

**TRANSYLVANIA
IN THE INTERWAR ROMANIA**



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MINORITY POLICY STRATEGIES OF THE HUNGARIANS OF ROMANIA BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

This study seeks to contribute an analysis of the political values and strategies according to which the National Hungarian Party (*Országos Magyar Párt* – OMP), representing the Hungarians of Romania, functioned. These values and strategies, and the self-reflective notions of identity functioning as a system of norms in a minority situation, may be summed up as the minority policy strategy of the Hungarian elite of Romania.¹

Factions, Cleavages

Classification according to Contemporary Sources

The contemporary press and the diplomatic background materials did not regard the Hungarian politicians outside of the OMP – acting as representatives of the Romanian parties – as participators in minority public life.² The OMP was divided into conservative and left-wing factions.³

The members of the *conservative group* emerged from the historical Transylvanian elite belonging to the party of István Tisza – until the summer of 1917 the government party. In their view, political leadership “must remain in the hands of the large- and middle landowning class and the intelligentsia, the so-called historical classes, because it is these that contain the most political ability and strength of national resistance.” The fact was that the (partly Jewish) urban bourgeoisie was weak, while the peasantry’s national self-consciousness was underdeveloped, and therefore they could fall under the influence of radicalism and “excessively democratic ideas.”⁴ The leading member of the group, which was

created primarily out of the leaders of the former state administration in Kolozsvár as well as the large landowners, was Emil Grandpierre, who directed the movement of the Hungarian civil servants prior to the peace treaty.⁵ They were joined in 1922 by Elemér Gyárfás – it was through him that they gained influence in the Catholic Church and in Transylvanian Hungarian financial life – and Elemér Jakabffy,⁶ editor of the journal *Magyar Kisebbség*, and the most distinguished Hungarian politician of the Banat. It was they who formed the *Kolozsvár Center*, recognized as the only representative of the Hungarians of Romania by the government in Budapest, and under the pressure of the later left wing demanding action it was they who initiated the self-organization of the Hungarians in December 1920 with the establishment of the Hungarian Alliance (*Magyar Szövetség*).

The diplomatic documents cited above divided the *party's left wing* into the circle of “Hungarian radicals,” led by Árpád Paál, and the group of “pacifist, humanitarian and internationalist” Hungarian Jews and émigré journalists from Hungary.⁷ According to these sources, unlike the Conservatives the former’s thinking was determined, apart from historical and legal education, by the sociological outlook associated with the journal *Huszedik Század* and Oszkár Jászi, although historical materialism and social democratic idealism also had an impact on them. They considered their crucial task to be “as radical a reform as possible” of Hungarian social and political life. This group of the younger Transylvanian Hungarian intelligentsia united within it political radicalism “with strong Hungarian national sentiment and a fanatical love of race.”⁸ The other segment of the left wing, according to the above-cited source, nurtured hostile attitudes towards the aristocracy and the Catholic clergy, and wanted to achieve the democratization of the state and society with the assistance of social democracy, and thereby hoped to seize political power. The most radical part of the current was “the so-called propertyless Jewish intelligentsia.”⁹ The oversimplifying characterization served in part to brand the existing reform aspirations within the party¹⁰ as leftist, and in opposition to

them to be able to cite the importance of national unity. According to the previously cited report, the political aims of the “left wing” included the following: the reorganization of the party relying on the bourgeoisie and the working class, so that “all the popular [*népi*] strength of the Hungarian minority would stand as a barrier against the oppressive Romanian political system”; the ousting of the aristocracy from the party leadership; the secularization of school policy; the retention of the Jews within Hungarian society.¹¹

The relationship between the two currents was determined by the fact that although the “left wing” – with its composition always changing – in the disputes reached the point of breaking with the party, it did not initiate the founding of a separate party, in part because it did not want to create an opportunity to disrupt the stability of the Hungarian political community, and in part because it conceded that the historical, national and grievance-based rhetoric of the Conservatives “was more deeply rooted in the psyche of the Transylvanian Hungarians” than the “nonetheless alien” intellectual currents advocated by it.¹²

*Political Cleavages*¹³

Classification according to *political values and ideas* may further refine the picture. The distinction between right wing and left wing is also supported by an examination of passivist–activist behavior as well as the differing strategies of the Hungarian Alliance, the Hungarian National Party (*Magyar Nemzeti Párt*) and the Hungarian People’s Party (*Magyar Néppárt*). The activism represented by Károly Kós and Árpád Paál signified not cooperation with the existing government but rather the urging of the self-organization of the minority Hungarians and the renewal of their remaining institutions.¹⁴ They, too, thought in terms of “Greater Hungary” (in other words the restoration of historical Hungary), although they imagined the Hungary of the future not as a centralized state but rather on the basis of cooperation among the regions.

In December 1920 the leaders of the civil servants' movement, taking as their starting point the Paris minority protection treaty – which in their interpretation had, together with the concept of *minority*, established a new legal entity in constitutional (and international) law: the subject of the minority rights established in the treaty – as well as the fact that the protection of these rights had become the duty of the League of Nations, decided in favor of establishing an alliance standing above parties, as a public entity. In their program they emphasized the need for minority autonomy, in contrast to the program of Károly Kós and his companions, the central idea of which was an autonomy stemming from Transylvania's historical separateness. This goal presumed the establishment of an independent Hungarian party cooperating with the Transylvanian Romanian National Party and the German parties. It was as a result of the dispute between the two groups that the Hungarian People's Party came into being. The debate was decided by the banning of the Hungarian Alliance: in December 1922 the OMP was born, in which the conservative group championing minority autonomy assumed important positions.

Minority Policy Considerations and the Attitude towards Unity

Imre Mikó dealt with the minority policy *orientations* of the Hungarians in Romania in detail in one of his studies.¹⁵ He saw the decisive difference between the OMP and the Hungarian Ethnic Bloc of Romania (*Romániai Magyar Népközösség – RMN*), led by Miklós Bánffy and replacing the former in 1938, in the fact that while the party placed the emphasis on a sometimes active, at other times passive *political defensive battle* in relation to the changing situation – “until the solution arrives from outside” – the latter considered ethnic organizing to be its most important task, because “whatever form the new Europe make take, the Hungarian people must prepare for every eventuality.” The program of the Hungarian Ethnic Bloc, however, was linked to several earlier reform initiatives. The members of the intelligentsia that appeared in 1918,

and experienced their political socialization as minorities, saw that Hungarian society in Romania was in need of inner renewal, and for this a strong institutional system of its own must be developed, which could react in an appropriate manner to the nation-building and modernizing challenges of the majority society. The disputes between the two “groups” concerned the attitude towards Romanian political life (collaborate, but with whom?), or they decried the lack of a relationship between the party leadership and the broad strata of society.

Beyond dissatisfaction with the party leadership, the attitude to the Romanian parties was the immediate reason for György Bernády and Károly Kós *leaving the party*.¹⁶ Árpád Paál, after losing his posts within the party and also struggling with existential troubles, went from being a bourgeois radical journalist to the editor-in-chief of a right-wing Catholic paper.¹⁷ Something similar happened to Miklós Krenner, who, after the failure of the reform group established to democratize the OMP (1927), still made an effort to put Romanian-Hungarian relations on new foundations in 1932; however, the party chairman, György Bethlen, rejected his initiative.¹⁸

With their editorials these publicists provided perspective and rhetorical reinforcement for the Hungarian middle class; however, they had no opportunity to realize their ideas politically.

The relationship between the strategies of “defense” (unity) and “building” (completeness) changed with Miklós Bánffy’s return home in 1926 – presumably with the support of the Hungarian prime minister, István Bethlen. Bánffy conducted his activity outside the OMP, in cultural and economic life, and this may have been due, apart from his ten-year-long political silence towards Bucharest, to the change in outlook of the experts and the government in Budapest. István Bethlen supported two alternatives at once: György Bethlen’s defensive, unity-preserving, wait-and-see policy, as well as Bánffy’s building of cultural and social ties.¹⁹ The leadership of the OMP found itself in the curious situation whereby the government in Budapest, which provided it with legitimacy, like its own party opposition, was urging it to build relations with

the Romanians and involve itself with the everyday life of society and people of modest means. The key figure in this society-building activity outside the party in the 1930s was Pál Szász, who turned the Transylvanian Hungarian Economic Association (*Erdélyi Magyar Gazdasági Egyesület* or EMGE) from the organization of the great landowners into the economic-coordinating and professional organization of the small and middle-sized landowners.²⁰ At this same time the Hungarian cooperative movement thrived, and local social life came to life.

After the change in sovereignty, the state-nation conception linked to imperial consciousness became useless. For the members of *the younger intellectual cohorts*, consciousness of belonging to the nation was paired with the demands of sociology, with turning towards the people. The circle of the *Erdélyi Fiatalok* (Transylvanian Youth) had proclaimed ideological neutrality; some of the generation joined the Social Democratic movement, others through the *Korunk* and *Falvak Népe* the Communist movement. Another part of the young elite, the *Hitel* group, with serious sociological training, strove, amidst the increasingly more tense international relations, for an organic renewal of the Hungarian institutional system. Its members (Dezső Albrecht, Imre Mikó, József Venczel and Sándor Vita) in the second half of the 1930s already held positions within the institutional system.²¹ The generational question did not entail a significant break – at this time in Romania such an anti-minority atmosphere had evolved that division within the OMP would have resulted in the community becoming defenseless. The party did not hinder the political activity of the “youth,” if it was not directed against the OMP: the elaborators of a number of the draft resolutions at the gathering of intellectuals in Marosvásárhely in 1937 had been active participants in the meeting of the minority section of the OMP a few months previously.²² There was no need to fear, therefore, groups significantly weakening the party’s voter base. The pre-1918 Hungarian elite preserved its leading role within the involuntary community that came about with the change in sovereignty: the party organizations were developed only up till the district seats,

but through the priests, teachers and local dignitaries they reached every corner of the community. The Hungarian voters voted not for party programs but rather for representation (and maintenance) of their own political community. A good example of the integrative force of this situation is the conduct of the dailies criticizing the OMP – during the election campaigns they lined up behind the party leadership at all times.

Attitudes towards Nation-State Aspirations

In order to delimit the community's political room for maneuver, we must examine the *resulting attitudes* to the *two nation-state aspirations* (Hungarian and Romanian) and to the assertion of independent Transylvanian *regional interests*.²³ What is also of concern here is whether the interests of a multicultural region with a unique history could become institutionalized in the face of nation-state aspirations (possession of the territory and handling of the minority issue).

In the early 1920s the government in Budapest itself decided whom from Transylvania it regarded as a suitable negotiating partner. Neither side could acknowledge this connection officially, although Bucharest, too, was aware of its existence.

Until the formation of the OMP in 1923, it had been Grandpierre and his associates who organized the distribution of civil servants' salaries arriving from Hungary, and support by the mother country of the system of ecclesiastical educational institutions. With the formation of the party, and the setting up of the embassy in Bucharest and the consulate in Kolozsvár,²⁴ the system now operated based on a planned budget. The next, third, phase began in 1924, when István Ugron was elected as leader of the party over István Bethlen's candidate for chairman, György Bernády. This was followed by Miklós Bánffy's return home, then – once again – despite the Hungarian prime minister's intention, the election of György Bethlen as chairman. In the fourth phase, after Bethlen's resignation in 1931 the affairs of the Hungarian parties beyond the

borders passed into the jurisdiction of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The election campaigns demanded significant sums, which could be raised only from Hungary. In the 1920s the pact negotiations and the running of certain candidates was the extent to which the government in Budapest (generally with the collaboration of the minister to Bucharest) intervened in the decisions of the party leadership.

In the 1930s certain leading Transylvanian Hungarian politicians (first and foremost Elemér Jakabffy and Nándor Hegedüs) distanced themselves from the Hungarian governments orienting themselves towards Germany, but the OMP was unable to prevail upon the Romanian parties to clarify their views regarding the minorities – the minority public therefore could trust only in the successes of Hungary's foreign policy. Budapest by this time was instructing the party leadership in every negotiation of the OMP with Romanians.

In order to interpret the attitudes, it must be made clear that the representatives of the government liberalism prior to 1918 followed different careers in the mother country and Transylvania after the war. In Hungary it was partly in Bethlen's policy of striving for stability that this tradition lived on. Amidst the unstable political conditions in Romania, the Transylvanian Hungarian political elite campaigned under the ideology of conservatism for the rule of law, the respect of societal autonomies and individual legal equality. In this milieu the previous, much-maligned Hungarian liberalism became the embodiment of European norms. In addition, the Hungarian progressivism of the turn of the century could live on in Transylvania without the onus of the unsuccessful "revolutions" of 1918–1919 in Hungary. Transylvanian Hungarian political and cultural life did not uncritically accept the so-called Horthy regime in the mother country, the handling of the "Jewish question" there, the "feudal-neo-baroque" world, and the lofty revisionist propaganda. One root of Transylvanism can also be traced back to this attitude. The OMP and the Transylvanian Hungarian public socially were much more sensitive than politics in Hungary.

The relationship to be formed with the Romanian political parties actually divided political life. Orienting themselves towards the Liberal Party were the “renegades,” who ran as candidates for this party in the elections in Hungarian electoral districts. Starting from the premise that amidst the “Balkan conditions” it was necessary to come to terms with the existing regime, György Bernády was the proponent within the OMP of seeking an alliance with the Liberal Party.²⁵ His fellow deputy, József Sándor, wanted to represent Transylvanian interests jointly with the Transylvanian National Party, then from 1926 onwards with the Peasant Party. It was likewise in Maniu’s party that Károly Kós saw the best ally, because of its regionalism and interpretation of peasant democracy. Nevertheless, it was with the People’s Party, led by Averescu and Goga, that the most serious alliance was formed, and in the creation of this Elemér Gyárfás had the decisive role. With the royal court, beyond the occasions of protocol, it was Gusztáv Majláth, the Catholic bishop of Gyulafehérvár, as well as Miklós Bánffy, who built good connections.

In this approach the most complicated question is the problem of *protecting independent Transylvanian interests*. A key question of the (political) debates surrounding Transylvaniam was: whether the Hungarians could find a genuine partner on the part of the majority nation for advocating common Transylvanian interests. In lieu of such a partner, the Hungarian elite, as the representative of a quasi-independent political community, tried through compromises to defend its position.

The question of some sort of autonomy for Transylvania was dropped from the agenda with the adoption of the 1923 Constitution, which strove for unity.²⁶ The administrative laws of 1925 and later 1929, in turn, made the establishment of viable local self-governments dubious precisely because of the preponderance of the non-Romanian elements in Transylvanian towns. The institutionalization of the Transylvanian Romanians’ independent political activity that represented regional interests ceased in 1926 with the fusion of the Transylvanian Romanian National Party and

the Bessarabian Peasant Party: Maniu and his followers had to come forward with a national program to counter the Liberals.

The Transylvanian situation in any event did not make regional solidarity possible: in the territory transferred from Hungary to Romania, in the administrative and political sphere it was the Romanians who assumed a decisive position, whereas in economic, social and cultural life the Hungarian, German and Jewish populations remained dominant. The Transylvanian Romanians were forced to fight on two fronts: they wished to alter the given socio-economic structure in Transylvania by state means, and at the same time they opposed the colonizing efforts of the Regat.

Political Strategies for Asserting Interests

I divide the efforts to enforce the specific national minority interests of the Hungarians of Romania into *strategies of party politics* and *social policy*. In this study I deal with the political strategies. Within this I recognize four, temporally distinct, modes of political activity: *pact-making politics*; *the establishment of the minority bloc*; *independent Transylvanian Hungarian political activity*; *the assumption of the framework of the corporatist system*.

Political activity was determined by two main features. The OMP, despite its intentions, in late 1922 could begin its operation only as a political party, as a self-government representing an autonomous political community. Its politicians regarded themselves as the representatives of the entire Hungarian population of Romania, yet their activity was limited to seeking remedies to legal grievances from Parliament, the authorities and the international community. In addition to the party leadership's conservative ideology, this also explains the criticism of the party regarding social organization. They tried to counterbalance the conflicts stemming from this within the party by establishing local sections, the special sections as well as the school council.²⁷

The other problem: the conditions for the institutionalization of minority autonomy were lacking from the outset, most of all, an

administrative environment built on self-governance. The interwar, centralized public administration, operating in a prefecture system, not only did make minority self-government possible but any sort of autonomous, horizontal organizing. Administrative autonomy in the Hungarian tradition consisted of the institutionalization of a broad decision-making jurisdiction of institutions built from the bottom up, the Romanian tradition made at most “de-concentration” possible. A graphic example of this is the fact that in the debates surrounding the Székely (Szekler) communal self-government it was the Romanian government’s opinion that this had already been realized through Church schooling – while the leaders of the Hungarian Churches struggled for the very existence of their Church schools.²⁸

Pact-Making Politics

After the adoption of the constitution in 1923 the OMP wanted to step out of its parliamentary isolation – without a domestic political ally it had not been able to achieve even the supplementation of the register of eligible voters.²⁹ But the Liberal orientation and rapprochement to Maniu and his followers also would have divided the party and the public. Nor did these Romanian parties initiate the establishment of contacts. Brătianu did not see the sense even of establishing a party on a separate ethnic basis. The Averescu’s People’s Party, which had been in government prior to 1922, with a lack of Transylvanian votes, maneuvering between Brătianu and Maniu, needed the support of the OMP. In the agreement reached at Csucsa (Ciucea) in October 1923 the two parties in preparation for the elections agreed that their deputies would form a parliamentary unit, in which the “Hungarian Party will accept the political instructions of the chairman of the People’s Party issued within this program.”³⁰ The concrete minority-protection demands – guaranteeing the autonomy and operating conditions of the Churches and the Hungarian-language schools, remedies for the grievances afflicting the system of Hungarian cultural institutions,

use of the mother tongue and proportional representation, the ending of abuses committed through the agrarian law, the settlement of the former Hungarian public employees' situation, and the elimination of favoritism – would be fulfilled if the People's Party formed a government. The secret agreement was made public in the spring 1925 by-elections. The electoral alliance was important to Averescu also because he could thus demonstrate his ability to govern to the king, as he could settle the Hungarian question, and to the OMP, not least because unlike the other two large parties the People's Party had fewer vested interests in Transylvania.

The Liberal government after the adoption of the law on standardization of the administration in June 1925 announced municipal elections for February 1926. The leaders of the Liberal Party, in the interests of preventing the victory of the Romanian National Party in Transylvania, established contact with Elemér Gyárfás, but he requested what had been set out in the Csucsá Pact with the People's Party from Tătărescu, who did not accept this. The draft agreement that came about during the negotiations in December³¹ was more concrete than the Csucsá Pact, and even before the elections the Liberals implemented a series of measures. On February 1, 1926, István Ugron repudiated the Csucsá Pact, yet the Liberals still did not sign the new agreement, because it became known ahead of time. Thus Ugron entrusted cooperation to the local sections, while Bernády and his people supported the compilation of joint lists. In fact, a deposit of 100,000 lei was required for each candidate list, which the local organizations of the OMP did not really have, and in the event of a joint list the governing party paid this.³² The election brought the OMP serious success: in 30 out of 49 Transylvanian towns the list supported by the Hungarians triumphed: remedying the Hungarian grievances, the government party administration supplemented the voter registers; finally the party leadership also attained external legitimacy: thereafter no one could say that the OMP was only the party of the Hungarian lords.

