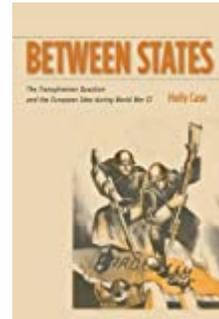




Holly Case. *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009. 349 pp. \$60.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8047-5986-1.



Reviewed by Andrew Ludanyi

Published on H-Soz-u-Kult (April, 2010)

H. Case: *Between States*

Holly Case's *Between States*, published by Stanford University Press is an excellent case study on the struggle between Romania and Hungary for possession of Transylvania during World War II. While the title of the book is too general to reflect its focus, the subtitle is an awkward attempt to narrow that focus. At any rate the title of the book does not do justice to the interesting and systematic analysis of the first four chapters. To make the book fit the title, chapters five and six were added. These should be reserved as a subject for a separate book. Case attempts to bring together two distinct themes (competition for Transylvania and the Holocaust), by linking them via the "European Idea". To this we will return later.

The study, as reflected in the first four chapters, is sustained by extensive footnoting that demonstrates Case's familiarity with all the important and even less important sources on the subject. The wealth of documentation provided indicates that Case has at least a reading knowledge of Hungarian and Romanian. The translation of some of the quotations indicates even more! Besides these footnotes a selected bibliography should also have been appended.

Assets of the supporting structure include a thorough index, excellent population statistics for Transylvania regarding the Second Vienna Award (1940), and some "figures" that include postcards and other photographs, which are particularly apt to describe the popular perceptions of Romanians and Hungarians during the war. These figures also include some ethnographic, demographic and topographic maps, which should have been listed under the subtitle of "maps" rather than "figures". The political maps (pp. 24, 26, 32) are clear and visually set the stage for the analysis. Unfortunately, the ethnographic, demographic and topographic maps are used only to document governmental perspectives. Thus they are copies and do not enhance the awareness of the population distribution based on nationality.

Sometimes more is less! It would have been better perhaps to present just two full page readable maps, one for the Hungarian perspective (Teleki map, p. 42) and one for the Romanian perspective (Manuilă map, p. 44). This way both objectives could have been better served, that means presentation of the nationality distribution as well as the perspective of the two governments.

The method used by Case throughout the study is to have the competitors speak for themselves. This works well when both sides receive a fair or roughly equal share of the quotes. Ion Antonescu or Iuliu Maniu are given about the same amount of space as Pál Teleki or István Bethlen. Thus, balance is reflected in the first four chapters. However, this balance is not maintained throughout the study and it breaks down in the last two chapters. Of course, the content of the quotes also determines the outcome of this method. The use of key words and their negative or positive connotation can have a dramatic impact on the overall portrayal of either the Romanian or Hungarian case.

Just two examples will suffice to make this point. First, the Hungarian Premiers László Bárdossy and Imre Nagy are labeled as "extremists" in the book, yet no similar designation is linked to the Romanian leader Ion Antonescu. Another example appears in Chapter 6 where Ion Antonescu and Albert Wass (p.217) are put on the same level as "war criminals". The former was the foremost political wartime actor on the Romanian scene, while the latter was a popular writer whose role was unrelated to the death and destruction of the war or more specifically to the Holocaust itself.

This point is an apt introduction to the dualism mentioned earlier. As Case mentions in her own "acknowledgements" to the book (pp. xii-xiii) Chapters five and six were previously published as studies in other volumes dealing with the Holocaust. This explains in part why these chapters (pp. 175-218) are different from the first part of the book (pp. 1-174). They are add-ons and as such have to be crunched into the overall thesis of the book. The crunching is to be achieved via the "European Idea". Unfortunately, the European Idea is never really defined. In this way almost anything can be subsumed under it including the ideals of the League of Nations, the status quo interests of the Entente Powers, or even the revisionist rationalizations of the Axis. (The only exception is the "Jewish Question" which indeed separated the Axis and the Allied visions for Europe!)

In the first four chapters the struggle for Transylvania becomes a window onto the relationships of Romanian and Hungarian leaders and their posturing to gain the support of the major European powers. Here Case describes the policies of two small or lesser states and how this affects the policies of the major states. The efforts of Hungary and Romania are presented from the time perspective of World War II, with flashbacks to the late 19th century, the events of the post-Trianon inter-

war relations of the two states, as well as the Second Vienna Award.

Chapters 5 and 6 are fused into the discussion of the earlier chapters, but in this instance Case fails to provide the effective balancing that was characteristic of the earlier chapters. Again two examples will suffice. The first is the discussion of the Holocaust in Romania and Hungary. The most damning elements of these policies are discussed after the "Singled Out" section (pp. 184-194). Here the policies are treated as equally noxious. This is a simplification, muddled by a lack of chronological discipline and even by the use of questionable data. Case recounts that following Operation Barbarossa, between June, 1941 and October, 1942 between 45,000 and 60,000 Jews were killed in reannexed Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina by the Romanian military. Additionally that 220,000 to 300,000 lost their lives due to expulsion to Transnistria by directives coming from Ion Antonescu. To "balance" this on the Hungarian side the casualty deaths of 42,000 individuals who served in the labor service battalions of the Hungarian army during the war are included. Finally, she adds the 3,000 [sic] in Vojvodina, Yugoslavia [sic] who were killed by the counter-insurgency round-up of the Hungarian military following Titoist Partisan attacks against their occupation units in January 1942. All other casualties among Hungarian Jews came as a direct consequence of Hungary's occupation by the Third Reich in the Spring of 1944. Unfortunately, Case fails to point out that this delayed cooperation with Hitler saved at least most of the Jews of Budapest, the largest cluster of Jews in Hungary.

The other example of lost balance is the one-sided use of terms and sources regarding the killings of Romanians by Hungarians and the killings of Hungarians by Romanians. The killing of any human being on the basis of their religious, ethnic or racial identity is to be condemned as a gross violation of human rights. However, in the killing of Jews, Hungarians, Romanians, Germans, or others, distinctions must be made whether or not the killing was a purposeful murder, a hate crime, war crime, or simply the inadvertent consequence of military operations. Pogroms, massacres, and executions against a targeted group obviously are of the former variety. It is in response to violations of human rights that we have the concepts of genocide, ethnocide and ethnic cleansing. For this reason I take issue with Case when she designates the killings of Romanians or the killings of Hungarians as "murder" if done within the context of military operations. Consider that the total number of Romanians killed during the re-annexation of Northern Transyl-

vania was ca.300. Until the surge of 2008 in Iraq, under American occupation, roughly that number of Iraqis were killed on a monthly basis and they were designated either as casualties or collateral damage. The term casualty is therefore a less emotive, a more objective way to describe what transpired on both sides of the lines of

demarcation separating Northern and Southern Transylvania following the Vienna Arbitral Decision of August, 1940.

In conclusion I highly recommend the reading of the first four chapters and reserve judgment on the remainder until a revised edition appears in print.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/>

Citation: Andrew Ludanyi. Review of Case, Holly, *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II*. H-Soz-u-Kult, H-Net Reviews. April, 2010.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=30044>

Copyright © 2010 by H-Net, Clio-online, and the author, all rights reserved. This work may be copied and redistributed for non-commercial, educational purposes, if permission is granted by the author and usage right holders. For permission please contact H-SOZ-U-KULT@H-NET.MSU.EDU.