

Rodostó in Europe – Europe in Rodostó The Ferenc Rákóczi II memorial exhibition

Dear Visitor,

We welcome You to the Rakóczi Memorial House and Museum in Rodostó. You are listening to the audioguide of a new historical exhibition which was created in order to salute to the memory of Prince Ferenc Rákóczi II and the Hungarian political emigration. The audioguide was created with the help of the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary and with the participation of the Hungarian National Museum.

This audioguide will offer you general information about the different units of the exhibition and you will be able to familiarize yourself with the historical background of the displayed artefacts, paintings and graphics as well.

Starting from the foreground, this part of the exhibition guides you back to the 18th century Europe.

Europe in the early 18th century

The peace treaty of Karlowitz (1699) put an end to the Turkish wars, the territory of Hungary was restored, the full direction of the country was completely controlled by the Viennese court, thus Transylvania also lost its independence. Other parts of Europe were ravaged by war. In the War of the Spanish Succession beginning in 1701 for the acquisition of the Spanish throne the French and the Bavarians attacked the Habsburg Empire. In northern Europe the Great Northern War broke out for the Polish throne and the Baltic hegemony. Almost all of the significant European countries were plunged into either of the wars.

In Hungary the nobility turned against the Habsburg government because of the serial violations of the constitution and their liberties, while the peasants were discontent with the raised taxes. Because of the overall discontent Ferenc Rákóczi and Miklós Bercsényi asked for the support of Louis XIV of France, the prime enemy of the Emperor of Austria. Ferenc Rákóczi was arrested for high treason, but – in an adventurous way – he fled to Poland from his prison in Wiener Neustadt.

You can continue your tour through the kitchen, right to the information desk. In the third room of the exhibition will acquaint you with the parentage of Prince Rákóczi and the history of his family.

The family relations of Ferenc Rákóczi II

Ferenc Rákóczi II was born into an aristocratic family. His great-grandfather, Prince György Rákóczi I made Transylvania rich and strong. He entered the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) and achieved that his state was included in the text of the Peace Treaty of Westphalia. His grandfather, György Rákóczi II as Prince of Transylvania wanted to gain the Polish throne as well. His campaign which was launched without the permission of the Porte was fallen through and he lost his life fighting the Turkish-Tartar armies attacking Transylvania. Through Zsófia Báthori – his grandmother on his father's side – he could vindicate the spiritual heritage of István, Zsigmond and Gábor Báthori, Princes of Transylvania.

His father, Ferenc Rákóczi I, was the greatest landholder of North-West Hungary. His mother, Ilona Zrínyi, was the daughter of Péter Zrínyi, the Croatian ban defeating the Turks and the niece of Miklós Zrínyi, poet and general. Péter took part in the anti-Habsburg plot of Wesselényi and was executed. Báthori Zsófia, the mother of Ferenc Rákóczi I could redeem the life of his son by money. Ferenc Rákóczi II lost his father as a baby. In 1682 his mother

married Imre Thököly who was the prince of the Turkish vassal state in Upper Hungary (Orta Madzsar). After its collapse she heroically defended the castle of Munkács, the last fortress of Thököly's principality, but in 1688 she had to capitulate. After the Peace Treaty of Karlowitz (1699) she went to exile to Turkey.

Now, you can return to the foreground and go up the stairs. The three rooms on the first floor of this Museum covers the history of the freedom fight between 1703-1711. The first room is in front of the staircase from where you can follow your way to the other two rooms.

Rákóczi's War of Independence (1703-1711)

The governing methods of the Viennese court met comprehensive revulsion in all the social classes. The derogation of the feudal rights, the obligate provision of the foreign army in Hungary, the raise of the taxes enhanced the discontentment. The troops stationed at the castles by the border became redundant and the Viennese court did not permit the establishment of a separate Hungarian army. The remnants of Imre Thököly's army and the troops dismissed from the castles attempted to rebel several times, but both the uprising in the Hegyalja region in 1697 and the uprising in the Tiszahát region in 1703 was put down. The enhanced discontentment and the forced conscriptions because of the War of the Spanish Succession led to the outbreak of Rákóczi's uprising.