Following the elections, however, the leader of the governing party handed in his resignation (March 27, 1926). Three days later

the king appointed Averescu as prime minister, and in the new government Octavian Goga received the Ministry of the Interior portfolio. Soon new parliamentary elections were announced, and the People's Party once again established contact with the OMP. Citing the new situation, István Ugron resigned as leader of the party; he was replaced by György Bethlen as temporary chairman.³³ During their negotiations the two parties, taking the text of the Csucsa Pact as their lead, formed an electoral cartel, which from the point of view of implementation was divided into three parts: requests to be fulfilled ahead of the elections, general principles, and additional local-level problems to be solved. As a result of the agreement 15 Hungarian deputies and 12 senators entered Parliament. However, Goga and his followers, because of the resistance of the Liberal Party state apparatus and the accusations of the other Romanian parties – which even charged them with treason to the nation – almost did not even set about realizing the promises made in the cartel.³⁴

The final pact took place in February 1938, after the king tried to take the wind out of the Iron Guard's sails by appointing Goga, who joined Cuza's anti-Semitic National Christian Party from the People's Party, as head of government (December 18, 1937). The most important measure of its brief governmental rule was the law on the verification of citizenship statuses. Under the terms of this the citizenship of the Jews was to be reviewed officially, but anyone's citizenship could be called into question based on denunciation. The denunciations against the Hungarians duly commenced.³⁵ Yet Goga needed the electoral support of the Hungarians and the Germans for the sake of securing a convincing pro-Axis foreign policy orientation. György Bethlen insisted on independent political activity, and it was precisely by means of this that he forced the government to make serious concessions; Goga in the end recognized the Hungarians as a collective legal entity. The OMP Managing Committee opposed the electoral collaboration, but the chairman's council – calling on Budapest as well – finally succeeded in getting the agreement passed. However, before the resolution was made public, the Goga government fell (February 10, 1938).

The integration of the OMP into Romanian political life occurred between 1922 and 1928. By 1927 the situation had evolved whereby both large parties reached the point where they removed the Hungarian question from their mutual struggle.³⁶ (They did not accuse each other of treason because of ties with the Hungarians, but nor did they form an alliance against one another with the OMP.)

Establishment of a Minority Bloc

The cooperation in Parliament of Romania's minorities was hindered by the fact that the German and Jewish parties did not want bring down on themselves the charge of irredentism as well by cooperating with the Hungarians. The Jewish National Party came into conflict with the OMP because of its efforts aimed at winning over the Hungarian Jews.³⁷ As for the Germans, following their pre-1918 minority policy, they conducted a pro-government policy – in addition they tried with Romanian government support to re-Germanize the Magyarized Swabians of Szatmár.³⁸ Although German politicians in Germany and Romania asked the Transylvanian Hungarian leaders – in exchange for cooperation in Romania – to mediate with the government in Budapest on behalf of the Germans of Hungary, this was pushed into the background on the occasion of the July 1927 elections. The Liberals promised only parliamentary seats to the OMP, but they did not support any kind of change in nationality policy. Because of the widespread news about the continuation of the land reform, the antipathy of the Hungarian voters towards the National Peasant Party was great; the chances of a victory by the Peasant Party in any case were exceedingly small.³⁹ As a result of the criticism by the reform group that found the results thus far insufficient, the party leadership was wary of entering into new pacts. The governing National Liberal Party was not an acceptable ally for the German voters either, because of its attacks against their centuries-old autonomous institutions. The new electoral law stipulated that in order to get into Parliament each party had to obtain a minimum of 2 percent of the national

vote, or an absolute majority in one county. Because of the by-now customary governmental electoral abuses, neither minority party was certain that it could satisfy these conditions. Thus in June 1927 György Bethlen and Hans Otto Roth formed the electoral cartel.

The elections of July 7 and 10 took place with the expected abuses, but the alliance even so attained 15 mandates, which were distributed between the Hungarian and German parties in a proportion of 8:7 (even though approximately twice as many Hungarians lived in Romania as Germans). The minority bloc, however, disintegrated in the autumn of 1928, after the pact signed with the Peasant Party – mediated by Rudolf Brandsch – following Maniu's appointment as prime minister. This kind of minority political activity worked well in a number of countries of Europe, but in Romania, because of the peculiarities of the Hungarian minority (substantially greater size and regional influence than the others, the revisionist vision of the future of the mother country, the peculiar Jewish dual identity) it did not become a lasting method of parliamentary political action.⁴⁰

Independent Hungarian Minority Political Activity

Beginning in 1928 the OMP ran in the elections alone. In Parliament it represented a sharply articulated opinion on every question.⁴¹ Romanian political life of the 1930s was determined by the battle of King Carol II with the two large parties as well as the Iron Guard; the state's Hungarian policy was characterized by a practice that appeared as an anti-revisionist movement but aimed at the destruction of the Hungarian positions. The OMP throughout was forced onto the defensive against the grossest accusations and the discriminatory legislation, and for this reason the party's leaders wanted to extract the minority question from the struggles of Romanian party politics at all costs.⁴² They would have liked to extract a definitive minority policy document (law, parliamentary stance, and so on), to which it would have been possible to refer in international forums as well. This did not succeed. The main result of the political strategy, resting on independent participation

in the elections, was to create the Hungarian political community and have it accepted within the Romanian political system, along with the prevention of some of the anti-minority measures. Nor can the deputies' committee work be ignored either, although of this we still know little, as well as the nearly factory-like handling in Bucharest of individual petitions and permits. In the late 1920s they now understood all this as Romanian Hungarian political activity, and not as the pursuit of Hungary's policy.⁴³

The other area of independent political activity: the work of international minority protection. The Transylvanian Hungarian delegates participated in the Congresses of European National Minorities (1925–1937), with Arthur Balogh and Elemér Jakabffy participating the most times. In the theoretical debates – among the two largest European national minorities, the Germans and the Jews – by their practicality and their principled stance against National Socialism they acquired great prestige.⁴⁴ On the basis of the 1919 Paris minority protection treaty signed by Romania, the Transylvanian Hungarian deputies submitted 34 complaints to the Secretariat of the League of Nations, mainly on grievances stemming from the land reform, as well as related to minority education. Due to the nature of the process only two of the submitted complaints came before the Council of the League of Nations, the rest were regarded as closed once the minority committee had made its report. The former cases, those regarding the private assets of Csíkszereda and the settlers of the Banat, too, were settled in only an unsatisfactory manner.⁴⁵

Participation in the Corporatist Political System

On March 31, 1938, Romanian political parties and associations were disbanded by royal decree. After negotiations held with the former leaders of the OMP, the Hungarian bishops, as well as with Miklós Bánffy and Pál Szász, the entire Hungarian population entered the Front of National Renaissance, which had come into being under the royal dictatorship on December 16, 1938.⁴⁶

Membership of the front was a precondition of voting rights, just as it was for membership of the chambers or employment as a civil servant. Thus the Hungarian minority's absence from the front would have entailed a serious legal disadvantage. The government in Bucharest, just as in the case of the Germans, bypassed the leaders of the former minority political parties; Bánffy, however, insisted on including the leaders of the former OMP and a few young intellectuals in the negotiations. On January 14, 1939, the agreement was duly reached on remedying the most important Hungarian grievances and on the organizing of the Hungarian ethnic community with a range of cultural, economic and social duties identical to those of the German ethnic community. The accord signed by Miklós Bánffy, György Bethlen, Elemér Gyárfás and Pál Szász on January 17 essentially resulted in the establishment of a separate section operating within the corporatist state organization.⁴⁷ According to Bánffy, the "the ethnic [*népi*] uniqueness of the Transylvanian Hungarians" had been recognized.⁴⁸ Bánffy explained his commission as president of the Ethnic Bloc, which elicited antipathy in the leaders of the former OMP, by stating that the government had not wanted to appoint a person who prior to 1938 had filled a political role, since it insisted on the exclusively social character of the Ethnic Bloc.

For Miklós Bánffy, the difference between the policies of the Hungarian Ethnic Bloc and the OMP lay in the fact that whereas the latter pursued a *policy of venting grievances*, the former concentrated on *organizing*. The published results also derived from this. In the 1939 single-party (although multi-candidate) elections the Hungarian population participated in greater numbers than in 1937.⁴⁹ Because Parliament was silent, the elected parliamentary deputies of the Ethnic Bloc were able to assert Hungarian interests through governmental intercession: an agreement was reached on Catholic assets, on state subsidies for public schools, on increasing the sustention fund for the clergy, on the recognition of the Reformed Church District of the Királyhágómellék (Piatra Craiului) and the Hungarian Evangelical (Lutheran) Church, and on the equitable settlement of citizenship issues.

According to the agreement signed on January 17, 1939, the Hungarians would establish separate *sections* by settlement, their professional organizations would likewise enter the national professional bodies, and they could establish an all-encompassing economic, social and cultural organization.

In the RMN, with Budapest's consent, the former leaders of the OMP also assumed a role, with the exceptions of György Bethlen and Elemér Jakabffy, but the personnel needed for organizing were provided on the one hand by the "new" generation in Hungarian public life (Bánffy, Szász, János Jósika, Imre Mikó, Béla Szentkereszthy, Ádám Teleki, János Kemény and Áron Tamási) and on the other by the new bishops who came to head the Hungarian historical Churches: Áron Márton, János Vásárhelyi and Béla Varga.⁵⁰

The ethnic organizing of the RMN extended to the following:

The *construction* of the so-called *neighborhood* or "*tens*" (*tízes*) *organization* – a *social community system* built on the principle of solidarity – was initiated from above.⁵¹ Based on the old Székely "*tens*" organization, 5–12 families formed one "*neighborhood*" (*szomszédság*), managed by the corporal (*tizedes*). Ten or twenty such neighborhoods were united under one "*main tenth*" (*főtized*) each, and these formed one district each. The wealthier districts assisted the poorer ones. Those working in the various professions supported those belonging to the RMN (medical care, legal aid services, supply of medicine, childcare, and so on) at cost or for free. By the spring of 1940 the neighborhood organizations now had 140,000 members. Their strongest network was developed in Kolozsvár.⁵²

To organize the social life of the Hungarian population, *specialized sections* were established – cultural, economic and social – which performed actual daily organization work. Through their leaders and "activists" the reform forces of the 1930s within the OMP gained positions within the RMN. The head of the office in Bucharest, responsible for maintaining contacts with the government, was Imre Mikó.

Within the corporatist system the ethnic community succeeded in achieving the *integration of the Hungarian Social Democratic workers*, since in this period now the Romanian working class, too, was organized on a national basis. For its part, the EMGE, with its organization embracing more than 40,000 farmers, brought the soil-tilling Hungarian population into the RMN. Hungarian tradesmen were organized with the establishment of the National Hungarian Tradesmen's Association (*Országos Magyar Iparos Egyesület*) on January 28, 1940.

Despite the impressive results, after the First Vienna Award the Hungarians' legal security in Romania deteriorated rapidly. The strength of the RMN was consumed largely by preventing and remedying the grievances that had become everyday occurrences (official transfers, citizenship issues, compulsory public work and requisitioning, and so on). In May 1940 the organization's activity was significantly restricted by the government; then in June, when the Front of National Renaissance was transformed into the National Party, the Hungarians were excluded from this organization.

The significance of the Ethnic Bloc was that in a critical situation it enabled the Hungarian political elite to mobilize reserves that it could use, together with the benefits of the corporatist system, to organize itself as an autonomous community, paradoxically under the conditions of the dictatorship. (In the same way, paradoxically it was this period that provided an opportunity for left-wing personalities to join in the leadership of Hungarian public life.) Despite the notable exchange of elites, under the conditions of martial law, its activity – beyond the establishment of the neighborhood organization – was limited, just like that of the OMP, to counterbalancing discrimination.

Notes

- 1 This study is an abbreviated version of my article "A Romániai magyarság kisebbségpolitikai stratégiái a két világháború között" [Minority Policy Strategies of the Hungarians of Romania between the Two World Wars], *Regio 2* (1997): 32–67. Here I do not deal

- with strategies of social policy and institutionalization, or with the ideological currents providing the legitimacy and integrative capability of the minority elite.
- 2 Elemér Gyárfás, *A választások tanulságai* [The Lessons from the Elections], Magyar Országos Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives, hereafter MOL] K 64-1927-27-350. ff. 21–23.
 - 3 The general outlook of the diplomatic reports is reflected in *Jelentés az erdélyi Magyar Párt elnökválságáról* [Report on the Election for Chairman of the Transylvanian Hungarian Party], MOL K 64-1924-27-505. f. 23.
 - 4 *Ibid.*, f. 13.
 - 5 Ráday Levéltár Archives, Budapest, Emil Grandpierre Manuscript Collection [Manuscripts fund] C 121.
 - 6 On his life and work, see Elemér Jakabffy, *Nemzetiségpolitikai írások* [Nationality Policy Writings], selected, with an introduction, by Sándor Balázs (Bucharest, 1993), p. 255.
 - 7 *Jelentés*, MOL K 64-1924-27-505. ff. 17–21.
 - 8 *Ibid.*, f. 17.
 - 9 *Ibid.*, f. 18.
 - 10 On the reform group see Béla György, “Hatalom és társadalom kisebbségben. Párt és belső ellenzéke 1926–1927” [Power and Society in Minority. Party and Internal Opposition 1926-1927], *Regio* 4 (2004): 85–98, and “Reformmozgalom a Romániai Országos Magyar Pártban (1926–1927)” [The Reform Movement inside the National Hungarian Party (1926-1927)], *Magyar Kisebbség* 1 (2003): 123–145 [Selection of Documents].
 - 11 *Jelentés, ibid.*, f. 19.
 - 12 *Ibid.*, f. 22.
 - 13 A basic source for the history of political events is Béla György, “A Romániai Országos Magyar Párt története (1922–1938)” [The History of the National Hungarian Party of Romania (1922–1938)] (Ph.D. dissertation, Eötvös Lóránd University, Budapest, 2006), p. 273, at <http://doktori.btk.elte.hu/hist/gyorgybeladiss.pdf> (December 2, 2011).
 - 14 Árpád Paál, “A politikai aktivitás rendszere” [The System of Political Activity], in Károly Kós, Árpád Paál and István Zágoni, *Kiáltó szó. Erdély, Bánság, Kőrösvidék és Máramaros magyarságához*. [A Word of Appeal. To the Hungarians of Transylvania, the Banat, the Criş Region and Maramureş] (Cluj/Kolozsvár, 1921).

- 15 Imre Mikó, “Erdélyi politika” [Transylvanian Politics], *Hitel* 2 (1940–1941): 176–182.
- 16 In 1927 Bernády supported an electoral alliance with the Romanian Liberal Party, Kós with the National Peasant Party, but the OMP found the Romanian promises wanting, and therefore refused to cooperate; see Gyárfás, *A választások tanulságai*, ff. 19–21, and János Fodor, “Bernády György tevékenysége a romániai Országos Magyar Pártban. A párt alakulásától Bernády második polgármesterségéig (1922–1929)” [The Activity of György Bernády inside the National Hungarian Party of Romania. From the Formation of the Party to Bernády’s Second Term as Mayor], manuscript, pp. 29–33.
- 17 Ferenc Sz. Horváth, “Utak, tévutak, zsákutcák. Paál Árpád két világháború közti politikai nézeteiről” [Roads, Paths Astray, Dead Ends. On the Political Views of Árpád Paál between the Wars], in Balázs Ablonczy and Csilla Fedinec, eds., *Folyamatok a változásban. A hatalomváltások társadalmi hatásai Közép-Európában a XX. században*. [Processes in Change. The Effects on Society of the Shifts in Sovereignty in Central Europe in the Twentieth Century] (Budapest, 2005), pp. 117–160.
- 18 Spectator [Miklós Krenner] “Verjünk hidat” [Let Us Build a Bridge], *Ellenzék*, January 10, 1932; “Bethlen György nyilatkozott” [György Bethlen Declared], *Keleti Újság*, January 17, 1932. For further details, see Sándor Balázs, “Egy hidverési kísérlet tanulságokkal” [A Bridge-Building Attempt with Lessons], *Valóság* 2 (1987): 20–37.
- 19 On this, see Ignác Romsics, “Bethlen koncepciója a független vagy autonóm Erdélyről” [Bethlen’s Conception of an Independent or Autonomous Transylvania], *Magyarságkutatás. A Magyarságkutató Csoport Évkönyve* [Hungarian Studies. Yearbook of the Hungarian Studies Research Group] (Budapest, 1987), pp. 49–64.
- 20 Béla Demeter and József Venczel, *Az EMGE munkája a román impérium alatt* [The Transylvanian Hungarian Economic Association under the Romanian Regime] (Budapest, 1940), p. 51.
- 21 On the aims of the *Erdélyi Fiatalok* and *Hitel*, their relations, and biographies, see Éva Záhony, ed., *Hitel. Kolozsvár 1935–1944. Tanulmányok, repertórium* [Hitel. Kolozsvár 1935–1944. Studies and Repertory] (Budapest, 1991), pp. 9–60.
- 22 See *Magyar Kisebbség* 17 (1937): 443–453.
- 23 Zsolt K. Lengyel, *Auf der Suche nach den Kompromiss: Ursprünge und Gestalten des frühen Transsilvanismus: 1918–1928*. *Studia*

- Hungarica 41 (Munich, 1993); “A korai transzszilvanizmus Románia-képéről; A meghiúsult kompromisszum” [On the Image of Romania of Early Transylvaniam: the Thwarted Compromise], in Zsolt K. Lengyel, *A kompromisszum keresése. Tanulmányok a 20. századi transzszilvanizmus korai történetéhez* [The Search for Compromise. Studies on the Early History of Twentieth-Century Transylvaniam] (Csíkszereda, 2007), pp. 109–138, 217–264.
- 24 András Hory, *Bukaresttől Varsóig* [From Bucharest to Warsaw], edited with an introductory study, by Pál Pritz (Budapest, 1987), pp. 41–128.
- 25 Elemér Gyárfás, “Az első kísérlet. Az Avarescu-paktum előzményei, megkötésének indokai, szövege, módosításai, következményei, felbomlása és tanulságai” [The Initial Attempt. The Antecedents of the Averescu Pact, the Reason for Signing It, Its Text, Amendments, Consequences, Dissolution and Lessons], *Magyar Kisebbség* 2 (1937): 41–70; 3 (1937): 77–99; 5-6 (1937): 157–158; Elemér Gyárfás, *A választások tanulságai*.
- 26 A summary of the debates surrounding the drafting of the constitution is provided by Lajos Nagy, *A kisebbségek alkotmányjogi helyzete Nagyromániában* [The Constitutional Status of the Minorities in Greater Romania] (Kolozsvár, 1944), pp. 25–31.
- 27 On the wide-ranging tasks of the parliamentary deputies, see “Willer József beszéde az OMP sepsiszentgyörgyi nagygyűlésén” [József Willer’s Speech at the OMP Assembly in Sepsiszentgyörgy], *Magyar Kisebbség* 18 (1937): 465–480.
- 28 Imre Mikó, “A székely közületi kulturális önkormányzat” [The Székely Community Cultural Autonomy], *Magyar Kisebbség* 13 (1934): 365–378; 15–16 (1934): 441–464.
- 29 Imre Mikó, *Huszonkét év. Az erdélyi magyarok politikai története 1918. dec. 1-től 1940. aug. 30-ig* [Twenty-Two Years. The Political History of the Transylvanian Hungarians from December 1, 1918, to August 30, 1940] (Budapest, 1941), pp. 26–28.
- 30 Point 5. The text of the agreement is printed in Mikó, *Huszonkét év*, pp. 274–284; for the detailed history of the pact, see Gyárfás, *Az első kísérlet*.
- 31 György Bernády, *Emlékeztető* [Memorandum] (January 6, 1926), HRM PÁK Ms7651/711. f. 27.
- 32 *A Magyar Párt tárgyalásai a kormánnyal. Bukaresti magyar követ jelentése a Külügyminiszternek* [The Talks of the Hungarian Party

