

German historian fights against Romanian falsification of history

A plea from Diana Krausser in the matter of saving the priceless documents known as *Regesta Brassoviae* (1358-1433).

A German researcher from Brasov, a historian by profession, has asked the assistance of an associate of the daily newspaper 'Háromszék' for saving the *Regesta Brassoviae* which, apart from the German references, contains a large number of Szekler references, as well. The majority of the Latin documents date back to the time of the Hunyadi.

The catalog, and the letters the historian was able to examine, strengthened the conclusion, normally skipped over by Romanian historians, that the city was one of the most important defensive links of the late-Middle Age Kingdom of Hungary - a true strategic location. According to the lady, a historian by training, even the infamous voivode Vlad Dracul (Dracula of films and books) was not as 'Romanian' as they claim today. During the preparations for the interview, it quickly became apparent that little can be done in the matter of the documents. They - according to law - are the property of the Romanian state and not even an institution, such as the Szekler National Museum, can accept it for safekeeping. Only the national archives. Yet - states the historian from Brasov - the chief interest of the Romanian state is that these documents be destroyed. (Those who think this opinion as too extreme should remember the string of historical falsifications of the last century.)

During the course of my interview with Diana Krausser - seemingly bringing to life her story - her family history permitted a glimpse into one of the most interesting cities of Central Europe, and the changing fate of the communities and people living here. An insight into the history of the city founded and populated by Saxons and, to a degree, into our own history.

The disclosure presents a partial - yet typical - picture of the evolution which re-drew the history of Brasov, highlighting the assimilative pressure which still bulldozes mercilessly over the past and the present. Even the circumstances surrounding the interview are revealing: I could not set foot within the door of the typical Saxon house in the immediate vicinity of the castle; the interview was recorded at a nearby restaurant. This, of course, could be from a lack of confidence but more likely a cover-up for hopelessness. A few stray words hint at strained financial and human circumstances, the multi-front struggle of an unemployed, solitary historian, resulting in a peripheral role - both professional and human.

Land registry and history

The family's land records stretch back to 1853, when a certain Jacob Barát is first mentioned in the documents, explains madam Krausser, who traces the family name to friars settled here in 1225 by the Teutonic knights, since the Saxon annals (Codex Saxon) clearly state that the city was essentially built around the monastery. The orthodox Saint Nicholas basilica of today was originally a church raised by the Cistercians.

"Romanovissima in Latin means the boundary of the last Rome, and because the historians of today are not conversant with Latin, and also because it is in their interest, they seek the origin of this expression somewhere in the Urals. In days gone by, but even today, the people from East of the Prut River did not march on Suceava or Iasi but came here knowing it had to conquer something here.

And what do famous historians of today say, that the then-population of Brasov were waiting for the Mongols to attack their homes. Totally false. The parts on the other side of the mountains were so-called confrontation zones; the Szeklers, for instance, guarded the entire Moldavian boundary - when an Asian tribe crossed the Prut, the entire Szeklerland was called to arms. Or, to hinder the Turkish armies attacking from the South, the confrontation zone between the Danube and the Carpathians was most expedient.”

My interview subject, of Hungarian descent by way of a grandparent - grandmother Marcella Keresztes, born in 1885 in Brasov, in the Podragu district, - and the family accumulated a priceless historical collection in an uncle’s (Joseph Notár) house, who was a notary and amateur historian. At the same time, grandmother - as a girl - acted as guide to English tourist at the turn of the millennium, acquainting the tourists with the legend of Dracula. But she used the term Dragcula and since I have been studying the history of the Hunyadi, most every Latin document of the period - and there are a lot - refers to him as Vladislaus Dragcula.

It is as a historian that madam Krausser is concerned about the destruction of authentic historical documents. She recounts that, in her university days, she saw with her own eyes how carelessly medieval documents were handled in the now-Orthodox Saint Nicholas church. The invaluable archival material was kept in dirt and filth, expressly prohibiting its care. But, according to her, the hauling of historical documents from Brasov has not ceased to this day.

