

Linkomies, Horthy and Mannerheim: Some aspects of Linkomies's "state visit" to Hungary in January, 1943

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The Finns have usually emphasized the separate nature of the war of 1941–44 waged by side of the Germans. We were not "allied" with Germany but only co-belligerents. This statement carries with it, at least indirectly, the idea that the other countries that had joined the common front with the Germans were subordinate allies, less rather than more independent factors.

The myth of the separate war of Finland has been persistent, although it received some blows already during the war. This is evinced in the state visit of the future Prime Minister, Professor Edwin Linkomies to Hungary in the beginning of January, 1943. Much to his surprise, he learned how also the Hungarians stressed the separate nature of their own war, and at the same time, tried to gain distance from Hitler's Germany. Already during the first day of the visit, Linkomies was able to gather that the Hungarians officially wanted to give his visit a more meaningful stamp than simply an ordinary lecture visit. Already at the station he was received by Ambassador Wuorimaa and the Secretary of the Legation, Mr Heikkilä as well as by several representatives of the Hungarian ministries of education and foreign affairs.

Next morning Linkomies finally observed that his visit was made into an important occasion in Budapest. The press featured the visit impressively; it reached the leading articles and it was regarded as a sign of close relations between kindred nations even during the war.

1. The Kinship between Hungary and Finland

Before the World War II the idea of kinship between Finland and Hungary had not gained wide foothold in Hungary. It did not particularly attract the cosmopolitan Hungarian nobility which had recently governed one European Great Power, Austria-Hungary. Why have an interest in that young, northern little brother "without

history"? On the other hand, Hungarian intellectuals and especially philologists cherished the ideas of kinship.

World War II changed the situation. The Winter War created an unparalleled sympathy towards Finland in Hungary. In a moment Hungarians throughout society realized that they had a heroic kindred nation in the North. Young men in great numbers enrolled as volunteers but because of the insecurity of their home country only one battalion reached Finland. On the other hand, the way to Finland was difficult because Hitler's policy was friendly towards Russia preventing the passage of volunteers.

The Hungarians were filled with warlike spirit but they did not reach the front in time because the Winter War ended. To mention one curiosity, it was only a few years back that the Hungarian volunteers still alive were presented with the memorial medals of the Winter War which they had already been granted but had not yet received.

2. Admiral Horthy – "The Mannerheim of Hungary"

In any case, the Finns had by their heroic fighting in the Winter War found the way to the hearts of their southern kindred people (*heimoveli*), and this fact was recognized by Linkomies on his arrival at Budapest.

It was also a great mark of honour that Linkomies was invited to meet the Regent of the Hungarian monarchy, Miklós Horthy. Understandably, it was the climax of the visit. Horthy had made it known that he wanted to meet Linkomies privately, and for this reason Ambassador Wourimaa was not present at the meeting.

One could perhaps call Horthy "the Mannerheim of Hungary" because Mannerheim and Horthy resembled each other both in their disposition and in their background experiences. He was one year younger than his Finnish colleague (b. 1868). Horthy also had served a Great Power and reached the rank of Admiral, and had become the commander of the fleet of the then also as a seapower well-known Austria-Hungary. In the same way as Mannerheim, also Horthy led the troops of the legal government and suppressed in 1919 the people's republic pronounced by Béla Kun. In the following year he was elected Regent of Hungary.

Linkomies relates his first meeting with Horthy as follows: "I was confronted with a tall, handsomely upright man who did not look aged at all although in the same year [18th of June, 1943] he

reached his 75th year. His wellcome was warm and hearty and it did not reveal the slightest noble stiffness". Linkomies goes on by writing that Horthy's quite small study was full of books leaving the impression that it was the study chamber of a professor rather than a reception room of a head of state.

3. Horthy and Mannerheim

It is no wonder that Linkomies was inclined to make comparisons between Horthy and Mannerheim. As he stated, both were soldiers who had won fame in World War I, both were liberators of their countries from "the claws of the communist eagle" and both were elected as Regents. True, Mannerheim stayed in office only for less than a year, Horthy for over two decades. Besides, both led their countries in the World War II.

In addition to these similarities, Linkomies took notice of the common characteristics in their human nature. These were "charming magnetism of the personality", "calm deliberation and apparent modesty", underneath which there glowed the consciousness of one's own value.

In Linkomies's opinion, Horthy was "somewhat more broad-minded" than Mannerheim, and he did not recognize in him the tightness often typical of Mannerheim. He also surmised that Horthy was more warm-hearted than the basically slightly cool Mannerheim.

Regent Horthy made a very great impression on Linkomies. This is even more remarkable since we know that Linkomies esteemed only a few people. Linkomies's assessment of the visit and its host was stylistically elegant, and it has literary value: "My visit to the Regent of Hungary took over an hour. It left with me a most pleasant memory and I left knowing that I had met a man who embodied what is spiritually most valuable in European man. His view of the future of his own country and of Europe was not particularly comforting. But in his manly resignation his human nature was characterized by a generous conviction. It was as if he had wanted to say that he was a human being, above whom the figure of fate had arisen into such proportions that human efforts could not control it any longer. He saw what the position of Hungary was, and the future was not to disqualify his view. It was not in his hands to alter the course of fate".

4. Horthy's plan

Definitely, Horthy was not a national-socialist in a strict sense of the word although he had had to lead his country into an alliance with Hitler's Germany. He and Mannerheim represented the pre-World War I monarchistic old regime. In spite of this, Horthy, the elderly Admiral, was interested in up-to-date questions of race.

Linkomies writes in his memoirs that Horthy was keenly interested in Finland and the racial propensities of the Finns. His purpose was incite several tens of thousands young Finnish men to move for a certain period to Hungary where they would marry young Hungarian women. These "emigrants" were to be allotted some land to cultivate. The ultimate goal was racially to improve the people of Hungary by giving it an injection of Finnish blood, and to complement the racial characteristics of the Hungarians with Finnish perseverance. Afterwards the Finnish men should have been allowed to return to Finland if they wanted but their wives and children had in any case to stay in Hungary.

Horthy's plan was of course to be implemented only after the victorious war. In any case, Finland could not have been able to hand over men in their prime for military service up to the amount of several divisions just like that. Admiral Horthy claimed to have informed President Risto Ryti of his plan but Ryti had forbidden public discussion over it before the end of the war.

Having returned to Finland Linkomies later asked Ryti about the matter but he denied having ever heard about it before. The plan appears so fantastic that Ryti's statement may well be true. The Hungarian Ambassador in Helsinki may have lacked the civil courage to tell the President about the plan of his posting country. Ryti's negative standpoint is further supported by the fact that the biographical study of Ryti written by the author of this essay did not reveal any references to the matter put forward by Horthy.

Horthy's plan came to nothing because Germany did not beat the USSR. "A New Europe" was not to be drawn after these plans. Hungary was overrun by the Red army, and already before this happened Hitler had organized a coup in Hungary and had had Horthy imprisoned. The Americans released him in due time and he spent his last years in Portugal where he died in 1957. We do not know whether the plan of racial regeneration produced any accidental results at Lapua where the battalion of Hungarian volunteers to fight in the Winter War still remained over several months.