- with the Government. The Report of the Hungarian Minister to Bucharest to the Minister of Foreign Affairs] (February 7, 1926), MOL K 64-1926-27a-72. f. 15.
- 33 On the reasons for Ugron's resignation, see *Ugron István levele ismeretlenhez* [István Ugron's Letter to an Unknown Person]. MOL K 64-1926-27a-218. ff. 3–10.
- 34 Mikó, *Huszonkét év*, pp. 61–65.
- 35 Nagy, *A kisebbségek alkotmányjogi helyzete*, p. 82.
- 36 Mikó, *Huszonkét év*, p. 7.
- 37 Zsombor Szász, *Erdély Romániában* [Transylvania in Romania] (Budapest, 1927), pp. 288–305.
- 38 Cogitator, “A szatmárvidéki asszimiláció IV–V” [The Assimilation from the Szatmár Region], *Magyar Kisebbség* 6 (1928): 209–216; *ibid.*, 7 (1928): 245–257.
- 39 Gyárfás, *A választások tanulságai*.
- 40 Béla György, *A Romániai Országos Magyar Párt története*, pp. 114–121.
- 41 For a bibliography of the remarks of the OMP deputies, see Árpád Kiss, “A magyar törvényhozók működése a román parlamentben” [The Work of Hungarian Legislators in the Romanian Parliament], *Magyar Kisebbség* 13 (1936): 342–356; 14 (1936): 375–393.
- 42 “Gyárfás Elemér szenátusi előterjesztése” [Elemér Gyárfás's Proposal in the Senate], *Magyar Kisebbség* 1 (1935): 6–8. For the documents relating to the affair, see Nándor Bárdi, “Pártpolitika és kisebbségpolitika. A romániai Országos Magyar Párt javaslata és annak visszhangja 1934–35-ben” [Party Politics and Minority Politics. The Proposal of the National Hungarian Party and Its Echo in 1934–35], *Magyar Kisebbség* 3–4 (1998): 128–185.
- 43 This is reflected in Árpád Paál's contemporary diary, Elemér Jakabffy's recollections and the correspondence between György Bethlen and József Willer alike.
- 44 The work of the Hungarian delegates at the congresses is analyzed in detail by Ferenc Eiler, *Kisebbségvédelem és revízió. Magyar törekvések az Európai Nemzetiségi kongresszuson (1925–1939)* [Minority Protection and Revision. Hungarian Efforts at the European Nationality Congresses (1925–1939)] (Budapest, 2007), pp. 190–230, 247–279.
- 45 Imre Mikó, “A romániai magyarság panaszai a Nemzetek Szövetsége előtt” [The Complaints of the Hungarian Minority

- of Romania before the League of Nations], *Magyar Kisebbség* 24 (1938): 581–585; a more recent analysis is Miklós Zeidler, “A Nemzetek Szövetsége és a magyar kisebbségi petíciók” [The League of Nations and the Hungarian Minority Petitions], in Nándor Bárdi and Csilla Fedinec, eds., *Etnopolitika* [Ethnopolitics] (Budapest, 2003), pp. 59–83.
- 46 For an overview, see István Már, “A Romániai Magyar Népközösség és a romániai magyarság a királyi diktatúra időszakában (1938–1940)” [The Hungarian Ethnic Bloc of Romania and the Hungarians of Romania during the Royal Dictatorship (1938–1940)], *Székelyszó* 8 (2003): 91–113. The debates concerning the creation of the Ethnic Bloc as well as the tension between legal demands and the expectation of revision is the focus of Ferenc Sz. Horváth, *Elutasítás és alkalmazkodás között. A romániai kisebbségi elit politikai stratégiája (1931–1940)* [Between Rejection and Adaptation. The Romanian Minority Elite’s Political Strategy (1931–1940)] (Csíkszereda, 2007), pp. 219–237.
- 47 *Felsőházi Napló*, December 18, 1940, p. 130.
- 48 *Ibid.*
- 49 In Csík in 1937 55.4% of the electorate cast their votes, in 1939 87.5%. In Udvarhely, these same percentages were 63.1% and 89.2% respectively, and in Háromszék 63.4% and 80.2%; see István Szabó, “Az erdélyi magyar népközösség története. Az erdélyi magyarság politikai szerveződése, a Magyar Népközösség megalakítása és működése” [The History of the Hungarian Ethnic Community. The Political Organization of the Transylvanian Hungarians, the Formation of the Hungarian Ethnic Bloc and Its Activity], in István Szabó, *Erdélyi mártírok és hősök aranykönyve* [The Golden Book of Transylvanian Martyrs and Heroes] (Pécs, 1941), p. 46.
- 50 *Ibid.*, pp. 224–226.
- 51 Lajos Puskás, *Tizedesség és a kolozsvári tizedesek* [The “Tenship” and the “Tens” from Kolozsvár] (Kolozsvár, 1942), p. 60; Márton Csortán, “A Kolozsvári Tízes Szervezet” [The “Tens” Organization in Kolozsvár], in Záhony, ed., *Hitel*, pp. 178–183.
- 52 By April 1939 in Kolozsvár 8,634 families were members of the neighborhood organization (this represented a two-thirds coverage); István Szabó, “Az erdélyi magyar,” pp. 48–49.

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NATIONAL ECONOMIC SELF-ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS IN TRANSYLVANIA. THE CONFLUENCES OF THE HUNGARIAN, GERMAN AND ROMANIAN COOPERATIVE MOVEMENTS²

This paper intends to present the cooperative movement from Transylvania composed of three nationally segmented networks that had their roots in the pre-war Austrian-Hungarian era. Their common traits, besides those resulting from universal cooperative principles, were the signs of confluences among these three national entities' cooperative models. The study of the movement thus enables us to observe the process of both the adoption of universal cooperative principles and their adaptation to the regional, local context. The change of regimes and of state authority that occurred in 1918–1920 in Transylvania on the basis of the Trianon Peace Treaty rendered this adaptation more complex, since these cooperative structures after 1918 continued to function and work in the new legal and political-economic framework of Greater Romania.

Cooperative Movements and State Policies in Romania

With the collapse and dismemberment of Austria-Hungary, Hungarians living in Transylvania³ became the greatest national minority of interwar Romania.⁴ The Transylvanian Romanian national elite, several of its members prominent in financial life and the cooperative movement, ruled an autonomous Transylvania for more than one year (January 1919–April 1920) inside Romania.⁵ During this period the majority of Hungarian public officers, mayors or functionaries lost their positions in favor of members of the Romanian administration.⁶ The autonomous Ruling Council was dissolved and the administration of the regions reunited with Greater Romania was centralized by the Bucharest governments.⁷ Either the different legal and institutional systems of Bukovina,

Transylvania and Bessarabia were unified gradually according to the Constitution (art. 137) or the Old Romanian laws were extended over the new territories.⁸ After the cooperative law (1903) of Old Romania was extended over the new provinces of interwar Romania in March 1923, only the national minorities maintained their former cooperative structure, statutes and internal relations based on the former legislation of the province, which remained in force until 1938. The German-speaking population from Bukovina, Bessarabia and Transylvania, the Hungarian minority and the Israelite population from Romania conserved, reorganized and restructured “their own cooperative networks” and kept their internal autonomy and proper financial and coordinating centers.⁹ Since on Romanian Kingdom territory the popular banks and cooperatives were constituted and registered according to the Old Romanian law on cooperatives (dating back to 1903), and the new reunited provinces in the pre-war period developed under Austrian law (Bukovina), Hungarian law (Transylvania) and Russian law (Bessarabia), interwar Romania was compelled to unify all these different legislative traditions.¹⁰ Only the ethnic Romanian cooperatives functioning on the new territories were integrated into the Romanian national cooperative system and policies during the early 1920s, minorities receiving 15 years of tolerance in order to accommodate/conform themselves to the Romanian legislation.¹¹

Among the Romanian political parties during the interwar period, the National Liberal Party ruled for the longest period (1922–1926, 1927–1928 and 1933–1937) and implemented a centralized administration, together with a strong industrialist and protectionist economic policy.¹² State policies – including land distribution and agrarian reform, nationalization of mines and foreign capital investments, and laws for the encouragement of national industry – were based on the “On Our Own” (“Prin Noi Însine”) ideology of the Liberal Party and designed to play a national role in Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia, where urban centers were dominated by “minorities”: Hungarians,¹³ Jews and Germans.¹⁴ Romania, similarly to other successor states,

used the tools of *economic nationalism* in order to implement new demographic and economic policies, so as to reinforce and stabilize the economic and administrative positions of ethnic majority inhabitants.¹⁵

The Romanian National Party had a long tradition of political activity representing the Romanians inside Austria-Hungary.¹⁶ In Romania, after a short regional governing period (Ruling Council, January 1919–April 1920), this party was pushed into opposition, where in 1926 it merged with the Peasant Party, constituting the National Peasant Party. This new peasant party governed for very short periods (1928–1931 and 1932–1933), but its “open door” commercial policies and decentralizing reforms could not fully exercise their effect, due to the economic-financial and agrarian crisis that hit Romania after 1929.¹⁷ The same was true for their peasant-oriented, cooperative-friendly policies (based on Virgil Madgearu’s agrarian theories).¹⁸ Nevertheless, a major consensus among the Romanian parties was reached on the agrarian reform and land distribution promised by King Ferdinand to the benefit of the peasantry during World War I.¹⁹

Land reform was implemented in Transylvania first by the Ruling Council in 1919, then countrywide by the Ministry of Agriculture and Domains and its subordinated department, called the *Casa Centrală a Cooperăției și Împroprietăririi sătenilor* (Central Savings Bank of Cooperatives and Redistribution of Land for Villagers) on the basis of the agrarian reform decrees and laws issued between 1918 and 1921.²⁰ Land reform disadvantaged communal and individual large landowners (most of them of minority origin) in favor of the Romanian small peasantry. The Hungarian population’s Churches lost more than 85 percent of their estates, while the Hungarian peasants were underrepresented during land distribution.²¹ Nevertheless, while regaining the small peasantry’s popular support for the government, interwar Romania became less competitive in agricultural exports due to the lack of capital for the development of the small peasant economy.²² The cooperative movement, which had a tradition of more decades in

each province reunited with Romania, was designed to solve this chronic economic and social problem of backward agriculture throughout Romania, by implementing land reform and enhancing the modernization of rural society.²³

In Romania the cooperative movement started and remained under state tutelage, its institutions being subordinated to (not only coordinated by) the ministries and state administration.²⁴ Therefore the two big parties, the Liberal Party and the Peasant Party, besides using cooperative networks as a “levy” or channel for the orientation and consolidation of the Romanian small landowners’ peasant economy, also concurred over the control of this mass movement for both economic and political reasoning. As a consequence, cooperative and tax legislation, as well as the cooperative national system, changed very frequently.²⁵ The cooperative leadership sustained the autonomy and decentralization of the movement, but at the same time recognized the need for state subsidies and credits, since the Romanian cooperative system was too weak financially. Thus the state – each successive government – conserved its authority and control over the whole cooperative system. Only the Peasant Party government tried to decentralize the cooperative institutions on a regional basis, since the 1929 law on cooperation authorized the regional federations and unions, and thus the nominated governmental officers were changed with democratically elected regional presidents. The Hungarian and other minority cooperative centers from Transylvania and Bukovina continued to function on the basis of the Hungarian and Austrian laws. They only had to convert their statutes to the Romanian legal prescriptions by September 1, 1938, at the latest.

National minorities, the Hungarians, Germans and Jews, after the reorganization of their cooperative institutes and the official recognition of their centers’ juridical personality in 1922 by a ministerial decree, succeeded in defending their internal autonomy, without being obliged to join the national cooperative centers.²⁶ These minorities also considered cooperatives to be important not only for economic but also for cultural and social considerations.²⁷

The Estimated Number of Cooperative Units, Federations and Membership in Romania (1918–1923)

	Total nr. of federations	Total nr. of cooperatives	Total nr. of members (thousands)
Old Romania	49	6,138	1,120
Transylvania			
Hungarian	2	1,230	300
Saxon	2	259	25
Romanian	10	755	79
Total in Transylvania	14	2,244	404
Bukovina			
Romanian	1	221	30
German	1	81	23
Polish	1	41	6
Ruthenian (Ukrainian)	1	13	2
Total in Bukovina	4	358	61
Bessarabia			
Bessarabia type	2	318	116
Old Romanian type	0	957	105
Jewish cooperatives	2	35	25
Total in Bessarabia	4	1,310	246
Total general in Romania	71	10,048	1,831

Source: *Anuarul României 1925–1926* [The Annual of Romania 1925–1926] (Bucharest, 1926), p. 118.

Saxons and Swabians retained their former cooperative centers in Sibiu (Nagyszeben, Hermannstadt) and Timișoara (Temesvár, Temeswar). Karl Wolff, the president of the Saxon People's Party and the director of the biggest Saxon bank, the *Hermannstädter Allgemeine Sparkasse*, renounced all his public functions, except for the presidency of the *Verband Raiffeisenschen Genossenschaften* (Saxon Cooperative Union), an office that he held (1886–1928)

almost for his entire lifetime. He continued to be actively involved in cooperative organizational life and wrote several articles and theoretical works on the issue.²⁸ The *Hermannstädter Allgemeine Sparkasse* continued – as it did during the pre-war period – to sustain Saxon cooperatives by offering low-interest credit, consulting and logistics (offices) to the cooperative center; and the successor of Wolff in the *Verband*'s presidential chair during the 1930s was the same person as the director of the aforementioned biggest savings bank.²⁹ The different German-speaking entities of historical regions now reunited in interwar Romania intensified not only their political and cultural relations, but also their economic synergy: the *Hermannstädter Allgemeine Sparkasse* also became the financial center of Swabians' cooperatives, while their former financial center maintained only non-lucrative functions (coordination, periodical accounting, auditing and consulting).³⁰

In 1918 Transylvanian Hungarians had 702 credit cooperatives with three regional departments, and 641 consumer cooperatives with a regional department of the former Budapest centers, totaling 220,646 members.³¹ Being cut off from the subsidies and coordination of their former centers by the new frontiers and weakened by the war economy and losses, the number of cooperative units decreased by more than four hundred. The remaining cooperatives were reorganized by the staff of the former regional departments in order to constitute in 1920 two centers: 403 credit cooperatives established the *Szövetség Gazdasági és Hitelszövetkezetek Központja* (Alliance of Credit and Economic Cooperatives, henceforth simply the Alliance) in Cluj (Koložsvár/Klausenburg), and 433 consumer cooperatives created the *Hangya Fogyasztási Szövetkezetek Központja* (Center of “Ant” Consumer Cooperatives, henceforth “Hangya Center”) in Aiud (Nagyenyed) on the basis of the former national cooperative department offices and functionaries. This reorganization was supported also by the *Erdélyi Gazdasági Egylet* (Transylvanian Economic Association) which barely regained its juridical personality in the new state (it actually happened only in 1929 during the Peasant Party government). The associative journal

(*Erdélyi Gazda*) provided a place for cooperative articles and issued a consumer cooperative supplement, *Hangya* (Ant), early in the 1920s (1922–1925) until the consumer cooperative center itself could start an annual, *Hangya naptár* (Ant Annual), in 1924 and a monthly journal, *Szövetkezés* (Cooperation), in 1925. The credit cooperative center published internal circulars and yearly reports to the General Assemblies, until it could publish its monthly journal, the *Szövetkezeti Értesítő* (Cooperative Courier), late in 1933. During the 1920s the Hungarian cooperatives, after a decrease in number by almost 50 percent, mainly due to the warfare, the change of regimes and the loss of their former centers, stabilized both the number of enterprises and their membership. Thus in 1929 their number was higher than that of the Romanian cooperatives (516 units, 74,066 members) in Transylvania. The Hungarian economic and credit cooperatives affiliated to the Alliance numbered 271 enterprises with almost 95,000 members, while the 397 *Hangya* consumer cooperatives almost 100,000 members.³²

The “minority cooperatives” – as opposed to, distinctive of “Romanian cooperatives” – were labeled and registered as “Hungarian,” “German,” “Saxon,” “Swabian” and “Israelite” not only by the kin-community but also by the official statistics and cooperative central organs.³³ In fact, however, they affiliated not only pure ethnic membership. According to the estimates made by the chief accountant, Petrovay, at the Alliance, in 1933 the 76,500-strong membership of Hungarian cooperatives included almost 19,000 Romanians, 6,000 Germans, 1,500 members of other origins, and almost 800 Israelite persons. The 333 *Hangya* consumer cooperatives registered among them 22 “Romanian” units (6.6 percent).³⁴

At the beginning of the fourth decade of the twentieth century, on December 31, 1930, in Romania there were 4,679 Romanian popular banks (as Old Romanian credit cooperatives were called) with 994,224 members and 560 minority popular banks (credit cooperatives, credit and savings unions) with 157,513 members, in total 5,239 units with a membership of 1,151,773 persons.³⁵ The

equity capital of these popular banks reached more than 2,040.5 million lei, while the equity capital of joint-stock commercial banks was five times higher, reaching 11,179 million lei. In unit numbers, 5 popular banks corresponded to 1 joint-stock bank.³⁶ The official statistics registered these popular banks and other types of cooperatives according to their ethno-cultural-institutional affiliation, respectively according to the historical regions where they functioned. These figures quantified the social penetration of the credit cooperative movement (geographical distribution, social density). In Romania, on average, 3,500 inhabitants or 700 households belonged to a popular bank: in other words, 32 percent of the heads of families, and 64 cooperative members belonged to 1,000 inhabitants.³⁷

*Number of Credit Cooperatives and Their Membership,
Compared to the Number of Joint-Stock Banks³⁸*

Region	Number of credit cooperatives	Membership	Joint-stock banks	Cooperative capital reported to the joint-stock bank capital
Ardealul (Transylvania)	829	179,119	290	5.5
Banatul (Banat)	208	46,418	190	4.2
Basarabia (Bessarabia)	590	110,869	49	32.8
Dunarea de Jos (Lower Danube)	506	123,122	90	40.4
Moldova	553	136,373	99	42.1
Bukovina	177	26,344	30	9.5
Bucharest	73	28,756	125	2.3
Muntenia	1,391	307,800	124	92.0
Oltenia	912	192,936	125	63.6
Total	5,239	1,151,737	1,122	18.3

*Loans Offered by Credit Cooperatives and Administrative Costs*³⁹

Cooperatives by ethno-cultural-institutional affiliation	Total loans	The administrative cost of 100 borrowed lei at the credit cooperatives	Federations and Cooperative Central Bank	Total administrative cost/100 lei
Romanian cooperatives from the whole country	6,869,218	6.19%	1.46%	7.63%
Hungarian cooperatives	461,631	5.67%		5.67%
Saxon cooperatives	364,914	2.98%	1.0%	3.98%
German cooperatives from Bukovina and the Banat	153,148			
Total	7,848,911			

Statistical figures showed that credit cooperatives (popular banks) offered loans at an average interest rate (14.5 percent in 1925, 17.6 percent in 1929 and 12.9 percent in 1931) much lower than that of joint-stock commercial banks.⁴⁰ Official records showed also that national minorities, especially the Saxons, succeeded in offering loans at a much lower interest rate than the national or regional average interest rate.

