confederation in his letters, while he considerably revised his position with respect to the rights to be granted to nationalities in Hungary. As reflected in his words quoted in the title of this subchapter, he realized that diverging national aspirations could be counterbalanced by a combination of individual and collective (national) rights. French foreign policy tended to prior-

itize the Italian cause, but when at the end of September a Russian diplomatic note made it clear to the French that the Russian were insistent on the Austria's possession of Lombardy, the Republic withdrew from supporting the Italian movement, while Austria announced that she would not tolerate any intervention in her domestic affairs.

At the end of December, Teleki issued a pamphlet to address the civilized peoples of Europe (*La Hongrie aux peuples civilisés*), and explained that Hungarian people were involved in a legitimate war of self-defense, and also fighting for European freedom, because having uprised the nationalities Austria aspired to restore her power with the help of the Tsarist Russia, which would entail Austria's subordination to Russia. During these activities, he took control of Hungarian diplomacy in the western countries from abroad. In the autumn of 1848, Kossuth, leading Hungary's war of self-defense, called him to coordinate the work of the foreign-based *chargés d'affaires*, and in addition Kossuth also instructed his own appointees to collaborate with Teleki. The ambassador to Paris sent Baron Lajos Splény to Turin, and then to Constantinople, László Szalay and then Ferenc Pulszky to London, Miklós Nemeskéri Kiss to Italy, and Wimmer to Berlin in August 1849. He conducted negotiations with the delegates of Venice and Piedmont. Later, Kossuth commissioned him to source arms, officers and funding. Principally, he negotiated with Polish officers concerning their potential involvement in Hungarian service, he sent Lieutenant-General Henryk Dembiński to Hungary, and announced a call to bring over Hungarian soldiers fighting in Italy.

Teleki made all efforts to interrupt Russian intervention; he wrote a pamphlet (*De l'Intervention russe en Hongrie*), and procured the interpellation of the French Minister of Foreign Affairs in the case, appraised the Minister's response in a public letter. Still, neither Drouyn de Lhuys, nor his successor, Tocqueville did in fact anything in spite of receiving Teleki very cordially. He announced the dethronement to the French Government, and then on 24 May 1849 he had an associated notice published in the press, in which he also emphasized the brotherhood of peoples. In all his reports and messages, he requested the appointment of his successor so that he could return home. He considered Turkish relations to be highly important, and was planning a journey to Constantinople. He did not agree with the circular issued by the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Kázmér Batthyány on 10 June 1849, in which the fundamental principles of the negotiations with the nationalities were set out. In July, he traveled to London to conduct negotiations with Palmerston and

opposition members of the Parliament, but was unable to prevent the final outcome of the war of independence from occurring.⁸

The fall of the war of independence also brought about major changes in Teleki's personal destiny, as he lost his home and wealth, while his not fully official status became even more uncertain. On 22 September 1851, in his absence he was handed down a death penalty, his properties were seized, and he was even hanged symbolically. His brother, József helped to avoid financial difficulties. However, he did not discontinue diplomatic activities, but strived for maintaining, broadening his relations. His hotel room was repeatedly visited by Prince Jérôme Napoléon and the President himself. Teleki received people fleeing to France, and ensured that they could not be persecuted by the police. Soon, the emigrant society of the Hungarians in Paris was formed, where he became the president with Bertalan Szemere acting as the vice-president and István Gorove as the secretary. Nevertheless, tensions and conflicts surfaced among the emigrants.

In addition to helping refugees, he continued to represent the cause of the Hungarian freedom fight. He made a declaration to object to the execution of the Prime Minister of the first responsible Hungarian Government, Lajos Batthyány, and it was published in French and Belgian newspapers. He made consistent efforts to prevent the extradition of soldiers and politicians having fled to the territory of the Turkish Empire to the Austrians and Russians. On the categorical French and English action, the High Porte refused extradition, still satisfied demands for internment. Teleki tried to mobilize all his relations to free the interned, or shorten the duration of detention. He trusted that the then sharpening Turkish–Russian conflict would lead to a war. In the autumn of 1849, in the light of his weakening political relations he reckoned that it would be more efficient to try to influence the public opinion. On the other hand, in January 1850 he had negotiations in London with Palmerston, about whom he did not have an unfavourable opinion, and unlike Pulszky he thought that Palmerston could usefully act for the Hungarian cause. Still, by the spring of 1851 he had lost much of his hopes, and became rather disappointed with diplomats. For the release of the interned, he met and negotiated with President Louis Bonaparte on several occasions.