In April 1703 rebels from the Tiszahát saw Rákóczi in Poland to call him upon to be their leader. In the Proclamation of Brezán Rákóczi resorted to the people of Hungary and called them to take up arms. Only a few hundred armed men awaited him at the border, nevertheless he took the lead in order to establish a new Hungarian state.

Soon many people joined his army and this called forth success. Imperial troops were expelled from Northern Hungary and the troops of Sándor Károlyi captured the fortifications built for the defence of Vienna in December 1703. In 1704 an offensive was launched to capture Transdanubia. In 1704 the imperial army defeated the French and the Bavarians in the battle of Höchstädt, thus more troops could be sent to the Hungarian theatre of war. Between 1704 and 1708 the rebels controlled the Great Plain and most of Northern Hungary. By the end of 1705 except for a few castles Transdanubia was also liberated, early 1707 Transylvania was also conquered.

In September 1705 the meeting of the Hungarian Diet at Szécsény elected Rákóczi „Governing Duke” of the Confederated Estates of the Kingdom of Hungary and established a 24-member Senate as an advisory board. The prince was given full powers to manage foreign affairs, finances and military affairs. The chancery led by Pál Ráday was in charge of diplomacy, while the Council of Economy was particularly responsible for arms and military equipment. The Diet also decreed on religious affairs. The free practising of the three accepted religions (Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Calvinism) was declared and denominational ownership of the churches taken from the protestants after 1647 was settled.

After the death of Lipót I the more pliable József I ascended the throne. Peace negotiations began with the mediation of English and Dutch diplomats. In 1704 Ferenc Rákóczi II was elected the Prince of Transylvania which was controlled by the Austrians at that time. Among the terms of the peace was the acceptance of his principality which was rejected by the emperor, thus the war continued. The prince relied on the French-Bavarian alliance despite Louis XIV had always secluded himself from a formal alliance. The French assisted the prince with an aid of 10 000 Thalers a year and submitted several military engineers and officers. In May 1707 the Diet at Ónod declared the dethronement of the Habsburgs and the prince wanted the Bavarian ruler Maximilian II Emanuel and later the Prussian crown prince to ascend the Hungarian throne. Because of the lost battle of Malplaquet the French-Bavarian

allies signed a peace with the emperor and suspended the military and financial assistance of the Hungarian Confederation. Ferenc Rákóczi II did not get substantive Swedish or Polish assistance and even the Turkish Sultan did not support him because of the operative peace treaty with the Habsburgs. Only Peter I, Tsar of Russia signed a treaty with the prince in Warsaw in September 1707. The tsar offered the Polish throne to Rákóczi, who would have accepted it under terms: the tsar should assure the freedom of the Polish and a Polish-Hungarian-Transylvanian Confederation should be established with the assurance of England and Holland included in the peace treaty ending the war. Despite the Russian victory by Poltava in 1709 the tsar was engaged by the Swedish war, thus Ferenc Rákóczi II and his state was left alone.

The state was also in a difficult economic situation, as the late 17th century wars almost totally depleted the economic resources of the country. For the storage and easier distribution of food and military equipment the prince set up a network of repositories. The domestic industry based on the guild system could not supply the large quantity of armour and uniform needed for the soldiers. The prince supported the improvement of textile and iron works, the master craftsmen were dispensed from military service and specific plans were worked out for the improvement of industry and trade. The greatest problem was the lack of money. The French financial aid and the gold and silver currency minted by Rákóczi was spent on buying weapons abroad. Thus – because of the lack of tax revenues – the prince had to debase currency. For a short time the copper coins pulled the country through the financial difficulties. Later Rákóczi had to levy tax which was imposed on everyone, thus even on the prince.