At the end of 1937, the Romanian Statistical Office and the National Cooperative Institute from Bucharest registered 746 Hungarian cooperatives, with a total membership of 152,779 persons. In the same year there were in Romania a total of 7,922 cooperatives, out of which 1,217 were recorded as minority cooperatives, and 6,705 as Romanian enterprises.⁴¹

The Total Number of Cooperatives in Romania in 1937⁴²

	Romanian cooperatives	Minority cooperatives	Total
Number of cooperatives	5,213	2,709	7,922
Number of associates	1,196,268	236,320	1,432,588

Ethnic Label of Minority Cooperatives⁴³

National affiliation	Number of minority cooperatives in 1937		
	Credit	Economic and consumer	Total
Hungarian	281	469	750
Saxon	185	51	236
Swabian	69	102	171
German cooperatives from Bukovina	60	0	60
Total	595	622	1,217

The small landowner peasantry constituted the majority of the membership. Romanian schoolmasters, teachers and civil servants were more active in cooperative leadership and propaganda compared to Hungarian intellectuals, as the following figure illustrates:

Social Structure of Credit Cooperative Membership in 1936⁴⁴

National affiliation	Farmers	Land-owners	Schoolmasters	Pastors	Craftsmen	Civil servants	Others
	Percentage (%) of total internal membership						
Hungarian	82.1	2.0	0.8	0.6	6.6	2.2	5.7
Saxon	92.4	1.0	1.1	1.0	2.2	0.6	1.7
Romanian	80.0	1.8	2.7	0.6	5.0	5.2	4.7

Contemporary statistics estimated the density of cooperative networks and calculated the average membership of a cooperative. In 1936 there were 488 Romanian, 185 Saxon and 307 Hungarian credit cooperatives in Transylvania. Considering membership,

in Transylvania there were 69,549 Romanian credit cooperative members, 20,808 Saxon members and 92,703 Hungarian members, meaning that 2.37 percent of Romanians, 8.85 percent of Saxons and finally 7.10 percent of Hungarians were affiliated to a credit cooperative.⁴⁵ The Hungarian population inherited a strong network of consumer cooperatives, maintained and reinforced by the *Hangya* Center and its excellent infrastructure, regional commodity deposits and logistics. Romanians continued to be very active in land purchase and settlement, as well as forestry cooperatives. The Saxon and Swabian population developed a strong network of livestock marketing and plant cooperatives, while Swabians and Hungarians had the densest dairy cooperative infrastructure.⁴⁶

The Evolution of Hungarian Cooperatives

The credit and economic cooperative center was situated in Cluj and the consumer cooperative center in Nagyenyed. The latter had four departments: an audit control, an insurance, a training-education and a commodity department. The staff of these departments coordinated and executed the yearly revisions and audits of the member units, while the commodity department (having a central rail station deposit at Nagyenyed, cave deposits and an industrial plant) coordinated the logistics of goods traffic and its movement towards its eight depots throughout Transylvania.

The Hungarian cooperative centers thus assumed both lucrative and non-lucrative functions in their specialized departments. On the basis of the 1929 cooperative law issued by the Peasant Party government, the national cooperative movement was decentralized, and regional cooperative federations and unions were founded countrywide, including the minority cooperative centers too. In the period 1929–1938, the non-lucrative functions were delegated to specialized “unions” near the lucrative centers, called “federations.” Not only were the revisers of the Unions responsible for autonomous audit and coordination, but they also developed new strategies for growth and diversification, as well as launching propaganda

activities (by press or especially by regional general assemblies, fairs, exhibitions and jubilee festivals).

Cooperative clerks, officials and “revisers” visited each cooperative unit at least once a year for auditing and consulting, while the cooperative centers periodically offered adult education, especially training courses for local cooperative accountants, presidents and cooperative shopkeepers.⁴⁷ Young cooperative professionals had published articles on adult education, school cooperatives and cooperative education in the Transylvanian cooperative press and in Catholic pedagogical reviews since the 1920s, but the first school cooperatives were founded in the mid-1930s, not only as an echo of some articles written by Hungarian cooperative clerks, but also following the example of the stronger Romanian school cooperative movement.⁴⁸ The Hungarian bishops, too, especially Sándor Makkai and Áron Márton, promoted the practical education of future schoolmasters, teachers and priests, introducing cooperative and economic disciplines in the curriculum of teacher-training schools and theological faculties.⁴⁹

The Alliance credit cooperative center was innovative in the sense that it functioned as a refinancing and equilibrating center for its members. With regard to their social implications, the loans offered by the Hungarian credit cooperatives proved to be cheaper than those of joint-stock Hungarian banks. Credit cooperatives emphasized local capital accumulation and the constitution of reserves, promoted savings, and succeeded in regaining the trust of other community-oriented institutions, especially the Churches.⁵⁰ In the 1920s, the cooperative centers cooperated closely with the *Kolozsvári Takarékpénztár és Hitelbank* (Savings Bank of Kolozsvár) due to the personal contacts of their director, László Bocsánczy, who had excellent relations with the financial centers of Hungary. Elemér Gyárfás, a senator in the Romanian Parliament for almost two decades and the president of the *Erdélyi Bankszindikátus* (Transylvanian Bank Union, constituted in 1922), was also elected onto the Administrative Board of the Alliance. He personified the communication between Transylvanian Hungarian banks, the

Transylvanian Bank Union, the cooperative leadership and the Hungarian Party.

On average the Hungarian cooperatives had relatively good results. Compared to the joint-stock Hungarian banks' results, the cooperative savings deposits and capital grew ten times faster (4,000 percent and 6,000 percent respectively) than those of non-cooperative joint-stock Hungarian banks (400 percent and 600 percent) in the period 1920–1929.⁵¹ The Transylvanian Hungarian banks were either too small or dispersed in the whole regions, or they were concentrated in the main financial towns and followed mainly profit-interest.⁵²

Nevertheless, the cooperatives continuously missed refinancing capital and were short on credit. Based on the positive Saxon cooperative model that was always sustained and refinanced by their mother institute, the *Hermannstädter Allgemeine Sparkasse* in Sibiu (Nagyszeben, Hermannstadt), the Hungarian Transylvanian financial and political leaders planned to found an overarching Transylvanian Hungarian mortgage institute, but since the 1929 financial crisis hit Romania too, this mortgage institute already constituted could not start its activity. Instead of this ideal but utopian financial center, the credit cooperative center lobbied for the consolidation of the credit cooperative movement. Again, the financial crisis shortened these plans for capitalization of cooperatives. Moreover, during the economic crisis, the governments, changing every year (between 1930 and 1934) in a competition for the peasantry's electoral favor, published four moratoriums on the conversion of peasant and agricultural debts. These policies again caused great losses to national minority cooperatives and banks, because they were not recompensed by the state, while the losses of ethnic Romanian cooperatives were in general supported by the Romanian National Bank.

In order to survive these shortages and to reinforce the whole network, the Alliance and *Hangya* centers adopted a strategy of diversification and intensive growth.⁵³ This agenda decided on the widening of economic activities/branches in cooperatives, and on

the levying of share-subscriptions. Thus the Alliance gave priority to productive short loans, aiming to encourage production and diversification. The diversification strategy included the widening of the activity by opening new economic branches (purchase, supply, processing, insurance, folk art and handicrafts, forestry, motorization or agricultural production and especially the dairy industry), and departments inside credit cooperatives, or by organizing new cooperatives. The Saxon and Swabian model, as well as study trips organized in Austria and Denmark, influenced this restructuring strategy and the settlement of the Hungarian dairy cooperative network. The continuously growing number of dairy cooperatives established two high-quality processing units in two regional centers. The dairy commodities of the Transylvanian Hungarian cooperatives focused on the Bucharest consumer market, where they shared the market with the Bessarabian German dairy cooperatives. Commodities bearing a registered mark – such as Transylvanian butter – were also exported to Greece, Palestine and England.⁵⁴ The rise in number of the Hungarian dairy cooperatives was impressive, rising from seven in 1929 to 135 by the end of the 1930s.⁵⁵

During both the reorganization in the early 1920s and the aforementioned restructuring and reorientation of the cooperative movement towards production and new services (such as the insurance business), the Hungarian cooperative movement relied on its traditional partners: mainly the Transylvanian Economic Society, the Economic Department of the Hungarian National Party, some community-oriented financial institutes and the historical Churches from Transylvania.

Partnership with(in) the Cooperative Movement

As the pre-war Transylvanian Saxon and Romanian model, and other Eastern and Western European models too, proved, the institutionalized promotion of the cooperatives became a “movement” mainly because the older (ideologically or ethnically)

kin-institutes agreed in promoting the cooperative value system and sustaining financially, politically or culturally “their” cooperative network.⁵⁶ The Saxon model continued to exercise a strong influence on the Hungarian intelligentsia in developing a new political and economic strategy for the new state. As the new *modus vivendi* for the national minority, the Hungarian literature set up “national solidarity” and “altruism” as paradigmatic features. This paradigm included the following: cooperation between ethnically kin-institutes, joint ownerships, personal unions, mutual consultations and representation in decision-making (interlocking directorships), common programs (annual assemblies, congresses) and adult education, sustaining school and student cooperatives.

The leadership of the cooperative centers included mainly the former staff of the pre-war functionaries and cooperative financial elite; they did not choose to leave Transylvania and go to Hungary, but remained in Transylvania after the Treaty of Trianon. Elemér Gyárfás, Hungarian senator in the Romanian Parliament, director and president of many other organizations, and some other personalities – György Bethlen, president of the Hungarian Party and of the Economic Association, Béla Drexler, former ministerial officer, bank director, president of the *Hangya* center, Sándor Makkai and Áron Márton, bishops, József Ürmössi, Unitarian pastor and cooperative leader, and the Unitarian bishop’s secretary – were those who represented several Hungarian institutions inside the cooperative leadership. Thus they personified the community of interest among these institutions (cooperatives, the Hungarian Party, the Transylvanian Economic Association and the Churches’ lay organizations, both Catholic and Protestant, or the banks and their union). The mutuality of interests was even enshrined in the bylaws of umbrella_organizations, each confession being represented, for instance, in both cooperative centers, where parliamentary deputies and bishops also had their seats. Sometimes, for lobbying reasons, even some Transylvanian Romanian politicians, administrative officials (such as Dr. Teodor Mihali, the mayor of Cluj, being a member of the Administrative Board of the Kolozsvári Takarékpénztár)

were offered a seat on the board of directors of Hungarian banks, but this seldom happened in the cooperative centers. The Hungarian parliamentary deputies represented the cooperative administrative board in legislation, where they cooperated with Saxon deputies in defending the minority cooperatives' autonomy.⁵⁷

These personal unions were partly symbolic, and partly expressed the mutual interest and values of the Hungarian elites and their institutions, some of them having not only moral but also pecuniary interests in cooperatives as founding shareholders.

The main interlocking administrative boards – of mutual representation – were those between the two cooperative centers, the Economic Association, the Hungarian Party and the Churches. Only some community-centered commercial banks were interested in promoting Hungarian cooperatives. The main refinancing center of the Alliance was the *Kolozsvári Takarékpénztár és Hitelbank rt.* (Savings and Credit Bank of Cluj) with the largest share in the assets of the Alliance credit cooperative center.⁵⁸

The continuous collaboration of the cooperative movement with the Transylvanian Economic Association was enhanced by the fact that some of its leaders were members of the board of directors of the Alliance too. The Economic Association's president until 1936 was the same lawyer, Dr. György Bethlen, who was also the president of the Hungarian Party. In 1936 the Transylvanian Economic Association took the "Hungarian" national epithet in its name, and the cooperative centers intensified their relations with the Transylvanian Hungarian Economic Association.⁵⁹ Representatives were mutually elected onto administrative boards, while the credit and the consumer center administration had two representatives in common, and all the Hungarian cooperatives decided to join the Transylvanian Hungarian Economic Association's membership.⁶⁰

The most consistent supporters of cooperation proved to be in this period the three historical Hungarian Churches of Romania: the Roman Catholic, the Reformed and the Unitarian Church. The most illustrative institutionalized economic cooperation with the Churches was in the matter of education, founding and funding of

new cooperatives, as well as mutual financial interests, especially insurance.

During the interwar period, professional education and higher education in the Hungarian language was suspended in state institutions.⁶¹ The majority of Hungarian elementary and secondary schools were administered and financed by the Churches. The Churches decided and managed, in the years of the heaviest financial crisis, in the first half of the 1930s, to open four private professional agricultural schools.⁶² The confessional communities continued to sustain the elementary schools, high schools and the two – Catholic and Protestant – theological faculties without state support. During the 1930s, due to the programs of Bishop Makkai and Bishop Márton, in the Theological Faculties and the teacher-training schools, future priests and teachers were trained in community development, internal religious mission, and cooperative, economic and accounting studies.

The confessional communities were proportionally represented on the board of directors of the cooperative centers: proportionally to the cooperative membership's three main confessions.⁶³ In rural communities the priests and pastors were in many cases cooperative members or presidents of administrative or supervisory board. Some micro-regions developed strongly, due to charismatic local leaders, who were frequently pastors or priests (József Ürmösy, Francis Balázs). Confessional youth societies also organized cooperatives.⁶⁴ Pedagogical reviews such as the *Erdélyi Iskola* (Transylvanian School), youth reviews such as *Erdélyi Fiatalok* (Transylvanian Youth) and *Hitel*, as well as the *Magyar Nép* (Hungarian People), a confessional popular weekly magazine, published in more than 17,000 copies a week, promoted the cooperative movement by articles and seminars organized for the students. The young generation of Hungarian intelligentsia was active in publishing articles and cooperative studies in their reviews. Christian social teaching influenced prominent young Catholics (university parish priest, editor and later bishop Áron Márton, sociologist József Venczel, teacher and "Scout leader" Lajos Puskás, or economists,

cooperative officials such as Tibor Petrovay and Zoltán Nagy). Protestant pastors, theological professors (Lajos Imre), writers (Domokos Gyallay Pap), reformed bishop Makkai, Unitarian pastor and writer Francis Balázs, or other Hungarian teachers, review-editors, regardless of their confession, published several books and articles on the issue of economic self-organization and spiritual-pedagogical education of the people, especially of the villagers, assuming that cooperative movement was one of the most important factors and levers, institutions towards this ideal goal of village people education and conservation, development in minority context. School and student cooperatives were founded in more than 100 elementary schools and 26 high schools and in several towns as young craftsmen's cooperatives; later in 1939 a School Cooperative Center started its activity to coordinate these educational and commercial activities.⁶⁵

Both at higher levels and at a local community level the Churches were the main shareholders in cooperatives. Sometimes the local Church offered its properties (land estate) to the cooperative plants.⁶⁶ The three Hungarian confessional communities jointly owned the Minerva Insurance Society Ltd. and the Minerva Literature and Printing Institute Ltd. (which published the most popular Hungarian weekly magazine) and opened rural libraries. In rural communities the credit cooperatives were the exclusive agencies of the Minerva insurance contracts. Besides the advantages of an offer of diversified services, this cooperative mediation of the insurance contracts was advantageous on three levels. The insured individual benefited from insurance discounts and facilities, as well as a more human and real estimation and payment in cases of damage. Secondly, the sums paid for insurance deposits remained at the level of the community as savings deposits of the credit cooperative. Thirdly, on a national level, the internally organized insurance meant internal circulation of money, a synergy inside the national entity. The confessional character (majority shareholding ownership) of the insurance company was considered to be a guarantee of its liability and seriousness. Since the company also

owned the Minerva Literature and Printing Institute Ltd., the largest Hungarian-language publishing house in Romania, it subsidized rural Hungarian literature by opening libraries.⁶⁷

The Saxon and Romanian nationalities also owned their own insurance companies during the period of the Dual Monarchy.⁶⁸ Besides the fulfilled ideal of having a proper insurance sector, the Hungarians also wanted to increase the density and financial basis of their organizations. The Saxon *Transylvania Versicherungsanstalt* succeeded in administering 74 percent of the insurance fees (70 million lei) paid by the Transylvanian Germans. The Hungarian Minerva Insurance Society Ltd., the sole Hungarian insurance company, gathered barely 10 percent of the insurance fees (20 million lei) paid by Hungarians. Moreover, the money paid out by the Saxon company returned to Saxons as interest rates, and payments for estimates and medical treatments.⁶⁹ The Saxon and Romanian model was also mentioned as motivating the Hungarian banks to constitute common funds for cultural goals.⁷⁰

In contrast to Hungarian banks, the Saxon banks preserved their low interest rates and altruism even after the 1929 financial crisis, completing some fusions under the leadership of the *Hermannstädter Allgemeine Sparkasse*.⁷¹ The economic-sociological literature (György Bözödi) remarked on the positive paradigm of the altruistic community-oriented financial policy of the Saxon and Romanian banks before the war: “The Saxon banks gave us a ready parable and model on how a national minority should organize its finances: in only one year, in 1912 they turned one third of their benefits to charitable works, 726,000 crowns, of which 456,000 crowns were given to churches and schools. With this amount of money we could have sustained all our Magyar confessional schools.”⁷²

Another young cooperative functionary observed that “We Hungarians have often mentioned with envy the *Albina* of the Romanians or the *Hermannstädter Allgemeine Sparkasse* of the Saxons,” as nationally devoted altruistic financial centers.⁷³ The ideal of constituting a Hungarian national coordinating institute and a Hungarian Bank in Romania was a continuous topic in the public sphere, but it remained only an unaccomplished nationalist ideal.

The argumentation of the article was based on the similarity of the ethnic and ethical values of the Minerva Company and the Hungarian cooperatives, as well as the coincidence of membership interests: “It is our national-economic duty to ensure that our national income circulates inside the vessels of our national economy. While the majority of the insurance societies are foreign institutions, and they export our capital, the Minerva is a domestic institution: it is the property of the Hungarian Churches; therefore the insurance fees and charges paid to it will support our ecclesiastical, cultural and economic interests, while the fees remain as deposits in the local cooperative benefiting the whole community for a longer period.”⁷⁴

In 1933 the Union of the Alliance organized its annual general assembly together with the Congress of the Hungarian Party. At this congress several leaders of Hungarian organizations expressed the need for an operative institute capable of decision-making and implementing a “proper economic policy” benefiting the Hungarian community. They also expressed the need for a higher Hungarian Bank to be founded by the existing Hungarian banks.

The Hungarian elite quoted the model of the *Arbeitsausschuss aller deutscher Wirtschaftsverbände* (Working Committee of the German Economic Associations) and the economic program of the *Sachsensatz* (Saxon National Assembly)⁷⁵ as an efficient representative institutional model of self-governed, autarkic economic policy. In 1933, the Congress of the Hungarian Party also declared the following: “Based on the experiences of the last 15 years it is obvious that our minority society will only be able to preserve its strength if the Magyar economic and financial institutions reorganize themselves through unique coordination on the basis of self-government. According to this aim, it is imperative to establish an Economic Council where all the Transylvanian Hungarian organizations and institutions would be represented.”⁷⁶

In fact, neither the Hungarian economic council nor a Hungarian bank could be established during the parliamentary constitutional monarchy, but both remained a continuous ideal of the Transylvanian Hungarian intelligentsia. During the corporatist regime installed

in 1938, the Economic Department of the corporatist *Magyar Népközösség* (Hungarian National Community) followed similar aims to those formulated in political manifestos: the representation and coordination of all Hungarian economic organizations from Transylvania.⁷⁷

The Internal Democratization's Ideal of “Minority Community” through Cooperatives

An important topic of interwar Transylvanian public life was – besides the claim to the equality of Transylvanian nationalities and their right to self-government, promises enshrined in the Treaty for the protection of minorities signed by Romania on December 9, 1919 – the need for an internal democratization of the national minority community. Especially in the 1930s, cooperatives and economic organizations that had a large social basis became important factors in democratic change, more precisely as channels for organizing larger social entities, the peasantry and craftsmen.