In his famous letter dated in September 1849, in Viddin, Kossuth informed the foreign chargés d'affaires, Count Gyula Andrassy, Teleki and Pulszky in relation to the closing period of the war of independence, and encouraged them to convince England that instead of the annexation of

the country Austria should be reinforced with an independent, constitutional Hungary as the most efficient means of counteracting Russian influence. Then from the place of his internment, Kütahya Kossuth tried again to urge his western *chargés d'affaires* to take active roles. Teleki organized and coordinated the measures of the emigration in the field of foreign policy from one of the most important diplomatic centers of Western Europe. Even Kossuth regarded him as his most valuable relation who was capable of independent initiatives.

Immediately after the war of independence, Teleki made an effort to convince Kossuth that he should issue a declaration to reassure nationalities by claiming that they were not insistent on Hungarian supremacy. Teleki himself conducted negotiations with them. On 4 January 1850 in London, in the company of György Klapka, Andrassy and Pulszky, and with the attendance of Polish, Russian and Romanian emigrants he participated in a meeting to promote the anti-absolutistic cooperation of the south-eastern European nations, where a proposal was made to set up a confederation committee. He familiarized himself with Kossuth's confederation concepts, and then during the summer an animated debate took place in association with the self-governing rights to be granted to the nationalities. Teleki maintained his position that the Serbian and Romanian peoples needed to be granted territorial autonomy. Kossuth turned this option down, because he thought that then other nationalities would demand similar rights, which would lead to the dismemberment of Hungary. Elaborated in the following year, his draft constitution did not propose territorial autonomy, but associational self-government to the domestic national minorities. On the other hand, Teleki repeatedly stated that nationalities would not accept either of these views, and therefore it was not reasonable to start planning constitutional institutions, but instead they should declare only the principle of universal suffrage.

In the spring of 1851, when the Romanian emigrant, Nicolae Bălcescu elaborated his draft for the confederation in writing, the debate about the nationality issue came to a new life among the emigrants in Paris. Now, Teleki seemed to be more permissive, and explained it to Sebő Vukovics that they should not deal with the province-based concept of autonomy any longer, but use the long-standing county system and naturally the individual localities as a framework to ensure the equality of the nationalities, while even the official languages should not be declared, as 'all others will be disentangled by life'. Weeks later, he still thought that in case no agreement could be made on the details, only generalities should

be declared, notably that the principles of liberty, equality and brotherhood were understood in relation to both individuals and 'nations', no supremacy was demanded for the Hungarian, and national minorities could decide their own destinies by way of universal suffrage.

Similarly, Teleki was active in opposition of the German Confederation, because Prince Schwarzenberg, Austria's Prime Minister put forward his plan to the Dresden Conference summoned from 24 December 1850 that Austria with her entire empire, including the countries that belonged to the Hungarian Crown, should join the reorganized German Confederation. England and France took a stance against this plan. With collaboration from the emigrants in Paris, Teleki worked out a memorandum (*Mémoire sur le Projet formé aux Conférences de Dresde d'incorporer la Hongrie et ses parties annexes à la Confédération Germanique*) in February 1851 on behalf of the Hungarian emigration, and submitted it to the French Government. He underpinned his objections with reference to the ethnic conditions in the Habsburg Monarchy and arguments concerning Hungary's historical separation, and expanded that the projected move would confound the balance of power in Europe, because Austria would be able to sustain her position only with the help of Russia, thus opening the way for the growing Russian influence.⁹

IV. 'Certainly, my friend, I am trying to forget this world'¹⁰

For his poor health and the costly life there, in the spring of 1851 Teleki left Paris, and moved to Switzerland, first to Geneva and then to Zurich to be around his friends, Pál Almásy, Mihály Horváth and Countess Lajosné Batthyány. It was not only the change of his place of residence, but also a feeling of hopelessness and powerlessness that made him gradually withdraw from emigration issues. In his letters written in spring and summer that year, he angrily flared out at Palmerston, stating that there had been gaps in the English diplomatic correspondence issued during the war of independence, and now Palmerston was doing nothing for the release of the people kept in detention in Turkey. At that time, Teleki did not have any trust in diplomats.¹¹

In his absence, with a narrow margin of one vote in favour of him he was elected to be the president and board member of the emigrant society in Paris, but he resigned from this position in the summer of 1851, because he considered the given proportion of votes as a sign of distrust, and

saw several events at the general assembly that he could not agree with. The emigrants of Paris recognized Kossuth as the leader of the emigration, and took the Declaration of Independence as a virtual fundamental law, while confessing the principles of democracy and republicanism. Teleki perceived that the declaration expressed indirect dissatisfaction with his activities as the president. On the other hand, he feared that excessively radical manifestations could potentially make the presence of the emigrants in France uncertain. He opined that it was easy to speak out for democracy and the republic, but the truly burning issue was the way how the principles of democracy could be applied in relation to the nationalities.