In 1708 the prince's troops were routed by the imperial army at Trencsén. The soldiers dispersed and soon Rákóczi's army was dwindled to half of its original number. In 1709 Transdanubia was given up and in 1710 the imperial troops were victorious again over the army led by the prince himself. Rákóczi's state soon shrank to Upper Hungary and the edge of the Great Plain. In 1710 lieutenant-general János Pálffy was appointed the commander-in-chief of the imperial army. The plague spreading all over Europe had reached Hungary as well and the only egress left for Rákóczi's plague and famine smitten state was conclude a peace treaty on favorable terms. In November 1710 lieutenant-general János Pálffy began the talks with Sándor Károlyi, the emissary of the prince. Rákóczi travelled to Poland, in his absence the supreme command was conferred to Sándor Károlyi and Pálffy mediated a favourable peace offer to him. The terms were accepted on 30 April 1711 and next day the summoned troops took an oath of allegiance on the Plain of Majtény by the flags pitched into the ground. The state of the Confederated Estates of the Kingdom of Hungary had ceased.

Up the stairs you can reach the second floor where You will be able to familiarize yourself with the emigration years of the Prince.

Rákóczi' exile

Ferenc Rákóczi II left Hungary on 21 February 1711 to meet Tsar Peter I in Poland. At that time he did not know, that he would never return to his homeland. He met the tsar on May 12 – after the Peace Treaty of Szatmár was signed – and he assured Rákóczi of his assistance. The prince relied on restarting the war with Russian help from the Castle of Munkács which was still under his control. However Munkács capitulated on 15 June, thus the last stronghold of the War of Independence fell. Tsar Peter I also revoked his assistance as he wanted to win over the benevolence of the Viennese court after his lost Turkish war. In spite of this Rákóczi escorted the tsar to Elbing and later he moved to Gdańsk. During his stay in Gdańsk the

number of his companions diminished very much. Some undertook service in the Russian army, others in the Polish army, but many returned home, like Pál Ráday and János Sréter. In the meantime the Diet of 1712 annulled all the decrees of the assemblies of Rákóczi's War of Independence, guaranteed clemency for those who returned by the date set in the Peace Treaty of Szatmár, but those who did not return were pronounced guilty in high treason. They were banished and their properties were confiscated.

On 9 November 1712 Rákóczi travelled to France to ask for the help of Louis XIV: he wanted the independent statehood of Transylvania recognized by the Treaty of Utrecht. He was admitted to the king on 13 February 1713 in the Palace of Versailles. Rákóczi fitted in the life of the court easily, but his efforts were of no avail, Transylvania was omitted from the Treaties of Utrecht and Rastatt. Because of the death of Louis XIV and his disappointment he settled by the Camaldolese monastery at Grosbois. He spent his time writing his "Confessions" and his memoirs. He did not forget his associates: he helped them financially.

In 1716 war recrudesced between the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empires, which gave new hope to restart the War of Independence. Relying on the letter of invitation and the promise of the sultan in August 1717 Rákóczi departed to Turkey, but by the time he arrived at Adrianople the war had ended. Rákóczi asked for the sultan's help in vain, he was frustrated again. In June 1718 on the beginning of the peace conference in Pozsarevác Károly III claimed his extradition, but the Porte did not comply. According to the peace treaty the Porte assigned residence for him farther on from the border, first he stayed in Jeniköj, near Constantinople, then from 1720 in Rodostó, which he was not allowed to leave. The exiles slowly gathered round Rákóczi. He lived here until his death with his most committed devotees, with Miklós Bercsényi and Kelemen Mikes among others. His contact with the Turkish offices and dignitaries was helped by Ibrahim Müteferika, who had Hungarian parentage and worked for the prince as interpreter and secretary.