While the conservative leadership of the Hungarian Party in Romania dominated Transylvanian Hungarian political life in the 1920s, a new generation of young Hungarian intellectuals emerged, challenging the conservatives. The youth admired the experience of Scandinavian countries (Denmark and Finland) as models of cooperative economies and democratic societies. The ideal of the internal democratization of the Transylvanian Hungarian minority was based largely on the social and economic reorganization of the peasantry via the cooperatives. Several of the reformist politicians and intellectuals became actively involved in the cooperative movement, as functionaries in both Hungarian cooperative centers. Some of them had excellent relations with the Transylvanian Romanian political and economic elite, a relationship that was often used in defending the autonomy of Hungarian organizations. It is worth noting that several Hungarian cooperative leaders led other institutions too: thus they assumed the common representation of cooperative, banking or farming interests, on the one hand, and

the cultural, political and ecclesiastical values of the Hungarian community from Romania, on the other. The cooperative leaders' experiences at foreign universities and on study trips were disseminated in articles and books, or personally as functionaries or village intellectuals. Ferenc Balázs, a Unitarian pastor, studied at Oxford and Berkeley during the 1920s; he visited Kagawa, Tagore and Gandhi, as well as other leaders of cooperative movements from all around the world. He was the most productive writer and publicist to disseminate the universal principles and values of the cooperative movement in Transylvania, publishing articles, regional development programs and several books on the issue. He was considered by his generation in Transylvania to be the most charismatic personality: he was not only a theoretical proponent of the cooperative ideal; as a village pastor he organized the day-to-day cooperative life of a micro-region in Transylvania, establishing a Regional Development Cooperative of Aranyosszék.⁷⁸ Others of his contemporaries, born also in the first decade of the twentieth century, such as Sándor Vita, Tibor Petrovay and József György Oberding, were economists, functionaries working in financial institutions, in cooperative centers or the press, but at the same time they actively published social-economic or legal minority political articles in the press or books together with their newspaper-writer or lawyer colleagues (Sándor Kacsó and Imre Mikó), participated at youth/student conferences, carried out their teaching activity at cooperative youth seminars in the university centers or in folk high schools and cooperative training courses. The model of a self-supported agricultural school system followed the similar policies of the pre-war Transylvanian Saxon adult education.⁷⁹

The traditional relations of the Hungarian cooperative leaders with Romanian and international personalities (Henry May personally visited the Hungarian consumer cooperative center in 1935) also made them more acceptable to Romanian political elites.⁸⁰ Thus minority cooperative centers were recognized as juridical entities early in 1922, well before other Hungarian organizations (the Hungarian Party, the Transylvanian Economic Association, the

Transylvanian Hungarian Cultural Society), the latter being much more exposed politically to the control of the Romanian authorities, while the minority cooperative networks were given by law the larger rights to autonomous development.

Conclusion

Contemporary cooperative leaders considered that, when confronted with the state's *ex cathedra* cultural assimilation policies and economic nationalism, the minority organizations ought to build up an institutional network by themselves, on their own, according to the pre-war slogan "each to his own," propagated in Transylvania mainly by the Romanian nationality leaders.⁸¹ The Saxon and the Romanian national solidarity models were surely idealized by the minority Hungarian elites in interwar Romania. Nevertheless, some of the national solidarity elements were naturally inherent in the Hungarian cooperatives as well, since the cultural and economic, confessional and political "pillars" of the national organization (as one main speaker called them at the Congress of the Hungarian Party) were reunited by the elite inside the community. The same was true for the Saxons and Romanians, too, in Transylvania.⁸² The main difference resided in their relationship with the state authorities. Feeling disadvantaged and discriminated against due to their non-dominant ethnic origin – in spite of the constitutional equality of all Romanian citizens – the Hungarians and the Germans from Romania tried to conserve their well-established organizational system without state subsidies, relying on their own resources. The informal coordination of the whole national minority community was of course less efficient, as compared to state coordination and control. The personal interrelatedness of minority organizations personified by the elite tried to rearrange and centralize the minority institutions according to the new political necessities and ideals, but it was very hard to reorganize all these on a national-cultural basis, since some of them were not inherently constituted for national reasons, but for profit or other goals (especially in the case of commercial banks).

Either cooperatives in their turn were supported and promoted by other kin-institutes, or they were the promoters and facilitators of national culture and their national community (jobs and services), while remaining committed to the universal principles and values of cooperative democracy, openness and non-discrimination. Thus the ethnic affiliation of cooperative networks can be explained by their constitutive national embeddedness: being promoted by older nationally devoted institutes and supporting in their turn their membership's cultural and national values.

The Transylvanian national cooperative movements reproduced similar features in their internal structure (joint enterprises and common festivals, general assemblies, and national elites sitting on most of the main institutions' governing boards). The main differences among them resided in their relationship with the state, county authorities and promoting institutes. Multi-ethnic boards of directors were very rare – it happened mainly in the big industrial and financial sectors – and the few exceptions of co-opting some high official were either forced by the law or based on lobbying interests of the firm (for example, offering a seat to the mayor in function or to other prominent Romanian politicians, as happened in the case of the Alliance and the big Hungarian banks from Kolozsvár). Otherwise seats were distributed between the leadership of promoter institutes and proportionally for the cooperative membership democratic delegations.

The wide popular basis of the movement offered a chance, a channel, to involve the co-nationals in an ethnic sense in the democratically structured cooperative network, thus enabling the everyday cultural socialization of their own ethnic peers inside a cooperative unit embedded in “their own” national institutional system.

Concerning the nature of the relationship between minorities and the majority at the level of the population, we can conclude that while state influence and competition for administrative resources rhetorically reproduced the inter-ethnic political conflicts, at the level of both the cooperative members and the leadership there was

a continuous inter-ethnic communication and mutual influence of organizational paradigms.

Economic and cooperative specialists used to gather at professional venues without regard to national origin, even at common political meetings, protesting against state control or the taking over of the cooperative movement by the Liberals. This common opposition or common platform usually formed on a regional basis, showing the solidarity of the Saxons and Hungarians, and several times of Transylvanian Romanians as well. Parliamentary deputies of Transylvanian origin, too, used to cooperate in the legislative chamber on bills. The Peasant Party government and the decentralized national cooperative institutions succeeded in integrating some delegates of the minority cooperative leadership into the central consultative organs.

National minorities, while trying to conserve their resources and properties, tried to integrate themselves as a recognized national entity into the new state, but this constitutional recognition remained lacking, and thus only individual and institutional integration strategies remained available for those activist national elites. Cooperatives were in favor of activism as opposed to the “passivism” of conservative politics. The young generation of cooperative leadership was also in favor of activism, but mainly oriented towards their fellows, hoping for the democratic reorganization and economic-social welfare of the Hungarian community. Minorities consequently opposed state control, while the cultural character of promoter institutes and their national target groups inherently conferred the national character upon the cooperative movement too. The internal cohesion among institutions and organizations from the same national group was paradoxically reinforced by the imminence of state control and encouraged different non-dominant national entities to develop mutual relationships.⁸³ While opposing state nationalism, the “genuine nations” developed a coherent program of nation-building without state help and sometimes against the state, relying on their proper national wealth and its programmatic efficient allocation. Cooperatives thus became mass

organizations channeling not only economic but also cultural and national knowledge towards the cooperative membership.

The comparative investigation in the history of the Saxon, Romanian, Jewish and Hungarian cooperative movements from Romania gave us arguments for the following statements.

The national label or eponym of cooperative movements was accurate, since the cooperatives developed inside a wider institutional framework (a “cradle”). The promoter institute, such as the literary association, the Church or the economic and political organizations, gave *ab ovo* a national character to the modern economic organizations, while the latter explicitly and implicitly expressed themselves and acted as national institutions. The Romanian national cooperative offices themselves registered cooperatives and their federations according to their national-cultural affiliations.

There was a continuous mutual influence of organizational paradigms among the three national cooperative movements, especially among Romanians and Saxons, in a synchronous way, and a diachronic application of the former nationality (Romanian and Saxon) models by the interwar Hungarian minority from Romania.

Cooperatives fulfilled four channeling functions: economic-commercial channeling, cultural-ideological channeling, upward mobility and mass mobilization. By offering bank and commodity services as well as economic advantages, organizing cultural and national conferences for the people, cooperatives raised the standard of living of several groups of peasants, and of cooperative delegates and functionaries, who thus could become politically active citizens. Cooperative membership at the same time was designed to objectify the national affiliation of their fellows, who happened to be gathered and mobilized for political or civic meetings inside the cooperative courtyard and were given an opportunity to express their opinions and exercise their voting rights in the general assemblies.

The history of cooperative movements introduced new primary sources in the historiography of minority problems, has offered

a “history of everyday life” point of view on the nationality question, and determines the researcher to diversify the sources and viewpoints of the one-sided political history of national groups and nation-building, by introducing new methods and sources, focusing primarily on the social and economic history of national entities: the everyday life of minorities and majorities.

Notes

- 1 The author’s research on the history of financial institutes, banks and cooperatives from Transylvania was supported by the János Bolyai Scholarship awarded by the Hungarian Academy of Science.
- 2 This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian National Authority for Scientific Research, CNCS-UEFISCDI, project number PN-II-RU-2011-3-0238.
- 3 Historians for the interwar period use a wider notion of the so-called “present-day Transylvania,” comprising all those Hungarian territories that were granted to interwar Romania. See the following: Keith Hitchins, *Rumania 1866–1947* (Oxford, 1994); Nándor Bárdi, Csilla Fedinec and László Szarka, eds., *Minority Hungarian Communities in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 2011), p. 8. See also Holly Case, *Between States. The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II* (Stanford, CA, 2009), pp. xviii–xix.
- 4 Ioan Scurtu and Liviu Boar, eds., *Minoritățile naționale din România 1918–1925* [The National Minorities from Romania 1918–1925] (Bucharest, 1995), p. 8; Ferenc Glatz, “Data on Trianon Hungary,” in Ferenc Glatz, ed., *Hungarians and Their Neighbors* (New York, 1995), pp. 105–110.
- 5 Gheorghe Iancu, *The Ruling Council (1918–1920)* (Cluj-Napoca, 1995).
- 6 Bárdi, Fedinec and Szarka, eds., *Minority Hungarian Communities in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 120–123.
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Szilárd Toth

**THE ROMANIAN ELECTORAL SYSTEM,
“ELECTORAL TRADITIONS” AND THE CHANCES
OF THE NATIONAL HUNGARIAN PARTY
IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS
IN INTERWAR ROMANIA**

The Hungarians of Romania, just like the political elite in Budapest, had hoped for a positive judgment of the Transylvania question at the Paris Peace Conference, and precisely for this reason the decision at Trianon and its consequences came as a serious shock for them. Their previously adopted political passivism lost its rationale, but it was not easy to shake the political elite of the Romanian Hungarians out of this. Nevertheless, active participation in political life remained the sole viable path for them. Just half a year after Trianon the Kolozsvár section of the Hungarian Alliance was formed (January 9, 1921), with the aim of representing the interests of the Hungarians in Romania before the Romanian state and the League of Nations. Political activism was given a further boost by Károly Kós's pamphlet entitled *Kiáltó szó* (Exclamatory Word), which appeared on January 23, 1921. Lajos Albrecht and Károly Kós, further urging activism, founded the Hungarian People's Party (*Magyar Néppárt*) on June 5, 1921.¹ One month later members of the People's Party reached an accommodation with the Conservative grouping, and on July 6, 1921, the Hungarian Alliance (*Magyar Szövetség*) was established, under the presidency of Baron Samu Jósika. The post of vice-president was filled by István Ugron, Emil Grandpierre, Kálmán Béldy, Géza Ferenczy and Lajos Albrecht, while Károly Kós became the secretary.² However, on October 30, 1921, the Romanian state suspended the activity of the Hungarian Alliance. Thereupon the Hungarian People's Party once again began to organize, and on January 15, 1922, it elected István Kecskeméthy, a theology professor, as its president. Simultaneously, on February 12, 1922, the Hungarian National Party (*Magyar Nemzeti Párt*) was

formed, under the leadership of first the Unitarian bishop József Ferencz, then Emil Grandpierre.³ Finally, under the leadership of Samu Jósika these two parties once more united, within the framework of the National Hungarian Party (*Országos Magyar Párt*) on December 28, 1922.⁴ It was after such antecedents that the National Hungarian Party came into being, in order to begin its political fight in the political arena of Romania, which was no easy task, as will be revealed below.

Analysis of Romanian parliamentary elections between the two world wars reveals a very exciting side of Romania's history. The electoral system and "customary law" made it possible for the political parties and especially the governing party to thoroughly "influence" the results of the elections. They possessed an array of means and methods with which they could alter the results of the elections, and they made due use of these. Consequently, at the start of every parliamentary session harsh exchanges between the opposition and the governing party regarding electoral fraud were inevitable. The minutes of the Central Electoral Commission are replete with the petitions, protests and appeals of the various political parties. Several historians, political scientists and sociologists have dealt with analyzing this problem, but the one who has perhaps best defined this "phenomenon" is Mattei Dogan, in his study entitled *Dansul electoral în România interbelică*⁵ (The Electoral Dance in Interwar Romania). The title of the study is very apt. The political practice in Romania was the following: the king appointed the new prime minister, the new government arranged the elections, and it was after this that Parliament convened. Naturally, each government arranged the elections in such a way as to obtain a sweeping majority. It is thanks to this that the election results and parliamentary representation of the major political parties greatly fluctuated, and the parties "danced" along the Romanian political scale. One of the most characteristic examples is the case of the National Liberal Party: in the 1920 elections, being in opposition, it obtained only 6.8 percent, but in 1922, when it was in government, it obtained 60.3 percent, in 1926 (in opposition) it fell back to 7.3

percent, and in 1927 (in government) it once more leaped to 61.7 percent, only to fall back once again to 6 percent in 1928.⁶ The other two major Romanian parties (the National Peasant Party and the People's Party) that formed governments in this period also "danced" in a similar way, to use Mattei Dogan's expression. When they were in government, they obtained a sweeping majority, but when they had to watch the organization of the elections from the opposition benches, they barely got into Parliament. Nevertheless, it is with the National Liberal Party that the greatest fluctuation may be observed, which prompts us to conclude that that it was they who possessed the narrowest voter base and they who committed the biggest electoral fraud in this period. Further promoting the victory of the governing party was the fact that the electoral law of 1926 provided an electoral premium to any party that obtained at least 40 percent of the votes. This party received 50 percent of seats in Parliament, and the rest of the parliamentary mandates were distributed based on the results achieved; thus the winning party possessed a minimum of 70 percent of seats in Parliament.

More recently, two books by Sorin Radu have also appeared in connection with the problems of the Romanian electoral system; in these, he analyzes these electoral problems much more profoundly than Mattei Dogan: *Electoratul din România în anii democrației parlamentare (1919–1937)* (The Electorate of Romania in the Years of Parliamentary Democracy (1919–1937))⁷ and *Modernizarea sistemului electoral din România (1866–1937)* (The Modernization of the Electoral System in Romania (1866–1937)).⁸

In these two books Sorin Radu thoroughly, logically and succinctly analyzes the means and opportunities to influence Romanian voters, not hesitating to emphasize the high degree of illiteracy, as a consequence of which great masses of voters lacked a political culture and were easily influenced. He has divided the possibilities of influencing the voters into two main categories:

- electoral propaganda: the role of the press, election rallies, electoral symbols, campaign speeches, and so on.
- the government's exertion of pressure: censorship, introduction

of a *curfew*, the use of pressure by the administration, the role of the judiciary, the army, the police and the gendarmerie, and so on.⁹

There is nothing wrong with those listed in the first category; these could be used in every normally functioning parliamentary democracy within legal bounds. With the government's exertion of pressure, however, it was possible to change election results fundamentally. In interwar Romania it was this second category that was the most important opportunity to influence the electorate, and not the classic electoral propaganda. Naturally, a certain exertion of pressure by the government can be observed in every democratic system, but in interwar Romania this was masterfully employed and there was no attempt to conceal it either, as a couple of examples also reveal.

An exchange in the Romanian Parliament after the 1926 parliamentary elections:

“Deputy Grigore Diaconescu: How do you explain that the deceased also voted for you?

Deputy Dr. Anton Ionescu: The same way that they voted for you as well. This is your method.”¹⁰

The statement of Spiridon Popescu during the same elections: Yesterday in Mugureni, where there is a Tutova electoral ward, Senator Galin ran into me. He had been looking for me and finally found me, to tell me something very important. “Spiridon Popescu, sir,” began the senator from Tutova, “you are a serious person. Now we are in power, it is we who are organizing the elections, and you yourself will understand that your presence here is now superfluous.” He then added, “When you are in power, then you will organize the elections and then I will not interfere in your elections.”¹¹

It is worth noting the speech of Deputy Gh. Cuza in Parliament as well:

“Gentlemen, today it is not a matter of the deeds of this or that party, but rather of the continuous maintenance of

a system of electoral fraud, irrespective of which party is leading the country...”¹²

This exertion of pressure on the part of the government, with varying shades of difference depending on which party was in power, was observable during the entire political life of interwar Romania.

The employment of the various illegal methods testifies to great resourcefulness: the use of false ballots, preventing opposition voters from voting with the help of the army and the gendarmerie, the introduction of quarantines in certain villages, and so on. It is no wonder, therefore, that under such circumstances what counted as a “normal” election was one in which a couple of fatalities and a couple of hundred, perhaps a couple of thousand, wounded could be written off as a consequence of clashes between the supporters of the various parties and the forces of law and order. There were, naturally, “cleaner” and “quieter” elections, too, but even then there were abundant incidents.

The governmental use of pressure mentioned by Sorin Radu, which led to these results, however, I would analyze and systematize somewhat differently:

1. ensuring the first place on the ballot for the candidate of the governing party;
2. hindering the political opponent’s campaign;
3. bribing voters and making them drunk;
4. terrorization of and/or physical assault on the voters, with or without the help of the gendarmerie;
5. obstruction of voting for the opposition and the transport of one’s own voters to the voting center;
6. the mass use of fake ballots.

But let us take a couple of examples. The ensuring at all costs of first place on the ballot at first glance might appear ridiculous, since this would not mean a situational advantage. However, we must not forget that a large part of the voters in Romania was made up of illiterate or semi-literate peasants, lacking any political culture

whatsoever. They voted for whoever bribed them, got them drunk, terrorized them or was at the head of the list, since, to their way of thinking, if he was at the head of the list, he must be the most important person among the candidates. To this end, the political parties practically waged hand-to-hand combat at the moment when the candidacies were submitted, since it was in the order of submission that they were placed on the ballot. Let us take one example:

“When they opened the door of the court house, so that the candidates could submit their candidacy, Attorney Roman Iosif (the candidate of the National Peasant Party) broke into a run, so that he could submit his dossier first, but at the second door the police commander blocked his path. Because, however, the police commander could not hold back the pressing crowd, he had to allow them through. In the meantime, however, a couple of civilians hurried to the police commander’s aid and held down Attorney Roman Iosif, so that meanwhile their own candidate (Liberal) could submit his dossier first,” writes the police report.¹³

The candidates were entered onto the list in the order of submission and the one at the top had an obvious advantage in the case of a semi-literate or drunk voter. And there were plenty of both in these elections.

As far as hindering the campaign of the political opponents is concerned, this the prefects did regularly, on ministerial orders from above, with the help of the police, the gendarmes and sometimes the army or civilians.

But let us see what Deputy M. Negură stated on August 13, 1932: In all the communes in the county [Vaslui] many citizens were severely beaten. . . . When the members of the National Peasant Party were unable to obstruct our propaganda with simple thugs, then they brought a bunch of gendarmes. They brought the thugs to disperse our people, and if they failed, then the gendarmes stepped in, and the latter beat up and arrested our people. . . . The system of roadblocks from 1926 was reintroduced.¹⁴

In the 1927 elections in Haró in Hunyad County, the candidate of the National Hungarian Party, Dr. György Martonossy, a lawyer from Déva, was not allowed into the room by the commander of the gendarmerie, Iovan Mica.¹⁵

The leaders of the National Hungarian Party in Marosvásárhely complained that the police, on instructions from the local police commander, had on more than one occasion, on June 25 and July 3, 1927, torn down the party's election posters.¹⁶

As far as bribing the voters was concerned, this was perhaps one of the most popular methods both among the voters and those bribing them. The means of bribery was alcohol.¹⁷ Complaints such as those below were regularly heard from the opposition benches:

“At Tanacu two barrels of wine were given to the voters.”¹⁸

“... In the electoral ward of Codăești 760 liters of wine were distributed, wine with which the voters of the National Peasant Party were made drunk...”¹⁹

As to how many people could be made drunk with 760 liters of wine in a not particularly well-nourished Moldavian community, I leave that to the calculations and imagination of the reader...