Furthermore, he felt grievance about the enthusiastic re-admission of members who had earlier left the society, such as Zsigmond Thaly, Dániel Irányi and Frigyes Szarvady, whereas Szemere, a former vice-president was not elected to the board at all. Teleki did not have too a good relationship with the returning members. When it was revealed that Lajos Csernátony had been publishing in the semi-officially issued Hungarian newspapers of *Magyar Hírlap* and *Pesti Napló*, and publicly disclosed a number of confidential declarations of the emigration, which had deteriorated their situation in France, Teleki broke relations with him, and Csernátony was also excluded from the emigration. While Teleki had no knowledge of Csernátony's direct links to officials at the Vienna police, he asked Kossuth to discontinue correspondence with Csernátony, Szarvady and Bangya. Only Frigyes Szarvady, who was also publishing in domestic newspapers, as well as Dániel Irányi and Zsigmond Thaly took with Csernátony, and they also stood down from the emigration society, though not because of Csernátony's exclusion, but their moving to Brussels. While in fact Szarvady did not leave France, Teleki saw his relationship deteriorate with his former secretary. He did not have complaints about Irányi, still he assumed that Irányi criticized his view on the judgment of the domestic conservatives.¹²

After his leaving the French capital, Teleki loosened relations with the Hungarian living in Paris, and fully broke off contacts with Ferenc Pulszky. Pulszky went to Paris, and met Teleki there in January 1849, after he fled from Hungary, and then he traveled to London. Teleki maintained close relationship with him, they led frequent correspondence, and coordinated their work as *chargés d'affaires*, and moreover the ambassador to Paris had a weighty role in Pulszky's recognition as an official appointee of the Hungarian Government, and provided for Pulszky's finan-

cial support. In May 1849, Pulszky participated in the Paris negotiations concerning the nationality issue, while Teleki first visited London in the summer of 1849 and then in January 1850. It means that their relationship survived the Világos capitulation, though Kossuth more often contacted Pulszky from captivity than the increasingly desperate and passive Teleki.¹³ The break-off was induced by a personal issue. At the end of the war of independence, Count Branicki, a wealthy Polish emigrant handed over 25,000 Francs to Teleki, presumably for the purpose of purchasing arms, and after the defeat he repaid the money, save for 5000 Francs, which had been spent by Pulszky. Later, in January 1850, on request of Lord Dudley Stuart, an English helper of the Hungarian cause, Teleki obtained the 20,000 Francs again to bring Kossuth off, but the plan was never realized, and was not even accepted by Kossuth himself. Teleki cried out when in the spring of 1851 he realized that Pulszky claimed to have secured the money together with Alajos Bikessy, and therefore in a hot-tempered letter he requested explanation from the London chargé d'affaires, with whom he aborted correspondence.¹⁴

In the process of Teleki's withdrawal and isolation, the key moment was when Kossuth pretermitted contacts with him. Initially, even if with longer pauses, they sent letters to each other consistently. Teleki tried to uphold hope in the exile in Turkey, assured Kossuth of his loyalty and support. On the other hand, he warned emigrants to keep their unity, and regard Kossuth as their leader. During the summer and autumn of 1850, they exchanged a number of letters, clarified several points of misunderstanding, and had debates on the rights and liberties to be granted to the nationalities. Although Kossuth closed this debate by stating that they would walk different ways, their contacts did not terminate, just became more sporadic. Kossuth more often turned to Pulszky, while from Paris it was rather Vukovics to send information. Early in 1851, Teleki repeatedly chose to add just a few sentences to Vukovics' letters sent to Kütahya, but later, in the spring and summer of the same year Teleki wrote several detailed letters to Kossuth, lastly on 27 June.¹⁵

During the summer, Vukovics described one of Kossuth's letters to Teleki that resounded the voice of criticism and dissatisfaction for the former ambassador to Paris. He desperately wrote to his friend that his immense work during two and a half years of peaceless and burdensome life Teleki dedicated to Kossuth and the cause had not yielded any result if Kossuth accused him of incapacity and treason. The detailed context of this latter judgment is not known, but there were such statements made by

some of the emigrants in relation to the ones who seemed to be more permissive in the negotiations, debates about the nationality issue. In any case, Teleki understood Kossuth's message as a reference to himself, for which he gave utterance to his deep satisfaction, and decided that he was to withdraw fully from the administration of emigration affairs. Moreover, Teleki was not able to accept that from his followers Kossuth expected unconditional obedience, because he insisted on the formulation of his own independent opinion.¹⁶