The destruction of evidence of the past

Madam Krausser feels that the most threatened is the *Regesta Brassoviae*, essentially one collection, containing about four thousand letters written by the Hunyadi and, even earlier, by King Sigismund, to the city of Brasov. In approximately a hundred years, they ascribed such importance to the city that they dispatched official, sealed letters by the thousands. The Latin manuscripts were later translated - primarily into German - and kept in various, often private, collections.

“After Trianon, they collected them from us, and other places too, and took them to the unused castle tower, from there, who knows? - says the historian, who feels that several of them may still be found in the city archives but countless got lost or destroyed, or were recorded contrary to their original content. Now, she is worried that what remained will also go missing or be destroyed.”

We have no place in the falsified history

“I have a plan to create a tourist guide group, who would show the tourists the authentic past of Brasov. Not like the nuns imported from the other side of the Prut who are instructed in presenting a created history. I have heard countless times the nuns, living in the community of the Saint Nicholas church, explain to foreign tourists this falsified history in which there is no role for Saxon or Szekler, no mention of the warrior people, only of orthodoxy.”

Diana Krausser is especially interested in the documents of the Hunyadi and Vlad Dragcula. She recounts in detail of the letters nowadays attributed to Vlad Tepes. She has knowledge of fifteen because many were taken away to Bucharest and those are, alas, hopelessly lost. To tell of only one example, covered recently by the press, that a local historian organized an exhibit in Paris of medieval seals. They were professed to be knightly seals - Romanian, of course - although I have no knowledge of any trans-Carpathian knights. But what is even more eye-catching: in the Middle Ages, these seals were used only in conjunction with a letter or

document. The seal, after all, had an authenticating and fastening role. If the seal is by itself, it means that it was stolen off some ancient document, which was, in all certainty, destroyed.

A little history

“I know from my grandmother that the oldest extant statue of Vlad Tepes is here in the city, at the Church of Saint George, formerly known as the church of the Szekler armed forces (founded in 1400, and only open to the Szekler military units). But why Saint George? In medieval iconography, Saint George was referred to as VLAD, meaning - in Latin letters - the man who attacked the dragon. The name Vlad could scarcely have existed, referring instead to the commander going into battle. To create a historical hero from this most disreputable Romanian is only possible through intentional falsification of history. In the early ‘60s, my grandmother pointed out the statue of Vlad Tepes as one who was the commander of the Szeklers. This is also implied since, as master of Bran castle - a position that could only be held by the Constable of the Szeklers - was, at the same time, the ruling prince of Transylvania.”

Without my consent

The changes-of-name of Diana Krausser are the stuff of novels. Today, she is unable to use her Saxon (German) name officially since her mother’s second husband, who was born near Bucharest, changed it - unbeknown to her - to Ion when she was six. In high school, her family name then became Ioniu.

“All my life, I lived under terror; later in life, I was even unable to marry. In fact, the terror the entire country was forced to suffer, I had to experience at a young age at home. I led an unfortunate life; I prefer not to dwell on it but I am unable to forget it, either. And we must not forget, as it can easily be repeated. In truth, the situation has not changed all that much today. In 2000, when I petitioned to officially register my German name, it was rejected.”

An evil mind

“I fight for the return of those thing taken away from Brasov. I do not believe that the treasures of Nurnberg, for being a former capital, were taken to Berlin. The infringement is still active today; I hold it the greatest calamity of the recent past that it was impossible to halt the cultural destruction leading to the decline of a community. The erasing of the past. Essentially, the removal of the former Transylvanian community of Brasov continues and another ethnic group is being favored to replace it. This process began in the early years of the 1800’s, which, back then, primarily had a demographic basis. Communism was the culmination of this cultural genocide - as if an evil mind invented it for the express purpose of wrecking a most advanced region of Europe. As we know, the cradles of civilization in Central Europe were the kingdoms of Poland and Hungary, which it was the interest of a far-less developed West to conquer. Still, I believe that history corrects its mistakes, that real culture will emerge victorious.”

(Csaba Ferencz, *Háromszék*, an interview for Szent Korona Radio)