On February 18, 1936, by-elections were held for a vacated parliamentary seat in Hunyad County. An individual by the name of Petru Zorgoni in Demsus commune gathered together a group of 30–40 adherents of the National Peasant Party, and got them drunk in his own residence; then they burst out into the street and began shouting “Long live the wheel [the electoral symbol of the National Peasant Party]!” Thereupon there appeared a group of Liberals, who began shouting “Long live the stick [the vertical line that was the electoral symbol of the National Liberal Party]!” The shouts turned into beatings and finally they tossed rocks at each other, until they broke the window of the tax office. At this time Petru Zorgoni, instead of pacifying the brawlers, went home, took out his revolver and fired two shots into the air without hitting anyone, wrote the gendarmerie in its report.²⁰

As far as the terrorizing of voters is concerned, we can also find examples in the above report, but there are much rougher scenes as well:

The day before the elections, at 12 o'clock at night, the Orthodox priest went around the village with a team of thugs, telling the inhabitants: whoever dares to set foot in the town is a dead man [the town was two kilometers away and it was there that they had to go to vote].

These same thugs at 12:30 at night broke down the door of our candidate... the residents of the village, seeing this, rushed home in terror to protect their families and children.²¹

... I was attacked with rocks when I was heading to the polling station... I fled to my car and hid, and when the gendarmes arrived to see who the culprit was, about 30 people responded with gunshots.²²

If bribery and terror were not sufficient, then the simplest thing was not to allow the opposition's voters to vote and to transport one's own voters into the voting center. All this was carried out with the help of the army, the gendarmerie or civilians of the government party.²³

In the 1927 elections the authorities set up a quarantine in five Hungarian-majority villages near Dicsőszentmárton (Gálfalva, Ádámos, Dombó, Szőkefalva and Királyfalva) because of an alleged plague epidemic, and prevented the residents of these villages from going to vote. Elemér Gyárfás, the deputy candidate of the National Hungarian Party, and Hans Hedric, the candidate of the German National Party, went to the Liberal prefect in Nagyszeben, who ignored their protests; then Emil Folea, the candidate of the National Liberal Party, told the protesters that the population of these five villages could go to vote only if Elemér Gyárfás and Hans Hedric withdrew their candidacies and the population of the villages voted for the National Liberal Party.²⁴ Both candidates listened with indignation to the offer, and naturally rejected it. It goes without saying that the Liberals won the elections in the ward, and it was thanks only to his victory in Csík that Elemér Gyárfás got into the Senate as the sole Hungarian representative.

In the by-elections of 1936, Prefect Romulus Miocu, the Liberal candidate, asked the Ministry of the Interior in a

telegram to intercede with the Romanian Railways (CFR) for the purpose of transporting voters: he requested that the CFR provide transportation for 1,000 voters from Alsóváca to the polling station in Bertenfalva and back, and the transportation of 800 voters to Dobra by the Lugos train. He requested that an additional eight to ten carriages be attached to the Karánsebes train for the voters of Várhely (Sarmizegetusa) and an additional six carriages be attached to the No. 2704 train.²⁵

If the previously enumerated methods were not sufficient, then there still remained the most primitive method, the mass use of false ballots.²⁶ A somewhat earlier – nineteenth-century – case in Bucharest became legendary. This characteristic and very tragicomic example of electoral fraud took place in Bucharest in 1895: in the polling station set up in the Clementa school the government had the soldiers vote several times, always dressing them in different clothes. One sergeant voted, went out, then a couple of minutes later came in to vote again, this time wearing a different coat, then for the third time, with a hat on his head, a fourth time exchanging the hat for a fur cap and so on... He returned a seventh time, whereupon the chairman of the polling station, Pompiliu Florian, had enough of this farce and yelled at him to cut it out: he had already voted seven times, and if he showed up for an eighth time, then he would arrest him!²⁷ This practice continued in interwar Romania as well.

In the 1927 elections in the electoral district of Marosújvár (Fehér County), according to the estimate of the National Hungarian Party, the National Liberal Party stole 500–600 votes from Hungarian voters. When it came to counting the votes, the chairman of the committee was unwilling to show the ballots to the other members for the purposes of verification, becoming indignant that they dared to question his honesty. When the chairman had counted up about 100 votes in a row in favor of the Liberals (in a ward where the National Peasant Party and the National Hungarian Party possessed reliable and stable voter bases and these two parties had not received even one vote according to the chairman's claim), the representative of the National Peasant Party tried to tear the

ballot out of the chairman's hand to make certain that the vote really was for the Liberals. The chairman did not let go of the ballot and as a result of this it tore. Thereupon the chairman immediately arrested the representative of the National Peasant Party for tearing the ballot and along with him also the representatives of the National Hungarian Party, Béla Lőrinczi and Béla Nagy, who were protesting against the incident. All three spent the remaining time until the ballots had been counted in the holding cell, so there was no one to verify the Liberal chairman's count.²⁸

In these same elections in nearby Torockó, Chairman Stamatide arrested the representatives of the opposition even before the voting, and in Déda, too, the representatives of the National Hungarian Party and the Romanian National Peasant Party were removed from the counting of the votes.²⁹ It should be mentioned only in passing that it was the National Liberal Party that organized and duly won a sweeping victory in the 1927 parliamentary elections.

In such an electoral context it is interesting to analyze the behavior of the Hungarian voters, all the more so because the Romanian political elite constantly accused the Hungarian minority in Romania of irredentism and revisionism. It is clear that they feared the Hungarians of Romania, since this was the most significant national minority in Romania and, unlike the case of the Romanian Germans (the other significant minority in Romania), the mother country, Hungary, neighbored Romania; furthermore, the Hungarian minority lived in substantial blocs along the common border. All this, together with the Hungarian government's disguised – and later openly proclaimed – revisionism, constantly vexed Romanian political circles. This is precisely why it is worthwhile to analyze the behavior of the Hungarian minority during the Romanian parliamentary elections, in order to see whether manifestations of this kind may be observed during the election campaign and on the day of the elections.

Analyzing the minutes of the Central Electoral Commission, we can establish that the “quietest elections” in interwar Romania were in the Hungarian-inhabited counties. In the minutes of the

Central Electoral Commission far fewer irregularities are noted in the counties inhabited by the Hungarians than in the other counties of Romania.³⁰ Yet there we could have expected many more than average, because of the inter-ethnic tensions there. Despite this, in a number of Hungarian-inhabited counties we find no irregularities whatsoever during certain elections, which in itself is already “irregular” with regard to Romanian elections. Where isolated incidents do crop up, these can be ascribed mostly to the excesses of the governmental pressure (the police, the gendarmerie and the army obstructing the voters’ exercise of their right to vote, blocking the roads and preventing, occasionally with armed force, the voters from reaching the election center). Such incidents cannot be ascribed to “revisionist provocations.”

There were a number of minor incidents that happened, for example, during the 1926 elections, when the National Hungarian Party entered into an electoral cartel with the People’s Party in government and the government allowed the Hungarian voters to march, officially tolerating this, during the election campaign under their national colors. Certain Romanian patriots, especially a couple of Romanian military officers, construed this as a provocation and an insult to the Romanian state, and noted a couple of cases when the outraged Romanians tried to tear the red-white-green banner out of the Hungarians’ hands.³¹ In any case this gesture testifies to great boldness and tolerance on the part of the People’s Party, in that they allowed this six years after Trianon. Incidentally, because of the defeat suffered in the elections, the elite of the Romanian National Party vented its frustration in very heated nationalist instigation. Alexandru Vajda-Voievod wrote the following in *Patria*:

From the land of Decebal, from the Hunyad of the glorious Corvins, lamentations reverberate: Romanian gendarmes shot Romanian voters dead. They killed them so that they might not vote for Romanians. In Greater Romania the Hungarian, the Saxon, the Jew and the Gypsy are under the protection of the gendarme. They may vote for Béla Barabás, who over a lifetime has persecuted everything that is Romanian. They may vote for him because in Greater

Romania, in the shadow of the Hungarian tricolor under the protection of the Romanian gendarme, Béla Barabás has the privilege of vilifying the ‘stupid Vlachs.’ The Romanian gendarme blushes, but he fulfills his obligation... The Hungarian party recited the ‘National Anthem,’ spoke of the territories torn from the body of the thousand-year-old Hungary. The Romanian gendarme stood to attention, red in the face, but he fulfilled his obligation... Entire villages were beaten up, and hundreds of Romanians were arrested and tortured by Romanian gendarmes... When in the land of the Corvins he could no longer hold the cordon, the Romanian gendarme fired a volley on his brothers. The dead were shot down at a distance of eighty to one hundred steps. The Romanian gendarme painted the soil of Greater Romania red with Romanian blood. This, so that Szele, Barabás, Tornya, Count Bethlen, Baron Jósika, Count Teleki and the other saviors of Goga’s majority might win.³²

The flavor of nationalist propaganda comes through in the article, but it also reveals to us those abuses that the government’s men committed during the organization and running of elections, when bloody incidents were everyday occurrences. However, we must not fall into the error of believing Alexandru Vajda-Voievod and so assuming that the Romanian gendarme spilled only Romanian blood during the elections and that the minorities were privileged and enjoyed the protection of the state authority. Imre Mikó recalled the 1937 parliamentary elections thus:

The parliamentary election of December 20 followed once again the spirit of the traditions of the Liberal Party. The candidates of the [National] Hungarian Party were arrested, rallies were not permitted, entire communes were closed down in the days before the election on the pretext of an epidemic, the appointed designees of the Hungarian Party were not allowed near the ballot boxes, those who did were beaten, and the votes cast were stolen and replaced with Liberal votes. The most serious clash occurred on the outskirts of Nyárádmagyarós in Maros-Torda County. About 800 Hungarian voters from several communes set

out in the early morning hours to the electoral ward center in Felsőoroszi to vote. In the vicinity of Nyárádmagyarós the notary of Mikháza, who had romanianized his name from Perényi to Pereni, together with eight gendarmes, called on the crowd to stop and held them until 11 o'clock in the morning. At that time the parish priest of Deményháza arrived in a cart, and the notary allowed him through the line. The crowd believed that the road was open to them as well and started after the cart. Thereupon the notary gave the order to fire and he shot first with a hunting rifle. Eleven Székely men collapsed. Two died on the scene: their bodies were transported in secret by the gendarmerie and no one was allowed to attend their burial. The others were placed in the state hospital in Marosvásárhely. One of them died, and several became disabled. After the election, proceedings commenced against the perpetrators, but the case was already dismissed by the investigating magistrate, which the grand jury also approved, and the High Court of Cassation and Justice itself also ruled in favor of the murderers. The investigation established that the gendarmes used arms in self-defense; the notary's rifle had been replaced, and a determination was made that the new weapon had not even been fired.³³

As can be seen, the government's men did not spill just Romanian blood over the "land of Decebal." It is true, however, that a distinction was made between voters who reached some sort of agreement with the government and opposition voters. It is thanks to this that during the 1926 municipal elections organized by the Liberals and the 1926 parliamentary elections organized by the People's Party, the National Hungarian Party could organize its own election campaign under more favorable circumstances, since the prefects had received an order from the government not to obstruct the activity of the National Hungarian Party.³⁴

Analyzing the minutes of the Central Electoral Commission, I encountered one single significant incident provoked by Hungarian voters. This happened on December 12, 1928, during the parliamentary elections organized by the National Peasant Party. It

is an irony of fate that out of the Romanian parliamentary elections organized between the two world wars this was the “most proper” and the “cleanest,” if one may put it thus. It was in these elections that the fewest violations could be observed (although this does not mean that the governing party did not exert pressure on the voters, but simply that the pressure was not as great as on other occasions). Analyzing the minutes of the Central Electoral Commission it turns out that in 21 of 71 Romanian counties there were no incidents at all.³⁵ Moreover, in many counties we are aware of only insignificant incidents.

It is precisely for this reason curious that it is precisely in this election that we find the bloodiest incident provoked by Hungarian voters. But let us see how the events actually happened. According to the minutes written by the chairman of the Electoral Commission of Háromszék (Trei-Scaune) County, Alexandru Ștefănescu (who wrote all this based on the statement of Judge A. R. Costescu, chairman of the election ward center in Oltszem), on December 12, 1928, in the election center in Oltszem an enormous scuffle arose, as a consequence of which the voters of Oltszem, Sepsibükszád and Mikóújfalú flooded into the polling station and fatally stabbed Corporal Stan Badea, a member of the guards, and seriously stabbed the court clerk and electoral office’s secretary, Gh. D. Ionescu. Thereupon a detachment of twenty soldiers was sent from Sepsiszentgyörgy; this restored order and the voting continued. The fatally wounded Corporal Badea and the seriously wounded court clerk Gh. D. Ionescu were admitted to the hospital in Sepsiszentgyörgy.³⁶ This is what may be found in the minutes written by the chairman of the Electoral Commission of Háromszék County, Alexandru Ștefănescu. The affair created quite a stir in the Romanian press, where we can find more and more ornate articles about the killing spree of the bloodthirsty Hungarians. In the meantime a detailed investigation of the case was ordered and it turned out that the “fatally wounded Corporal Stan Badea” was now well, and his state of health was good, just like that of the “seriously wounded court clerk Gh. D. Ionescu.”³⁷ Based on the investigation

and report begun on December 14, 1928, and carried out under the direction of Prosecutor A. Safirescu, the events had transpired as follows:

Voter János Katona appeared at the polling station in an inebriated state. The chairman of the polling station, Judge Aurel R. Costescu, ordered that he be locked in the pantry, so that he would sober up. After a short time a disturbance broke out in the courtyard among János Katona's fellow villagers, and this then spread to all the voters. A few of them, also mostly in an inebriated state, tried to force their way into the office. Six or seven Székely armed with knives tried to break into the office, but Corporal Stan Badea resisted them, whereupon they dragged him into the courtyard and soundly beat him, also stabbing him with penknives a few times. The corporal, however, soon succeeded in escaping into the polling station and locked the door behind him.

Upon seeing these things, the commander of the twenty-man detachment of guards, Lieutenant Dimitriu, became intimidated. He tried to pacify the crowd until reinforcements arrived from Sepsiszentgyörgy, but in the scuffle someone tore a rifle from the hands of one of the soldiers, whereupon his soldiers dispersed. The crowd broke open the door of the polling station, dragged Corporal Badea into the courtyard and beat him senseless, stabbing him a few more times with penknives.

Others, armed with penknives, knives and a revolver, burst into the polling station and attacked Judge Costescu, the chairman of the office, and wounded the court clerk Ionescu. Chairman Costescu escaped through a side door and fled by car to Sepsiszentgyörgy to report the incident. From there twenty soldiers led by a sergeant went out by truck to Oltzsem, restored order, evacuated the polling station and continued the voting in an orderly manner, as if nothing had happened. The ballot boxes were undisturbed: no one had touched them.

Meanwhile Baron Béla Szentkereszty, the representative and candidate of the National Hungarian Party, appeared on the scene, whereupon the crowd began cheering and again displayed

aggressive behavior. Thereupon Baron Szentkeresztzy, to avoid further incidents, withdrew.³⁸

At approximately the same time the voters behaved in a threatening manner at the neighboring polling stations in Székelykeresztúr and Torja as well, but there as a result of the resolute action of the guards events did not get out of hand. In Torja the commander of the guards threatened the voters that if they did not calm down and in the scuffle someone among them were to be shot accidentally, he would not be held responsible for this. And so passions were calmed.³⁹

As can be seen, the incidents were serious, but not to the extent that the chairman of the Electoral Commission for Háromszék County, Judge Alexandru Ștefănescu, reported and the Romanian press presented it. It is a curiosity of the events that in the great general fighting and amidst the ransacking of the polling station no one touched the ballot boxes. This shows that the voters were not interested in influencing the outcome of the vote. The cause of the incidents must be sought in something else. But we can better grasp this if we analyze the statement of another eyewitness, Dr. Kelemen Szendrei.

According to the narrative of Dr. Kelemen Szendrei of Gidófalva (who ran in the elections on the list of the National Peasant Party) at 9 o'clock in the morning a voter was brought into the polling station who was so drunk that he could not even stand on his feet, and was taken to another room so that he would not vomit on the floor of the office. At 10:30 another drunken voter came in and he was also locked up in the other room while he sobered up. Soon a third voter appeared, also from Mikóújfalva, but since he did not come next alphabetically, they kicked him out, telling him to come in when it was his turn. A couple of minutes later this voter entered again, whereupon he, too, was locked up with the other two. At around 12 o'clock the voters of Sepsibükszád and Mikóújfalva began to riot in the courtyard and demanded that the three locked-up persons be set free, *since now there was freedom and no one could be arrested*.⁴⁰

The crowd tried to enter the polling station, and the soldiers tried to hold them back with rifle butts, whereupon one of the Székely lads grabbed the weapon of one of the soldiers and ripped it from his hands, at which the guards dispersed and the lieutenant fled into the office. Thereupon the crowd burst into the office and attacked those present. Not only did they fall upon the Romanian officials present, but they set about the Hungarians as well; however, ultimately they took out their rage mostly on Corporal Badea, holding him responsible for the three arrests. Apart from him only the court clerk Ionescu was injured slightly. Kelemen Szendrei was also attacked with a long knife by an inebriated, furious Székely, who roared “Good Lord, sir, you’re Hungarian?!” but he managed to twist the knife out of his hand and escaped; then in the courtyard he encountered two sober peasants from Mikóújfalu, who promised that they would protect him.⁴¹

As can be seen, one of the main reasons for the disturbances was the excessive quantity of alcohol consumed. It is apparent in all witness statements that a good many of the voters were in an inebriated state. The other reason was the fact that the crowd waiting outside became outraged at the way in which the chairman of the polling station treated the intoxicated and disorderly voters: he arrested them and had them locked up to sober up. He had the right to do so, and the procedure was proper, but it provoked the outrage of the crowd. Also encouraging the crowd to demand its rights was the fact that these elections were not organized by the Liberals and the state of siege was finally lifted for the first time since the First World War. During the 1922 and 1927 elections organized by the Liberals, and the 1926 elections organized by the People’s Party, a state of siege was in effect and the government exerted much greater pressure on opposition voters than in 1928. In 1926 this did not affect Hungarian voters, because the National Hungarian Party was in an electoral cartel with the governing People’s Party. Thus the Liberals became associated with the image of the enemy, mainly because it was the Liberals who made the most intensive use of the methods of pressure (arrest, physical assault, and so on). All this is

articulated quite pithily and succinctly by the crowd in the following sentence: *Let the arrested men out, since now there is freedom and no one may be arrested.*⁴² The crowd felt that it had now finally rid itself of the Liberals' excesses and demanded its rights. Of course, it forgot that the arrested drunken voters were the ones who had begun the disorderly conduct... This explains also why they vented their rage specifically on Corporal Stan Badea: it was he, as the embodiment of the government's excesses, whom they regarded as the main enemy, since it was he who had had the three intoxicated voters jailed. Incidentally, Corporal Badea was attacked twice. Once in front of the polling station, and afterwards when he had fled into it and the crowd rushed the building. As we can see, they had no personal bone to pick with the rest of those present. Apart from Corporal Badea, only the court clerk, Gh. D. Ionescu, was injured slightly. No harm befell the soldiers, even though the latter had tried to hold the crowd back with rifle butts and one of the soldiers had had his weapon ripped from his hands. Nor were the commander of the military detachment, Lieutenant Dimitriu, or the chairman of the polling station, Judge Costescu, harmed either.