Teleki was clearly aware of the significance, popularity of Kossuth's personality, that he could be the one to maintain cohesion among the emigrants, and represent the Hungarian cause the most efficiently. In addition, Teleki had high hopes in Kossuth's role in forging an anti-absolutistic alliance of European democrats. For this reason, Teleki tried to hold off assaults on Kossuth in the press. He defended Kossuth against Prince Pál Esterházy, and planned to respond to Count Kázmér Batthyány, from which he was prevented by his illness. He even disadvised Szemere to stand out against Kossuth publicly, though inefficiently. On the other hand, Teleki did not agree with Kossuth's plans in connection with dictatorship, as he feared that they would lose the support of European democrats. He was increasingly disturbed by the tone of Kossuth's statements, as Kossuth was gradually pushing himself to the fore, and became much identified with the Hungarian cause in person, while he should have been only the advocate of the question.¹⁷

Kossuth's appointee in London, Miklós Nemeskéri Kiss, who also had good contacts with Teleki, regularly informed the former Governor, then staying in the United States, about the situation of the emigrants, and he even conveyed messages between Teleki and Kossuth, and tried to highlight the merits of Teleki's activities. To the open assaults on Kossuth, the emigrants in London responded with a declaration of loyalty, and called the other emigrant groups to join. Vukovics, who had trust in Kossuth, and acted in defense of him at the times of assaults, did not agree with the declaration, and rather gave support to the proposal that a two-member committee or the former members of the Parliament should exercise control over the leader of the emigration. Neither could Teleki and his friends in Switzerland accept the petition, because they looked to the clarification of principles instead of declarations of trust in certain persons in their way to strengthen unity. They objected to the reference to the title and powers of the Governor, and thought that the popularity of a single man could not replace the popularity of the cause of the whole nation.¹⁸

Teleki and his associates sharing the same principles were similarly revolted by Kossuth's letter written in Cincinnati, in which Kossuth called the emigrants on order, and protested against restrictions on his leading role. The former ambassador hoped that if Kossuth returned, in person he could be convinced about the harms of the ill-selected political approach. However, Teleki did not try to contact Kossuth, but rather inquired about the influence of his trip in the United States and Kossuth's political plans from Klapka, and was contemplating with his corresponding partners how a form of organization could be given to the emigration, and curb Kossuth's ambitions for exclusive control. On the other hand, he thought that Kossuth would disregard his opinion, and would not want to be in contact with him. Andrassy also tried to mediate between the two politicians when – instead of himself – he proposed Teleki, as the most suitable person for the given diplomatic tasks, i.e. to act for the representation of the emigration in the United States. Teleki did not have a favourable view on Kossuth's relationship with Mazzini, and condemned his steps towards the outbreak of impetuous uprisings.¹⁹

The former diplomat became politically active again when the Russian–Turkish conflict broadened into an international crisis; he even left Switzerland to move to Paris. He reckoned that Austria's declaration of neutrality in December 1853 was just a tactical move, and in a memorandum he explicated to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs that Austria would support Russia, and the western powers should not be interested in conciliating Austria on their own side, because it would be more beneficial for them to have free scope against the empire of the Habsburgs. When, however, Austria entered a treaty with the great powers, the Hungarian emigrants lost that hope. During the crisis, Teleki had close cooperation with Klapka, who traveled to Constantinople, and Teleki started to nurture the idea of initiating political action together with Kossuth. Still, the emigrants in Switzerland – similarly to Klapka, Vukovics, Antal Vetter and Ödön Beöthy – were willing to collaborate with the former Governor on condition a committee were set up to consult his steps. Beöthy was asked to negotiate with Kossuth, who continued to insist on the one-man leadership, and for this reason contacts and cooperation were not established. Before that, in the spring of 1853 Teleki offered his condolences to Kossuth for the loss of his mother, where Kossuth explained that one of his former proclamations had been used by Mazzini in an action in Milan without Kossuth's knowledge. This text suggests that

Teleki could have given a response in which he explained why he disagreed with Kossuth.²⁰

As it has been mentioned before, Teleki was in close contacts with Klapka during the Crimean crisis, they reconciled their activities. They got acquainted with each other at the London negotiations early in 1850, Teleki was positively impressed by the general, and their correspondence remained continuous until as late as September 1854. Thereafter, they met on several occasions, Klapka bought a house in Geneva, and Teleki was a frequent guest in the city. Once, in October 1856 they had a hassle with each other in the Geneva casino, which resulted in a duel, but thereafter they reunited. Teleki's duel hero mentality did not disappear in emigration: in the autumn of 1852, he also invited Haynau to duel, and when it was not accepted by the retired general, he published his letter of call to the duel in newspapers.²¹

