

József DEMMEL (ed.)

Az ismeretlen Ľudovít Štúr. Magyar tanulmányok a legnagyobb szlovákról [The Unknown Ľudovít Štúr. Hungarian Studies about the Greatest Slovakian Man]

Békéscsaba: Magyarországi Szlovákok Kutatóintézete 2016, 104 pages,
Kor/ridor Books 6.).
ISBN 978-615-5615-22-1

An interesting work has been published as the sixth piece in the series of *Kor/ridor Books* in 2016, edited by József Demmel, which contains the lectures of the conference “Ľudovít Štúr – in Hungarian mirror” broadened into studies. The special feature was that only Hungarian historians took part in it. The year of 2015, the 200th anniversary of Štúr’s birth was announced Ľudovít Štúr’s Year in Slovakia. During the jubilee year a lot of important scientific results were published in Slovakia; the Hungarian historians’ studies are important because of their outsider point of view. Eva Kowalská, who wrote the introduction to the book, emphasizes that these texts are interesting especially because the people who wrote them know the results of the Slovakian Štúr-research, yet they were not influenced by the earlier canonized Štúr-figures.

The first study of the book was written by Ágnes Deák. Her work titled “*The Myth of Observation. Ľudovít Štúr and the Secret Service in the 1850s*” looks for the answer for the question still unanswered in the Štúr-historiography. It is whether Ľudovít Štúr was watched by the Secret Service in the last years of his life after 1849. Examining archival sources, she proves that Štúr did not stand in the foreground of the attention of organizations collecting data for the state police, that’s why there was no reason to keep him as a retired private man under purposeful observation, rather he appeared in the halo of Hurban’s activity, in the files of the gendarmerie, police or civil service.

The second study received the title “*The Evangelistic Štúr*”. Its author, Botond Kertész searches the answer analyzing Štúr’s texts for what effect his evangelistic religion had on Štúr’s oeuvre, whether he accepted liberal or conservative theological principles. According to his conclusion “For Štúr only one real community existed, the nation’s. He considered religion, belief in God similarly important, even essential, however, he did not owe value to the Church as community, rather he saw concurrency against the only and most important community forming force, the nation. Basically Štúr was thinking in a secular way. We can understand his work more deeply if we study his evangelistic surroundings, education and belief. But we also have to be clear that Štúr stepped over the frames, the main points of his oeuvre can be found out of the evangelistic, traditional Christian teaching.” (48.)

The third study was written by József Demmel, the title is “*From Norm Violating into Mod-*

ern Nation? *Ľudovít Štúr and the History of the Slovakian National Movement – in Anthropological Approach.*” In his text he uses Victor Turner’s, the British anthropologist’s social drama theory presenting Štúr’s life and the early story of the Slovakian national movement. He states that the community which was created by Štúr – that is “communitas” – bears the frame conditions of a society later to come into being. Due to it for the 1860s “a Slovakian intellectual elite was formed, where beside the priests rationally thinking lawyers, doctors, engineers got their part, a wealthy Slovakian entrepreneur circle and – thanks to the three Slovakian high schools – a wider, educated, Slovakian national branch appeared, a fragmented, though not so strong media market was created, whose products were read not only by a narrow intellectual group, but by self-conscious craftsmen, lower noblemen saving their Slovakian connections, farmers able to read and write.” (65.) So that the community created by Štúr means the basis of the society coming to being.

László Matus’ study called “*We can reach our most sanctified aims if we will be not only Slovakian, but All-Slovakian. – Ľudovít Štúr and the tribal nationalism*” examines the contradiction between Slavism and Slovakian national thought. He states that Štúr “was thinking not in particular Slovakian national, but Slavonian supranational frames.” (84.) His important conclusion is that “Štúr could not canonize modern nationalism as national ideology. He was one of the leading personalities of identity - political mobilizing based on Slavonian unity, which was potentially nation forming, yet Štúr could not realize it.” (84.)

The book is finished by Csaba Katona’s text, who does not write straight about Štúr, but about his remembrance. He states that there have been attempts to canonize him in some form in every period since his death, however, every one of them has failed. Štúr cannot be “placed in any ideologically based historiography unexpurgatedly.” (96.) The afterword of the epilogue is not only worth considering in Štúr-research, but in every historical research. “The moral is that at last historic facts should not be adjusted to a system run by some actual ideology, theory, trend.”

The short, only a 104-pages long book is closed by a thorough index. The edition is standardized, there are no shortages in it. The content is also laudable, it can be interesting not only for Štúr-researchers, but for everyone who is interested in 19th Century history, social or idea history. The other great advantage of the book is that – similarly to the other books of the Kor/ridor series – it is freely available online. On the whole, the writer of the present lines recommends this book for the enquirers.

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