

András Bereczki

Professor István Csekey and the Lapua Movement

Professor István Csekey (1889–1963) was a prominent figure in 20th century Hungarian and European jurisprudence, who, in addition to his significant academic activities, became one of the most important figures in Hungarian-Estonian and Hungarian-Finnish relations between the two world wars. The eight years he spent as a visiting professor in Tartu, Estonia, were decisive in the development of Csekey's later interests. From then on, he dealt a lot with Estonian and Finnish topics: cultural history, local history and political issues.

After outlining the background, the lecture attempts to explore what could be learned about Finnish history and culture in the early 1930s in Hungary, as well as about the political situation in Finland at that time, with special regard to the activities of the Lapua movement, based on the works of Professor István Csekey. His analyses of the political situation in Finland - nearly a century later - can practically be regarded as a source.

In addition to his teaching and management activities, from 1923 he sent news from Estonia - and sometimes from Finland as well - to more than ten Hungarian newspapers in Hungary and outside of Hungary analysing the political situation on current issues, writing about the past and present of relations with the Finno-Ugric peoples, as well as about his personal experiences. He was awarded a Finnish medal for his work in the so-called Finno-Ugric ethnic kinship movement and for promoting Finland in Hungary.

Professor Csekey has written more than 20 studies and articles on Finland. His writings on the history of culture and relations, as well as on the recent history of Finland, were published as books, book chapters and articles in journals and newspapers. These works fall into five categories. The first group includes his shorter articles written between 1924 and 1929, mainly for newspapers (personal experiences of the Kogutowicz-Teleki expedition to Northern Europe; Hungarian cultural events in Helsinki; cultural congresses, etc.). The second group consists of longer, more scholarly works on the Finnish legal system, written in the late 1920s, which gave the reader a real insight into the system. The third category includes works inspired primarily by the emergence of the Lapua movement, which will be discussed in more detail here. The fourth category comprises articles written in the second half of the 1930s, mainly on cultural themes, and the last is made up of works written during the Second World War.

A legal scholar who rarely dealt with day-to-day political events, he was acutely aware that Finland's history had reached a turning point in 1930 and wrote several articles on the events there. After such an active beginning, one might expect the professor to continue to follow the events and their consequences in new writings after the summer of 1930, but - for reasons not yet precisely explored - this was not the case. For many years after 1930, Csekey did not become actively involved in Finland's newer domestic political developments, although he continued to participate enthusiastically in the activities of the so-called "Ethnic Kinship" movement, promoting Estonia and Finland in Hungary. Initially, he followed the development and growth of the Lapua movement with great interest, almost enthusiasm, but he always expressed reservations about the possible failure to respect the Constitution and the laws in force and the violation of the parliamentary framework. The latter may also be linked to the reduction in his activity in reporting current events in Finland.

Some of the main literature used

Ablonczy, Balázs 2016: Keletre, magyar! A magyar turanizmus története. Jaffa Kiadó, Budapest.

Antal, Tamás–Ruszoly, József 2020: Csekey István (1889–1963). In: Acta Universitatis Szegediensis: Forum Acta Juridica et Politica 10/1. A Szegedi Tudományegyetem jogász professzorai I. 155–168.

Csekey, István 25 of his works

Bereczki, András 2003: Az észtországi és finnországi nemzetiségi politika tükröződése a két világháború közötti Magyarországon. Kisebbségkutatás 4: 733–764.

Egey, Emese 2018: A két világháború közötti magyar–finn–észt kapcsolatok. NH – Collegium Fenno-Ugricum, Budapest.

Halmesvirta, Anssi 2014: Kedves rokonok. Cédrus Művészeti Alapítvány – Napkút Kiadó, Budapest.

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