The charge of nationalist provocation was also raised. In his report to the minister of justice on December 19, 1928, Chief Prosecutor Safirescu spoke of pre-planned acts, regarding the county leaders of the National Hungarian Party as the chief culprits. His main argument was that there were disturbances in the neighboring voting centers in Székelykeresztúr and Torja as well: the minority voters marched singing their national songs and shouted "*Long live the Hungarian candidates, long live the Hungarians, long live Hungary!*" Chief Prosecutor Safirescu regarded all this as provocative. The crowd at first was only noisy, but later took a threatening stance. Furthermore, he claims to have certain information that László Fábián, one of the candidates of the National Hungarian Party, had "delivered a provocative, irredentist speech inciting hatred among the nationalities."⁴³

He writes, furthermore, that it was claimed that several Catholic and Reformed priests from the neighborhood had delivered similar

speeches and that they had made their faithful swear not to vote for Romanians, only for their Hungarian brethren.⁴⁴ He argued that Judge Aurel Costescu had declared that when he asked the two Catholic priests of Oltszem to soothe passions, they stood idly by and after a while departed the scene.⁴⁵ Chief Prosecutor Safirescu contradicts himself in the minutes sent to the Ministry when he speaks of a pre-planned act and places the responsibility on the shoulders of the county leaders of the National Hungarian Party, since, in his account, after the commander of the military detachment in Torja told the Torja Hungarian leaders that he would make them responsible for the disturbances, the latter cooperated with the authorities and soothed passions.⁴⁶ At the same time the action of the commander of the Torja military detachment was to be condemned, since the latter had said that if in the shoving the soldiers accidentally shot one or two leaders of the local Hungarians, he would not be held responsible for this...⁴⁷ Moreover, in Oltszem, too, when the crowd began cheering and once again displayed aggressive behavior, Baron Béla Szentkereszty, the representative and candidate of the National Hungarian Party, withdrew, a gesture that Chief Prosecutor Safirescu also appreciated.⁴⁸ Also to be condemned, however, was the inaction of the two Catholic priests, who did not try to soothe passions. But to claim that it was a case of a pre-arranged action against the Romanian state, in the light of the existing evidence, is quite an exaggeration. It is probable that in the campaign speeches nationalist exhortations were uttered, but this happened similarly on the Romanians' part as well. The priests exerted great influence over the voters and it cannot be ruled out that they made their faithful swear not to vote for the Romanian parties, but this did not happen by chance: the Romanian parties tried to obtain the votes of the minorities⁴⁹ and in the present case too Dr. Kelemen Szendrei ran on the list of the National Peasant Party.

The crowd's breaking into the polling station may be ascribed to spontaneous outrage. They were furious that their fellow villagers had been arrested, considering this to be unlawful. This theory is supported by the statements of other witnesses heard as well: László

Zathureczky and György Boer. The statement of György Boer, who was a delegate of the National Peasant Party, puts the events in a completely different light: the crowd asked the soldiers several times to release the arrested voter, János Katona, and only after the latter had refused this several times did they rush the polling station and liberate their fellow villagers. Thereupon they demanded that the chairman of the polling station hand over Corporal Badea to them.⁵⁰ This, too, reveals that it was he whom they regarded as the chief culprit in the arrest of János Katona. As can be seen, we can find the causes of this bloody incident not in inter-ethnic incitement, but rather in the outrage against the excesses of the governmental organs, and in excessive alcohol consumption.

Hungarian voters behaved in an exemplary fashion in parliamentary elections in interwar Romania. The low number of recorded incidents testifies to this, whereas in other counties of Romania not inhabited by Hungarians we encounter many more and much more serious incidents. The National Hungarian Party took part in every election between 1922 and 1937 (although it should be added that in the 1922 elections it took part under the name Hungarian Alliance, out of which the National Hungarian Party came into being a couple of months later, but the same political elite led both and could rely on the same mass of voters) and obtained greatly fluctuating results. This was due mainly to which Romanian party had organized the elections and what the relationship of the National Hungarian Party to the particular governing party was. However, the fluctuation is still not as great as in the case of the Romanian parties, which indicates that the National Hungarian Party had a much more stable and more disciplined voter base and fewer votes could be stolen from it with the methods mentioned above. The results depended, moreover, on the intensity of the “pressure” of the governing party. I have already noted that it was the National Liberal Party that was the great master of this, while the National Peasant Party was the most honest, with the People’s Party positioned somewhere between the two. This can be seen, incidentally, in the results of the National Hungarian Party as well. The table below

shows the number of the National Hungarian Party's deputies and senators in Parliament, as well as the name of the governing party organizing the elections and the relation of the National Hungarian Party to the governing party during the elections in question.

Year	Deputies	Senators	Governing party	Relation to the governing party
1922	3	3	National Liberal Party	in opposition
1926	15	12	People's Party	electoral cartel
1927	8	1	National Liberal Party	in opposition
1928	16	6	National Peasant Party	in opposition
1931	10	2	National Union Coalition (<i>de jure</i>) / National Liberal Party (<i>de facto</i>)	in opposition
1932	14	3	National Peasant Party	in opposition
1933	8	3	National Liberal Party	in opposition
1937	19	3	National Liberal Party	in opposition

As can be seen, the “electoral dance” noted by Mattei Dogan can be observed in the election results of the National Hungarian Party as well, with the caveat that the more positive results are not due to the fact (as in the case of the Romanian parties), that it was in the government and it organized the elections. Only during the 1926 elections did it enjoy the goodwill of the governing party, when it was in an electoral cartel with it. On all other occasions it was in opposition. Precisely for this reason we may regard the results of the National Hungarian Party as the “barometer of electoral fraud,” since on most occasions it endured the pressure exerted by the government during elections from the ranks of the opposition. The chances of the National Hungarian Party in the interwar Romanian parliamentary elections depended not so much on convincing its own voter base as rather on the intensity of the pressure exerted by the governing party organizing the elections.



A caricature depicting the Romanian elections: the leaders of the major political parties, Iuliu Maniu, Ion Mihalache, General Averescu and Nicolae Iorga, are fighting, while Ion I. C. Brătianu is trying to calm them down.

Notes

- 1 Imre Mikó, *Huszonkét év. Az erdélyi magyarság politikai története 1918. dec. 1-től 1940. aug. 30-ig* [Twenty-Two Years. The Political History of the Transylvanian Hungarians from Dec. 1, 1918, to Aug. 30, 1940] (Budapest, 1941), pp. 20–23.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

- 4 *Ibid.*, pp. 40–41.
- 5 Mattei Dogan, “Dansul electoral în România interbelică” [The Electoral Dance in Interwar Romania], *Revista de cercetări sociale* (1995) 4: 3–23.
- 6 Szilárd Toth, *Partidul Maghiar și problema minorității maghiare în Parlamentul României în perioada interbelică* [The National Hungarian Party and the Problem of the Hungarian Minority in the Romanian Parliament in the Interwar Period] (Cluj-Napoca, 2008), p. 40, and Dogan, “Dansul electoral în România interbelică,” pp. 6–7.
- 7 Sorin Radu, *Electoratul din România în anii democrației parlamentare (1919–1937)* [The Electorate of Romania in the Era of Parliamentary Democracy (1919–1937)] (Iași, 2004).
- 8 Sorin Radu, *Modernizarea sistemului electoral din România (1866–1937)* [The Modernization of the Electoral System of Romania (1866–1937)] (Iași, 2005).
- 9 Radu, *Electoratul din România*, pp. 146–319.
- 10 *Monitorul Oficial. Partea a II-a Desbaterile Adunării Deputaților* [Official Monitor. Part II, Debates of the Assembly of Deputies], April 11, 1926, p. 1916.
- 11 *Ibid.*, February 7, 1926, p. 1678.
- 12 *Ibid.*, August 13, 1931, p. 1987.
- 13 Ciprian Iancu, “Campanie electorală ca-n 1936–1937” [An Electoral Campaign as in 1936–1937], *Replica Hunedoara*, Nov. 29, 2008, at http://www.replicahd.ro/replica_db/index.php?pagerun=2&title=campanie_electoral_a_ca_n_1936_1937&more=1&c=1&tb=1&pb=1
- 14 *Monitorul Oficial. Partea a II-a Desbaterile Adunării Deputaților*, August 13, 1932, p. 1784.
- 15 Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale București [Central National Historical Archives, Bucharest], Fond Comisia Centrală Electorală [Central Electoral Commission Collection], dos. 8/ 1927, f. 86.
- 16 Direcția Județeană a Arhivelor Naționale Cluj [Directorate of the National Archives for Cluj County], Fond Partidul Maghiar din România [National Hungarian Party Collection], fasc. 8, f. 35.
- 17 Dogan, “Dansul electoral în România interbelică,” pp. 20–22.
- 18 *Monitorul Oficial. Partea a II-a Desbaterile Adunării Deputaților*, August 13, 1932, p. 1784.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 1986.
- 20 Iancu, “Campanie electorală ca-n 1936–1937.”

- 21 *Monitorul Oficial. Partea a II-a Desbaterile Adunării Deputaților*, August 13, 1932, p. 1784.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 1785.
- 23 Dogan, “Dansul electoral în România interbelică,” pp. 3–23; Mikó, *Huszonkét év. Az erdélyi magyarság politikai története 1918. dec. 1-től 1940. aug. 30-ig*; Radu, *Electoratul din România*, pp. 146–319.
- 24 Direcția Județeană a Arhivelor Naționale Cluj, Fond Partidul Maghiar din România, fasc. 8, f. 92.
- 25 Iancu, “Campanie electorală ca-n 1936–1937.”
- 26 Dogan, “Dansul electoral în România interbelică,” pp. 22–23.
- 27 Raluca Ion, “Obiceiurile românilor la alegeri, din trecut până în prezent: pomană și cafteală” [Customs of the Romanians during Elections, from the Beginnings to the Present: Alms and Beatings], *9AM*, retrieved Nov. 28, 2008, at <http://www.9am.ro/stiri-revista-presei/Social/112408/Obiceiurile-romanilor-la-alegeri-din-trecut-pana-in-prezent-pomana-si-cafteala.html>
- 28 Direcția Județeană a Arhivelor Naționale Cluj, Fond Partidul Maghiar din România, fasc. 8, f. 73.
- 29 *Ibid.*, fasc. 8, f. 73.
- 30 Toth, *Partidul Maghiar*, p. 41.
- 31 Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale București, Fond Comisia Centrală Electorală, dos. 69/ 1926.
- 32 Mikó, *Huszonkét év*, p. 61.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 195.
- 34 See, for example, the circular telegram of Minister Tancred Constantinescu to the prefects, in which he calls on them not to obstruct the activity of the National Hungarian Party: Ioan Scurtu and Ioan Dornea, eds., *Minoritățile naționale din România 1925–1931. Documente* [The National Minorities of Romania, 1925–1931. Documents], vol. II (Bucharest, 1996), pp. 117–118.
- 35 In the following counties there were no incidents at all: Argeș, Brassó, Brăila, Cahul, Câmpulung, Covurlui, Dorohoi, Falcu, Fogaras, Hotin, Hunyad, Ilfov, Mehedinți, Muscel, Naszód, Romanși, Sălaj, Soroca, Storoișeni, Teleorman and Torda. See the minutes of the commission monitoring the progress of the elections, Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale București, Fond Parlament [Parliament Collection], 2212/ 1928, vol. II, ff. 112–260.
- 36 Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale București, Fond Comisia Centrală Electorală, dos. 17/ 1928, f. 20.

- 37 *Ibid.*, dos. 17/ 1928, ff. 16-17.
38 *Ibid.*
39 *Ibid.*
40 *Ibid.*, f. 45.
41 *Ibid.*, f. 46.
42 *Ibid.*
43 *Ibid.*, f. 30.
44 *Ibid.*
45 *Ibid.*
46 *Ibid.*, f. 29.
47 *Ibid.*
48 *Ibid.*, f. 16.
49 Toth, *Partidul Maghiar*, p. 48.
50 Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale București, Fond Comisia Centrală Electorală, dos. 17/ 1928, f. 50.

Attila Gidó

THE TRANSYLVANIAN JEWS IN ROMANIA, 1918–1940

During 1918–1919 the Eastern Hungarian and Transylvanian territories were occupied by the Romanian army, and under the terms of the Peace Treaty of Trianon in 1920 a part of the Banat, the Partium and historical Transylvania were transferred from Hungary, which finished the world war as a defeated party, to Romania. Henceforth by Transylvania I mean the totality of these annexed territories.

If parallel histories and historiographies exist, then perhaps one of the best examples of this is European Jewry, and specifically – continuously narrowing, as it were, the circle – the Jewish community of Romania. Undoubtedly, it was on the basis of religion, and, from the late nineteenth century onwards, the Zionist movement, that the Jewish communities of the individual regions found that common denominator upon which they could build the consciousness of their belonging. Yet in many cases these two factors were still not enough for establishing closer relations among inhabitants of Jewish origin of the different countries and regions. A concrete example of this is interwar Romania, with the establishment of which Jewish communities of various languages, cultures and statuses, indeed, those belonging to different Israelite religious factions, were brought within the same administrative borders.¹

The clearly visible difference among the Jews of different parts of Romania, and the survival of the “regional identities” of the Jewish communities of Greater Romania, may be observed up to the present, even if linguistic homogenization continues. For all this, the history of the Transylvanian Jews after 1918 – apart from a brief Northern Transylvanian intermezzo between 1940 and 1944 – is no longer exclusively Hungarian, or Hungarian-Jewish history, but rather a three-way (Hungarian–Jewish–Romanian) common historical experience and a new integration history.

The Number of the Transylvanian Jews

Thanks to the large-scale in-migrations, the size of the Transylvanian Jewish population following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 doubled. In the territories of Eastern Hungary annexed to Romania after World War I, in 1869 105,000 persons of the Israelite faith were resident. They numbered 182,489 in 1910 and 192,833 in 1930 and made up 3.4 percent of Transylvania's population.² In 1910 about 132,000 of the Transylvanian Israelites, that is, 72–73 percent, were native speakers of Hungarian. Their percentage, taking into account the Transylvanian assimilation tendencies, continued to rise until the 1920s.³

The 1930 Romanian population census, just like the Hungarian census carried out in Northern Transylvania in 1941 and the Romanian census in Southern Transylvania, now asked not only about religious affiliation but also nationality. In 1930 a surprisingly high percentage of Transylvanian Israelites, 92.6 percent, declared themselves Jewish (178,699 of the 192,833 Israelites). In 1941 in the territories that came under Hungarian suzerainty the percentage of those declaring themselves ethnically Jewish was now only 31.3 percent (47,358 persons out of the 151,125 Northern Transylvanian Israelites).⁴

In Southern Transylvania the 1941 census conducted by the Romanian authorities registered 40,937 Israelites.⁵

The reason for the enormous discrepancy between the Northern Transylvanian Jewish ethnic proportions in 1930 and 1941 is to be sought in the census-taking methods. In 1930 the Romanian authorities, in addition to having tried to influence the decision of the Jewish population in the previous weeks through the press, almost without exception arbitrarily registered every Israelite person as being of Jewish nationality. In addition to abuses by the authorities, however, it is more than certain that the changes that occurred in the identity consciousness of the Transylvanian Jews following the change of rule and the development of loyalty to the Romanian state (that is, the fulfillment of the state regulations as a loyal subject

independently of individual religious conviction) also contributed to the high ethnic indicators.

In the Central and Eastern European states of the era the Romanian example was not the only one, since the territorial gains could be legitimized by, among other things, statistical data. In the case of the Czechoslovak population censuses, for example, similar census-taking methods may be encountered (1921, 1930).⁶

The Jewish-related data of the Hungarian population censuses under the monarchy and Romanian censuses following the First World War can also be interpreted in the framework of a Hungarian–Romanian symbolic ethnic contestation of space. By ethnically classifying (as Hungarian, Romanian or Jewish) the Transylvanian Israelite inhabitants, representing more than 3 percent of the population, it was possible, if Hungarian were chosen, to enhance the statistical data, or, if Romanian, to achieve the opposite.⁷

The influx of the Jewish population from the village to the city in the twentieth century continued to increase. In 1910 45.3 percent of Transylvanian Jews lived in towns.⁸ Twenty years later, when this territory now belonged to Romania, this figure had changed to 56.2 percent.⁹ Figures broken down into the larger regions of Transylvania also reveal that the urban Jewish population was unevenly distributed. In 1930 in the Banat 85.6 percent of Jews lived in towns, exceeding not only the average for all of Transylvania, but also those for Romania (68.6 percent) and Hungary (73 percent). By contrast the percentage was 56.6 percent in the territory of historical Transylvania, and only 52.1 percent in the Partium.¹⁰

It is worth discussing the cases of a few larger towns as well. The largest Jewish communities lived in Nagyvárad/Oradea and Kolozsvár/Cluj.¹¹ The 1930 population census recorded 13,504 persons of the Israelite confession in Kolozsvár, and the 1941 census 16,763.¹² Between the two world wars their proportion compared to the total population of the city ranged between 13 and 15 percent. The majority of them were Hungarian in language and culture. In 1910 93.1 percent of the Israelites of Kolozsvár (6,565 persons) declared themselves to be native speakers of Hungarian,

yet a significant segment of them knew at least two other languages (German/Yiddish and Romanian), and 57.3 percent (3,767 persons) spoke at least one other language. From this it is possible to infer the presence of a significant bilingual (Hungarian–Yiddish, or Hungarian–German) Israelite population who, having reached the final phase of assimilation, at the time of the census now declared the language of the receiving Hungarian nation as their mother tongue.¹³

It was the Jews of Nagyvárad who formed the largest Jewish community in the region. Compared to the total population of the town, by 1930 their proportion had reached 24 percent (19,905 persons), while in 1941 they formed nearly 23 percent (21,333 persons). Compared to Kolozsvár, the Israelites of Nagyvárad were linguistically and culturally integrated to a greater degree into the Hungarian populace, which at the same time indicates that they were more deeply embedded in the socio-economic structures as well.¹⁴ This can be gleaned not merely from the Hungarian mother tongue indicators, but also from the ethnic indicators of the 1930 census. Although when it came to declaring nationality a vigorous pressure on the part of the Romanian authorities weighed upon the Jewish population, one can see that in Nagyvárad in 1930 only 74.1 percent of the population of the Israelite faith declared themselves to be of Jewish nationality, while in Kolozsvár this percentage was 96.7 percent. As in Kolozsvár, at the time of the population count in 1941 the percentage of those of Jewish nationality had declined significantly (1,560 persons, or 7.31 percent).¹⁵

The ideological and cultural orientation of the charismatic religious leaders likewise could be decisive for the cultural and ethnic orientation of the communities in question. In Nagyvárad the commitment of the Neolog rabbi Lipót Kecskeméti and the Neolog Jewish community president Béla Konrád to Hungarian culture and the Hungarian nation, and their fierce anti-Zionism, were the decisive factors. In Kolozsvár, on the other hand, the religious direction of both the Orthodox and the Neolog community was overseen by rabbis close to the Jewish national ideals (the Orthodox

rabbi Mózes Glasner, who himself emigrated to Palestine in 1921, the Neolog rabbi Mátyás Eisler, and later their successors, Akiba Glasner and Mózes Weinberger).

In addition to the aforementioned two cities, significant Jewish communities lived in the territory of Szatmárnémeti, Máramarossziget, Temesvár, Marosvásárhely and Dés also. Depending on their geographical setting and the ethnic composition of the narrower region, we can encounter very different ratios of mother tongue and Jewish self-definitions.