During the years of reclusion, the one-time diplomat led intimate, friendly and confidential correspondence with Sebő Vukovics, who arrived in Paris in the spring of 1850 after hiding in Hungary. He lived close to Teleki in the nearby Montmorency district of the French capital, and when his friend left the city, as well as during his own long-term stay in London from 1852, they frequently exchanged letters. On several occasions, Teleki referred to the fact that he was in continuous correspondence with Kázmér Batthyány, too. Unfortunately, these letters have not survived, similarly to Vukovics' letters of responses. He did not approve the action of the former Minister of Foreign Affairs against Kossuth, but as he wrote they did not have any further dispute in this respect. The situation with Szemere turned out to be similar. Although Teleki objected to his stance against Kossuth, their relationship did not brake up, at the end of 1855 Szemere wrote to Vukovics that once Teleki had not showed up any more, had not responded, written to him. It may be true, because it is only until the summer of 1853 that their correspondence can be traced back. He was also in correspondence with Mihály Horváth, but as early as in the spring of 1852 Horváth complained that Teleki's letters are rather scarce and short. During the war of independence, Teleki had unbroken relations with Miklós Nemeskéri Kiss working at the diplomatic service in Paris, either in person, or via letters. Lajos Batthyány's widow also moved to Geneva in 1852, her children were taught by Mihály Horváth, and Teleki sometimes wrote letters to the Countess.²²

From the early 1850s, Teleki suffered a series of adversities in his private life. In 1851, his elder brother, Ádám passed away, and then 1855

saw the loss of József, with whom he spent a longer period of time in Belgium in the summer of 1852, when he was already ill. He liked staying in Brussels with Baron Miklós Jósika and János Ludvigh. His friend, Baroness Augusztá Liphay, the widow of Baron István Orczy also visited him on several occasions. Abroad, he met his younger sister, Augusztá, with whom he had increasingly frequent correspondence. Teleki seemed to be sympathetic when his sister married the private tutor of her children, Pál Bozó, who was 15 years younger than her. Teleki also lost friends and other associates in the emigration, such as Kázmér Batthyány in 1854, Cézár Mednyánszky in 1857. In this latter year, his third brother, Sámuel died, while the refugees started to seek permission to go home: László Szalay was granted amnesty in 1855, followed by Gyula Andrássy in 1857 – though Teleki had broken off with him earlier –, István Gorove also returned home, similarly to Almásy Pál in 1859. The Geneva colony had disintegrated by the autumn of 1853, still Miklós Puky, a good friend later, settled in the city. During these years, Teleki was restlessly wandering among the cities of France, Belgium and Switzerland, but found no place to stay for longer than a few months. He lived with an undulating spirit, retiredly, while struggling with physical and psychic pains.²³

V. ‘No more truly loyal person on your side’²⁴

Teleki was displaced from his reclusion and isolation by the changes in international politics. In the spring of 1858, he was invited by his former Italian emigrant friends in Paris to Turin, where Prime Minister Cavour explained his plans against Austria to him. Teleki suggested that in military issues Klapka should be consulted. The Hungarian general conducted several negotiations with politicians from Piedmont, and then Prince Jérôme Napoléon, too. He made agreements with the leaders of both countries that they would support the fight for Hungary’s independence, the establishment of a Hungarian legion, and undertook to make contacts with Alexandru Cuza, Prince of both Moldavia and Walachia. With Teleki’s acceptance, Klapka came to an understanding with Prince Cuza that for the war of liberation they would provide ammunition warehouses and military bases. Kossuth made arrangements in London with the Serbian Crown Prince, Mihailo Obrenović, as in the meantime Kossuth was also involved in the negotiations. In his letter dated as of 19 March 1859, Teleki himself initiated the re-establishment of contacts, which was al-

lowed by the fact that his criticism had never reached the level of public and personal assaults. Kossuth cordially responded, and sent his memorandum addressed to the Italian and French government in relation to conditions of Hungarian military participation. With Teleki's agreement, he wanted to ensure that the Hungarian uprising and divergent army would not be left alone by the western partners. After that, their correspondence became regular, they consulted with each other consistently, were able to deepen their relationship, while the tone of their letters became increasingly friendly.