After the death of Ferenc Rákóczi II on 8 April 1735 the exiles in Turkey invited József Rákóczi, the elder son of the prince to be their leader. Thereupon he fled from Austria and arrived at Rodostó on 1 December 1736. The war which broke out on the summer of 1737 between the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empires gave them hope to return from the exile. On 2 December 1737 József Rákóczi was admitted to the sultan and on 25 January 1738 he was given the athname of the sultan on the Principality of Transylvania. On 28 January he issued a proclamation on his plans to the people of Hungary and Transylvania, but the awaited joining of the great number of discontents did not occur. The Turkish attack did not accomplish significant results either and shortly József Rákóczi died on 9 November 1738 in Cernavoda. The exiles who gathered round him returned to Rodostó on 21 June 1740. This was the end of the last significant event of the exile.

The small room by the end of this hall salutes to the memory of Kelemen Mikes, the secretary of the Prince.

Kelemen Mikes (1690–1761)

His father participated in the Thököly revolt. He studied in the Jesuit high school at Kolozsvár, from 1707 he was the page of Ferenc Rákóczi II. After the fall of the war of independence he followed his master into exile and stayed by him to the very last. In 1758 he became the leader of the Hungarian community. With the title "Letters from Turkey" he wrote his experiences of exile of the period 1717–1758 in the form of fictitious letters to an imaginary aunt in Constantinople. In addition to this he also translated several French works into Hungarian. His work was first published in Szombathely in 1794.

In the old dining room you can acquire information about the history of the building itself in the 20th century.

The history of the building in the 20th century

Kálmán Thaly gave the first account of the dining house of the prince in 1889. He and Lajos Szádeczky did everything to save the ruined building. On their initiative the Hungarian state acquired the artistic decorations of the dining house, which were removed and transported in 29 cases to Kassa to build the replica of the dining house of Rodostó there. The planing of the building was interrupted when Kassa was annexed to Czechoslovakia after the World War I. The reconstruction of the dining house was completed in 1942, after the town became the part of Hungary again in 1938.

The dining house in Rodostó was renovated by the Hungarian state in 1932. The decorations of the original stuccos were painted on the plaster of the dining hall, the removed doors and windows, the wooden ceiling and the cupboard were reproduced. The rebuilt dining house was opened as the Rákóczi Memorial Museum in 1933. In 1982 the true copies of the original furnishing at Kassa were made, thus the true copies of the stuccos, wooden ceilings, and painted, decorated cupboard removed in 1905 got back to their original place.

Finally, go back to the groundfloor where you will find the last room of this exhibition about how the posterity remembers to the Prince.

The return of the ashes of Ferenc Rákóczi II and his associates to Hungary and the Rákóczi cult

The quest of the tombs of the prince and the other exiles, and their predecessors in exile, Imre Thököly and Ilona Zrínyi, and the saving of the remaining artifacts were the merits of Vilmos Fraknói, Kálmán Thaly and Lajos Thallóczy. The ashes were shipped to Hungary in 1906 after the 20th Act of 1906 abolished the 2nd and 3rd sections of the 49th Act of 1715 which banished Rákóczi and his associates. The event was resounded by a nationwide celebration between 27 and 30 October 1906. The ship "Kelet" carried the coffins and the escorting delegation to Constanța, from where they were conveyed by a special to the capital. At each stop the train was greeted by celebration.

In Budapest there was a black service in the evangelical church on Deák square and a black mass was in the St. Stephen's Cathedral. Afterwards the ashes were taken by a special train to Kassa or to Késmárk.

The ashes of Ferenc Rákóczi II, Ilona Zrínyi, József Rákóczi, Miklós Bercsényi, his wife Krisztina Csáky, Antal Esterházy, and Miklós Sibrik were buried in the vault of the cathedral of Kassa, the mortal remains of Imre Thököly were buried in the new evangelical church in Késmárk. The relics of the exiles found in Rodostó were shipped to Hungary at the same time.

In the 20th century celebrations, memorial exhibitons payed reverence to the prince and his associates taking part in the War of Independence. The cult escalated in the late 19th century was gradually gave place to the in-depth research of Rákóczi's era, and the results were exposed in comprehensive monographs, scientific sessions and various publications.

Thank you for your attention and we hope that you could recall the past in this historical building.