Following France's entry into war, on 5 May Napoléon III and Kossuth met in person, which had been organized by Klapka, but before that he and Teleki visited Kossuth in London to clarify the conditions of their cooperation. On the following day, Kossuth, Klapka and Teleki set up the Hungarian National Directorate, which meant that Kossuth moved away from his stubborn insistence on his sole leadership. The declaration of the Directorate on 22 June virtually accepted the provisions set forth in the draft constitution drawn up by Kossuth as the fundamental principle of the resolution of the nationality issue. Negotiations with the Romanian and Serbian had already been conducted along these principles, as Teleki had moved towards a compromise on his concepts concerning the nationalities. In the middle of May, he traveled to Geneva, where together with Klapka he worked on the organization of the Hungarian legion, while late that month he also negotiated with Cavour. On 8 June, he wrote another memorandum to the Emperor, in which he argued in favour of the launch of the Hungarian uprising and the overall destruction of Austria. Kossuth also appeared in Italy, and met Napoléon III on 3 July, and repeatedly demanded guarantees for the Hungarian participation, but the Emperor soon entered into armistice with Austria, thereby confounding both Italian and Hungarian expectations.

Teleki was still in Genova to make arrangements for the legion, but then his relationship with Klapka much deteriorated, and he felt overwhelmed by depression, disappointment. Months of aimless wandering came again. At the end of the year, he turned down Kossuth's request to undertake the representation of the emigration in Turin. Early in 1860, an agreement was made in London to give the duty to Pulszky. Teleki reunited with Pulszky only reluctantly, and maintained his unfavourable opinion in relation to Pulszky's character. His visit to Palmerston also convinced him that England was insistent on the survival of Austria. His negotiations with Prince Jérôme Napoléon in Paris did not give Teleki

more reason for enthusiasm. He did not accept the representation of the National Directorate in Paris, but on his proposal Kossuth appointed Miklós Nemeskéri Kiss. He remained in fact active only in building domestic relations. He organized the commission for the leadership of the movement, and the leaders themselves became his friends, relatives and acquaintances.

Garibaldi's successes gave a new impetus to the Italian unification movement. Cavour invited the members of the Hungarian National Directorate for a meeting, and on 11 September 1860 a new agreement was made promising support to Hungary's liberation. Teleki became more active, and made steps in particular to settle the nationality issue. He accepted to draft a memorandum addressed to Cuza in an effort to revive the negotiations conducted in the previous year, and also warned the leaders of the domestic movement to seek reconciled solutions with the nationalities. Due to the position of England and France, however, the information received from Cavour on 8 November cast a chill on the anticipations of war.²⁵

Teleki's diplomatic activities were terminated by his private journey to Dresden at the end of November, and then his arrest and extradition to Austria. As a spectacular gesture, the Emperor Francis Joseph released him from captivity on condition that he would not leave the country, but refrain from politics. The loss of one of the respected leaders caused great difficulties to the emigration, which witnessed new opportunities at that time, while the surprising amnesty was hard to understand. Teleki perceived it as a heavy mental burden to clarify the events and his own role. Still, he did not keep a distance from politics, but the drama of his rugged life materialized in the domestic political scene. In the Parliament summoned again after 12 years, he was backed by the majority, and could feel the trust personally in him and the political activities of the emigration. At home again, he remained insistent on his program, and wanted to prevent all deals with the Habsburg monarch that could potentially impair the country's independence. Adherents in his party, as well as their friends and relatives whom he had supported in rising to the front ranks of domestic opposition tried to convince him that his consistent approach in refusing negotiations had become unsustainable under the changed political circumstances in Hungary. With his ruined health and nervous weakness, Teleki was unable to resolve this conflict by changing his conviction, and finally took his own life.²⁶

Notes

- * This study was completed with the support of the OTKA/NKFIH grant no. K112335 awarded to the Hungarian Realms of Memory Research Group working at the University of Debrecen.
- ¹ Teleki to his mother, 4 September 1840. Horváth, *Teleki László*, 1: 80.
 - ² Romhányi, 'Teleki László és Kegyence', 1: 40-54.; Horváth, *Teleki László*, 1: 27-45.; Fábri, 'Bárcsak tökéletes', 23-43.
 - ³ Teleki, 'Kegyenc', 1: 211-306.; Sirató, 'A "különc" gróf Kegyencze', 215-225.; M. Lovas, 'Teleki László kultusza', 227-237., 249-252.; Szilágyi & Vaderna, 'Az irodalom rendi intézményrendszerétől', 608-611. See also Romhányi, 'Teleki László és Kegyence', 1: 59-60., 2: 139-150.; Lengyel, *Gróf Teleki László*, 18-22.; Kemény, 'Teleki László', 1: 16-26.; Horváth, *Teleki László*, 1: 78-102.
 - ⁴ Teleki's speech in the Parliament on 18 August 1848. Kemény, *Teleki válogatott munkái*, 1: 447.
 - ⁵ Romhányi, 'Teleki László és Kegyence', 2: 150-153.; Horváth, *Teleki László*, 1: 45-60., 1: 67-77., 1: 103-177.; Lengyel, *Gróf Teleki László*, 9-18., 22-39.; Kemény, 'Teleki László', 1: 26-45.; Velkey, 'Délután Teleki', 74-94.
 - ⁶ Lengyel, *Gróf Teleki László*, 39-51.; Kemény, 'Teleki László', 1: 45-53.; Kemény, *Teleki válogatott munkái*, 1: 432-447.; Horváth, *Teleki László*, 1: 178-194.; Csorba, 'Egy barátság', 74-79.; Erdődy, 'Nemcsak Ausztria halt meg', 109-110.
 - ⁷ Teleki to Lajos Kossuth, 14 May 1849. Kemény, *Teleki válogatott munkái*, 2: 27.
 - ⁸ Óváry-Avary, 'Teleki párizsi küldetése', 434-442.; Lengyel, *Gróf Teleki László*, 52-96.; Hajnal, *A Batthyány-kormány*, 131-156., 179-181.; Kemény, 'Teleki László', 1: 53-78.; Horváth, *Teleki László*, 1: 197-290.; Erdődy, *A magyar kormányzat*, 95., 108-111., 116-121.; Erdődy, *Kényszerpályán*, 28-29., 37-39., 54-58., 86-93., 102-105., 120., 125-126.; Kosáry, *Magyarország*, 31-33., 45-57., 71., 78-87., 97-99., 163., 174-186., 258-269.; Miru, 'Teleki és Kossuth', 161-173.; Hermann, 'Fejezetek', 669-695.; Erdődy, 'Nemcsak Ausztria halt meg', 110-119.
 - ⁹ Lengyel, *Gróf Teleki László*, 97-111.; Kemény, 'Teleki László', 1: 78-88.; Horváth, *Teleki László*, 1: 291-353.; Csorba, 'Egy barátság', 80-85.; Miru, 'Teleki és Kossuth', 173-191.; Hermann, 'Fejezetek', 695-702.; Miru, 'A szabadság elve', 703-724.; Erdődy, 'Nemcsak Ausztria halt meg', 119-122.; Teleki to Kossuth, 27 September 1850. Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, Országos Levéltár [National Archives of Hungary] R 90, I. 921.; Teleki to Sebő Vukovics, 16 May, 11 and 17 August, 13 September 1851. MNL OL R 216, 1. cs., 1. tétel.
 - ¹⁰ Teleki to Bertalan Szemere, 23 July 1851. MNL OL R 190, 5. tétel, 2. cs.
 - ¹¹ Teleki to Sebő Vukovics, 16 May 1851. MNL OL R 216, 1. cs., 1. tétel; Teleki to Kossuth, 28 May and 27 June 1851. MNL OL R 90, I. 1232., I. 1273.
 - ¹² Teleki to Kossuth, 27 September 1850 and 17 April 1851. MNL OL R 90, I. 921., I. 1184.; Teleki to Sebő Vukovics, 8 and 20 July, 11 and 17 August 1851. MNL OL R 216, 1. cs., 1. tétel; Vukovics to Kossuth, 12 July 1851. MNL OL R 90, I. 1288.; The emigrant society in Paris to Kossuth, 16 July 1851. MNL OL R 90, I. 1296.
 - ¹³ Pulszky, *Életem*, 1: 513-539.; 'A szabadságharc magyar diplomáciai levelei', 81-111.; Vértessy, 'Gr. Teleki László levelei', 2: 217-244., 3: 313-321.; Correspondence

- between Kossuth and Pulszky. MNL OL R 90, I. and Országos Széchényi Könyvtár [National Széchényi Library], Kézirattár [Manuscript Collection], Fond VIII/537., Fond 67/53., Fond 67/63.
- ¹⁴ Pulszky, *Életem*, 1: 484., 2: 15., 2: 34., 2: 57-58.; Teleki to Bertalan Szemere, 23 May 1851. Albert, *Szemere Bertalan leveleskönyve*, 21-23.; Hermann, 'Fejezetek', 685-687.
- ¹⁵ Miru, 'Teleki és Kossuth', 181-191.
- ¹⁶ Teleki to Bertalan Szemere, 15 August 1851. Albert, *Szemere Bertalan leveleskönyve*, 28.; Teleki to Sebő Vukovics, 21 August 1851. MNL OL R 216, 1. cs., 1. tétel.
- ¹⁷ Teleki to Sebő Vukovics, 27 October, 1 and 14 November 1851. MNL OL R 216, 1. cs., 1. tétel; Teleki to Bertalan Szemere, 30 October 1851 and 24 February 1852. Albert, *Szemere Bertalan leveleskönyve*, 34-35., 49-51.; Jánossy, 'A Kossuth-emigráció', 1: 345-361.; Lengyel, *Gróf Teleki László*, 112-117.; Kemény, 'Teleki László', 1: 89-91.; Horváth, *Teleki László*, 1: 357-361.
- ¹⁸ Jánossy, *A Kossuth-emigráció Angliában*, 2: 331., 2: 414., 2: 436., 2: 564-566., 2: 578-579., 2: 585-588., 2: 613-617., 2: 645-646., 2: 687-688., 2: 876-877.; Teleki to György Klapka, 17 February 1852. Klapka, *Emlékeimből*, 583-586.; Teleki to Sebő Vukovics, 6 and 31 March, 14 August 1852. MNL OL R 216, 1. cs., 1. tétel.
- ¹⁹ Kossuth to Miklós Nemeskéri Kiss, 15 February 1852. Horváth, *Teleki László*, 2: 290-295.; Teleki to György Klapka, 17 and 23 March, 3 August, 9 September 1852. Klapka, *Emlékeimből*, 586-587., 591-595.; Teleki to Sebő Vukovics, 17 April, 18 July, 25 December 1852. MNL OL R 216, 1. cs., 1. tétel; Mihály Horváth to Sebő Vukovics, 31 March 1852. Jánossy, *A Kossuth-emigráció Angliában*, 2: 735-740.; Teleki to Mihály Horváth, 4 June 1852. Kemény, *Teleki válogatott munkái*, 2: 94-96.; Gyula Andrassy to Kossuth, 13 October 1852. MNL OL R 90, I. 1986.
- ²⁰ Teleki to Miklós Nemeskéri Kiss, 10 March 1853. Kemény, *Teleki válogatott munkái*, 2: 105-107.; Teleki to György Klapka, between 27 October 1853 and 26 March 1854. Klapka, *Emlékeimből*, 482-484., 600-618.; Teleki to Sebő Vukovics, 23 December [1853], 3 January and 13 February [1854]. MNL OL R 216, 1. cs., 1. tétel; Lengyel, *Gróf Teleki László*, 118-122.; Horváth, *Teleki László*, 1: 361-363., 1: 373-381.
- ²¹ Teleki to Sebő Vukovics, 18 August, 3 and 21 September 1852. MNL OL R 216, 1. cs., 1. tétel; János Ludvigh to Bertalan Szemere, 30 July 1857. Albert, *Szemere Bertalan leveleskönyve*, 224.; Horváth, *Teleki László*, 1: 388.; Velkey, 'Délután Teleki', 68-72.
- ²² Bertalan Szemere to Sebő Vukovics, 8 November 1855. Albert, *Szemere Bertalan leveleskönyve*, 100-101.; Mihály Horváth to Sebő Vukovics, 14 May 1852. Jánossy, *A Kossuth-emigráció Angliában*, 2: 830-832.
- ²³ Romhányi, 'Teleki László és Kegyece', 3: 250-254.; Lengyel, *Gróf Teleki László*, 122-127.; Horváth, *Teleki László*, 1: 366-372., 1: 382-388.
- ²⁴ Teleki to Kossuth, 3 May [1860]. Kemény, *Teleki válogatott munkái*, 2: 173.
- ²⁵ Lengyel, *Gróf Teleki László*, 128-152.; Kemény, 'Teleki László', 1: 92-98; Szabad, *Forradalom*, 19-22., 42-44., 48-49., 87., 114-149., 403-407.; Horváth, *Teleki László*,

- 1: 396-415., 1: 425-447.; Farkas, *Magyar függetlenségi törekvések*, 11-20., 34-36., 99.; Erdődy, 'Nemcsak Ausztria halt meg', 123-127.
- ²⁶ Romhányi, 'Teleki László és Kegyence', 3: 254-258.; Lengyel, *Gróf Teleki László*, 153-173.; Kemény, 'Teleki László', 1: 99-114.; Horváth, *Teleki László*, 1: 448-464.; Szabad, *Miért halt meg*; Csorba, 'Egy barátság', 85-89.; Erdődy, 'Nemcsak Ausztria halt meg', 128.

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