In Máramaros, experiencing the in-migration of the most mobile, significant Yiddish-speaking population even in the late nineteenth century, the rate of integration among the Jews was the lowest, thanks not least to the authority of the Hasidic-oriented rabbis (such as the Teitelbaums) also. Here as late as 1910 only 17 percent of Israelites declared themselves to be native speakers of Hungarian, and 73.4 percent of them spoke German or Yiddish, while in 1930 the number of those who did not declare themselves Jewish was negligible.¹⁶ We encounter a similar situation in Szatmár: the religious refusal to integrate of the Hasidic rabbis at the head of the Orthodox community (Jehuda Grünwald, Lázár Grünwald, and then from 1934 onwards Joel Teitelbaum, who founded a dynasty in New York after World War II) and the Zionism of Rabbi Sándor Jordán, who gathered around himself Status Quo adherents, jointly impacted the Jewish choice of identity.¹⁷

The effect of the sizeable German-speaking population and the mixed ethnic environment is manifest in the data for Temesvár also. In the city of the Banat in 1910 65.3 percent of the Israelites were native Hungarian-speakers, but many of them too (82.5 percent) knew the German language.¹⁸

Without comparison to the 1941 data, the 1930 nationality indicators paint a distorted picture of the stratification of the Transylvanian Jews. These results show that the nationality indicators did not necessarily follow identity changes appearing within Transylvanian Jewry. Rather, they were momentary manifestations of loyalty shown towards the political authority of

the time, state loyalty.¹⁹ On the other hand, the deviations between the Jewish ethnic proportions of the various towns and regions may reflect tendencies towards assimilation or dissimilation.

Social Structure

When we examine the Jewish social structure of interwar Transylvania's settlements, we must take into account two quite important factors: 1) the Jewish population – with regard to its stratification – may be regarded as having an incomplete structure, where certain categories were almost completely missing, or were hardly present; 2) with the change of rule a host of internal (within the community) and external events transpired, under the effect of which the Jewish occupational structure moved in the direction of transformation and/or consummation.

The phenomenon of the “incomplete society,” the evolution of which may be explained by, among other things, the earlier restriction of the rights of Jews, is not a Hungarian peculiarity. The same thing also characterizes the other Jewish communities of the Central and Eastern European region.²⁰

The social structure of Transylvanian Jewry displays similarities with their co-religionists living in the territories both of Hungary and of the Old Kingdom: that is, it was commerce, industry and the liberal professions that provided the means of living for the majority of Jews. In farming, public offices, or in the area of transport and communications, on the other hand, they were barely present.

Regarding the Romanian countrywide figures, in 1930 40 percent of Jews worked in the areas of commerce and finance, 28 percent in industry and industrial trades, and 6.5 percent in farming, while 5.1 percent moved in various liberal and intellectual professions. By 1938 their proportion had grown in commerce and finance, as well as in industry (48.3 percent and 32.8 percent respectively), although the percentage of those earning a living from farming and the liberal professions had decreased (4.1 percent and 4.6 percent respectively).²¹

In the territories transferred from Hungary to Romania, in comparison to the all-Romanian average, fewer Jews derived their income from industry (26.3 percent) or the areas of commerce and finance (37.5), but at the same time more made a living from farming (9.1 percent) and the liberal professions (13.2 percent).²²

The occupational structure of the Transylvanian population broken down by ethnicity displayed a quite complex picture. The data from the 1930 census showed the greatest concentration in the area of farming among the Romanian population (81 percent), while in the case of the Hungarians and Germans a much more balanced stratification evolved. Fifty-eight percent of Hungarians and 54.1 percent of Germans were engaged in farming. In accordance with previous tendencies, the percentage of those earning a living from farming among Jews continued to remain quite low (9.2 percent), but the income of more than two thirds of them was derived from mining and industry (26.7 percent), as well as from the branches of commerce, credit and transport (40.4 percent).²³

Thus the majority of Transylvania's total population made their living in the agrarian sector, although the occupational structure developed differently at the level of the individual ethnicities. Accordingly, we can observe shifts in ethnic ratios in the various sectors. All this was closely connected with the modernization traits observable among the nationalities, as well as with the trends in the ability to read and write, and level of schooling, choice of school and career orientation. Thus, for example, the vigorous urbanization of the Jewish population (in 1930 56 percent of Transylvanian Jews lived in towns, while 10.5 percent of Romanians and 27 percent of Hungarians did so), its advantage observable in the area of literacy (66.9 percent of Jewish males living in the territory of historical Transylvania, compared to 61.9 percent of Christians, were able to read and write in 1910) and higher level of schooling (in Transylvania between the two world wars 21 out of 100 Jewish elementary school students continued their studies in some sort of secondary school, while the figure was 8 for Romanians, 9 for Hungarians and 10 for Germans) made possible the acquisition of competencies through

which they succeeded in greater proportions than the Christian population in professions demanding expertise, practicality or increased intellectual achievement.²⁴

At the level of regional data we can also observe substantial differences. In the territories of the Partium (also encompassing Máramaros) the percentage of Jews earning a living from agriculture was much higher (13.1 percent) than, for example, in the Banat (1.9 percent). Between the two world wars it was based on this that attempts to colonize Palestine with Jewish agriculturalists from Máramaros were also made. In the Banat, on the other hand, in the areas of commerce and finance we can encounter higher numbers (44.7 percent in contrast to 33.5 percent for the Partium).²⁵

The unbalanced occupational structure of Transylvanian Jewry is manifest even when we do not examine the internal proportions, but rather compare their place within the various branches to that of the Christian population. The Transylvanian Jews, amounting to more than 3 percent of the populace, were overrepresented in every category except for farming and mining. They amounted to 7.6 percent in the industrial professions and industry, 34 percent in the areas of commerce and finance, and 6.3 percent in the liberal professions.²⁶

Contributing to a significant degree to Transylvania's economic development were the Israelite middle and upper middle classes. The territorial changes following the First World War involved negative economic consequences not only for the Hungarians but also for the Jews. The border drawn at Trianon affected the westward-oriented, far-reaching economic ties of the Transylvanian Jews gravely. The upper middle class of Nagyvárad, for example, lost the products provided by the agricultural areas in Bihar and Békés Counties, and many large banks lost their affiliated institutions in Hungary.²⁷ Despite the initial difficulties, the Transylvanian Israelite upper middle class and the majority of economic operators adapted to the new situation relatively quickly. With the formation of Greater Romania, as a matter of fact, the market and commercial opportunities greatly expanded, since Transylvania had become part of an economically less developed country.²⁸

Several Jewish-owned large companies numbered among the largest economic operators in Transylvania. Such, for example, was the Steel Plant in Resica, which in 1938 had capital stock of one billion lei and produced 90,000 tons of steel annually.²⁹

Until the second half of the 1930s we can encounter persons of Jewish origin at the heads of professional organizations as well: the manufacturer Mózes Farkas was leader of the Kolozsvár Directorate of the General Union of Industrialists of Romania (*Uniunea Generală a Industriasilor din România*, UGIR), while Zsigmond Szána and Albert Bürger directed the secretariats in Temesvár and Marosvásárhely respectively. The distiller Miksa Wertheimer was president of the Industrial Department of the Chamber of Industry in Kolozsvár.³⁰

The Legal Framework Determining Romanian Integration

The special situation of the Transylvanian Jews in comparison to their brethren in Romania was rooted in their differing legal status, which would determine both the past and subsequent eras. In Hungary the Jews were interpreted as a confession and duly treated as such; by contrast, until the 1923 Constitution went into force, the Jews in Romania counted as alien and therefore as a national-ethnic group. Thus Transylvanian Jewry, enjoying the salutary effects of the Hungarian civil emancipation of 1867 and the 1895 Law of Religious Reception (Law XLII of 1895), at the forefront in Hungarian cultural and linguistic assimilation, came to share the fate of Jewish communities of a lower legal status and differing cultures.³¹

When the Transylvanian Jews came under Romanian suzerainty in 1918–1919, the legal security enjoyed in the Kingdom of Hungary was replaced by legal insecurity and defenselessness. The leaders of the Romanian Ruling Council (*Consiliul Dirigent, Kormányzótanács*), which was charged with the administration of Transylvania, attempted to dispel concerns relating to the legal status of the Jews. In July 1919 the attorney Ioan Suciu, one of the

organizers of the Romanian Grand National Assembly in Alba Iulia, received the rabbi of Nagyvárad, Lázár Schönfeld, for an audience. During the conversation he made a promise to respect the Hungarian law on emancipation and emancipate the Jews of the Regat.³² Events following the change of rule, however, vindicated not Suciú but the fears of the Jewish population.

The Mârzescu law on citizenship passed in 1924, and then the review of citizenships taking place in 1938, deprived 23,000 Transylvanian Jewish heads of households and unmarried persons of their citizenship (3,000 in 1924 and 20,000 in 1938).³³ The Jewish Statute that went into effect in August 1940, which downgraded the Jews to second-rank citizens, had an effect on the Jews of Northern Transylvania for one month.³⁴

Thus until 1940 the legal position of the Romanian Jews, including the Transylvanian Jews who wound up in Romania, was regulated by the 1923 constitution, the 1924 law on citizenship and the 1938 law on the review of citizenships, as well as the 1940 Jewish Statute, and these formed the basis for the decrees and laws passed.

Article 133 of the 1923 Romanian constitution on the emancipation of the Jews guaranteed the political rights of the Jews of the Regat, and theoretically offered a solution to the question of citizenship as well. Yet it was still necessary to “opt” for obtaining citizenship: the constitution did not make possible the collective emancipation of the Jewish community.³⁵

On the citizenship of the minorities of the annexed areas, including Transylvania, on October 23, 1923, the Romanian government published a separate decree, which represented a step back compared to the previous regulations. Under the terms of the decree those minority inhabitants were recognized as Romanian citizens who at the time that the 1919 Minority Protection Treaty went into force had a permanent domicile in the territory of Transylvania or Bukovina and did not apply for any other citizenship.³⁶

The law on the acquisition and forfeiture of Romanian citizenship, which Minister of Justice Gheorghe Mârzescu submitted to

Parliament in January 1924 and which became one of the most important laws with regard to the legal status of the minorities, imposed further restrictions.³⁷

The Anghelescu law on private education that appeared on December 22, 1925, had heightened importance for the operation of the minority Churches and the schools maintained by the public institutions. Article 36 prescribed either Romanian or “Jewish” as the teaching language of Jewish educational institutions, which made possible a dual interpretation: the individual schools, should they not wish to introduce Romanian-language instruction completely, could freely choose between Yiddish and Hebrew.³⁸

Matters such as the closing of schools on Saturday, state aid for the Jewish communities and denominational schools, or the Sunday hours of operation for Jewish businesses, represented a constant problem between the two world wars. Even though regulations were introduced for each case, the state agencies did not observe them.

The framework of communal life was defined by the laws on education and the practice of religion. The Law on Denominations (April 22, 1928) drafted by Alexandru Lapedatu, a minister in the National-Liberal Party, settled the legal standing of the Jewish communities in the country’s territory.³⁹

The Law on Churches distinguished three types of Jewish religious community in the country’s territory – Sephardic, Ashkenazi and Western rite. Under this, the Transylvanian Orthodox and Hasidic Jews were grouped into the Ashkenazi category, and the Neologs among the Western rite. The communities became an independent legal entity only from 1932, when the 1928 law was applied.⁴⁰

The Jewish communities and the schools maintained by them were barely granted any state support between the two world wars. The Jewish communities and schools were supported by the Romanian state only between 1928 and 1937, annually allocating them disproportionately small sums of between one and ten million lei.⁴¹

As in several Central European states, in Romania, too, the attempts to push the Jews out of the economic and various liberal professions was intensified in the 1930s. The main demand of the radical right was to supplant the non-Romanian nationalities in the intellectual and liberal professions and in economic life. They based their argument on a few stereotypes widespread in public thought: in the Regat the Jews, and in Transylvania the Hungarians and the Jews, controlled every area of economic life, in foreign-owned factories and companies the minority employees were treated preferentially, the liberal, intellectual, legal and medical professions were saturated, and this had to be helped by introducing the *numerus clausus*, and so on.

The legislation restricting the economic activities of the Jewish and other ethnic minority populations, which did so indirectly up to the 1920s, became a menacing reality in the following decade. The law regulating the employment of Romanian personnel published on July 24, 1934, fixed the proportion of minority employees who could be hired at companies in percentages. This meant that the personnel of economic, industrial or commercial firms employing more than twenty people had to be at a minimum 80 percent, and their management 50 percent, of Romanian ethnicity.⁴²

The *numerus clausus* movement with one of the most serious consequences for the intellectual elite of Jewish origin was that affecting persons in the legal profession. Beginning in 1935 the demand to exclude minority lawyers became general. The recurring topic of debate at the lawyer congresses was the issue of the *numerus clausus*. At the conference of Transylvanian bar associations held in Kolozsvár a few months later, on June 1, the main topic was overcrowding in the legal profession, the financial situation of the lawyers and the pension issue.⁴³

In late 1935 at the congress of the National Union of Lawyers several delegates demanded the Romanianization of the bar associations and the removal of the Jewish colleagues.⁴⁴ Certain bar associations in the Regat also took actual steps for the sake of proportioning, striking a number of their Jewish members off their lists.⁴⁵

In the wake of the *numerus clausus* movement in Romania the ethnic minority members were gradually pushed out of the head bodies of the bar associations. In the spring of 1938 nine of the twelve-member board of the Kolozsvár bar association were Romanian, two Hungarian and one Jewish. As a result of the elections held in April the board became entirely composed of Romanian lawyers.⁴⁶

The exclusionary legislation impacting the Jewish population (in economic and social terms) was not devoid of foreign influences either. It was first and foremost the Nazi Germany of the 1930s that provided the model, without having exerted any particular pressure on Romania in this area.⁴⁷

In late December 1937, the National Christian Party, which obtained a mere 9.1 percent of the vote in the parliamentary elections, was entrusted by the king with forming a government. The government led by Octavian Goga (December 1937–February 1938) openly espoused his anti-Semitism, and shortly after its installment issued anti-Jewish decrees one by one. The appearance of certain Jewish publications was banned, the free railway tickets given to Jewish journalists were revoked, and attempts were made to purge the Romanian press of minority contributors. The Minister of Labor, Gheorghe Cuza, prohibited the employment of Christian maids under the age of forty in Jewish families.⁴⁸

The exclusionary regulations made it seriously difficult for a significant proportion of the Jewish population to earn a living. At the same time, it prompted the religious and secular Jewish elite to elaborate, thinking in terms of a kind of corporatist model, plans for a system of economic and social self-defense building on the internal solidarity of the Jews. It was this ethnic closing of ranks that was articulated in a plan put together in January 1938 by a representative of the Jewish community in Arad, in which he made proposals for legal defense, the creation of jobs (for example, Jews should employ only Jews) and the transformation of religious education (by this he meant education in a Jewish national spirit).⁴⁹

The measure of the Goga–Cuza government with the most serious consequences for the Jews was undoubtedly the legal

decree on the review of citizenships announced on January 21, 1938. Its elaboration was justified on the grounds that several hundred thousand Jewish refugees or immigrants had unlawfully received citizenship after the war. While in the case of the Jews the law officially prescribed review, in the case of Christian inhabitants it only considered this to be necessary if their inclusion on the citizenship rolls had occurred in a dishonest way.⁵⁰ It was a fundamental characteristic of the law that it did not place the burden of proof on the courts; rather, those whose citizenship was called into question had to verify their right. All those whose case received a favorable judgment affirmed their Romanian citizenship, while the rest lost theirs and assumed alien status.⁵¹

Jewish Communal Institutions and Political Interest Representation

The annexation of Transylvania to Romania resulted in profound changes within Jewish society. The process of self-organization and institution creation that commenced after 1918 occurred in the various parts of the country autonomously, independently of one another. What they had in common was the fact that – in addition to the struggle against anti-Semitism – all of them set as their most important task putting the brakes on assimilation and having the Jews recognized as a nation. The strivings in this direction of the Jews in the annexed areas met with the support of the Romanian state's homogenization policy. However, while in Transylvania and Bessarabia the Romanian government recognized the Jews as an independent nationality, thus trying to separate them from the Hungarian and Russian minorities respectively, in the Regat it attempted to hinder the national evolution of their co-religionists.⁵² It is not by chance that in the Old Kingdom it was the Union of Romanian Jews (*Uniunea Evreilor Români*), which pursued a moderate assimilationist policy, that defined Jewish public life. By contrast, in the annexed areas organizations that engaged in Jewish ethnic-national political activity (in Transylvania the Jewish

National Union of Transylvania, and then from 1930/1931 the Jewish Party of Romania) filled this role.

The system of institutions built by those Romanian Jews who joined the European Zionist movement formed the background to cultural and linguistic rebirth between the two world wars. Playing a significant role in this were the schools maintained by the Jewish communities, as well as educational institutions that joined the Tarbut system (*tarbut* means “culture” in Hebrew). Under the Tarbut system, in addition to general instruction in Jewish history and literature, the modern Hebrew language (*ivrit*) was also taught. A network of Tarbut-type educational institutions was able to evolve mostly in Bessarabia, where it included about 75 kindergartens, primary and secondary schools.⁵³ Outside of Bessarabia, only in Poland and Lithuania did such a large number of Tarbut institutions operate. In the other regions of Romania the number of Tarbut schools was much smaller than this, and education of this type was left rather to the schools maintained by the communities.

Compared to conditions before 1918, a significant change occurred in the area of Jewish communal institutions. Whereas prior to the First World War Transylvanian Jewry, like their co-religionists in Hungary, had been organized mainly on a religious basis and the Jewish religious communities counted as the basic pillars of community organization, after the shift in sovereignty the number of secular and Zionist institutions grew.

The Jewish National Union of Transylvania, brought to life in Kolozsvár in the autumn of 1918, fought for the recognition of Jewish national rights and self-organization and the suppression of anti-Semitism. The organization’s name is linked to the establishment of most Transylvanian Jewish secular institutions as well.

In 1919, the Jewish Lyceum of Temesvár began to operate in collaboration with the National Union. It was the Union that launched in 1920 the Tarbut boys’ and girls’ gymnasia in Kolozsvár and the Jewish Orphanage Association with branches in several towns (from 1925 onwards the Association in its apprentices’ hostels provided

industrial training for Jewish youths intending to find employment as skilled laborers in Transylvania or Palestine); it also operated numerous periodicals and publishers.

It was through the daily *Új Kelet* (1918–1940) that the Transylvanian Jewish national public press was created, while publishing houses such as *Fraternitas*, *Kadima*, *Noar*, *Cionista Könyvtár* and others brought out books promoting national rebirth and the cultivation of Jewish culture. In continuation of the traditions of the Dualist Era, works of lasting value appeared in the period as a result of research into Jewish religion and history. In Nagyvárad Lipót Kecskeméti, in Kolozsvár the chief rabbis Mátyás Eisler and Mózes Weinberger, and in Temesvár the chief rabbi Jakab Singer cultivated these subjects.⁵⁴

Jewish cultural life was defined by the various theatrical and amateur groups as well as the Hazamir Choral Society of Temesvár and the Goldmark Philharmonic Society of Kolozsvár.

The upbringing of a new and vital Jewish generation was the slogan of the sports movement launched by the Jewish National Union of Transylvania. By opening up to mass sports, the Jewish sport associations that were formed one by one from 1920 onwards came forward as a new organizing force and community institution of Jewish youth. Mobilizing significant masses, the sport associations, beyond physical exercise, provided communal programs as well. Clubs, balls and celebrations promoted the meetings of youth and formation of Jewish friendship circles.⁵⁵

The political and social development of the period between the two changes of rule greatly impacted the life of the Transylvanian Jewish community as well. Everyday life was defined by finding answers to anti-Semitism that surfaced at varying intervals (anti-Jewish incidents in Nagyvárad and Kolozsvár in 1927, the burning of the Jewish houses of Borsa in 1930, and so on), and pressure to dissimilate on the part of the Romanian state, and by elaborating individual life strategies that enabled one to stand one's ground on the desired identity path corresponding to one's choice. This naturally induced profound changes in the structure of the Transylvanian

Jewish population. The Second Vienna Award impacted a Jewish community that, in addition to the nuanced differences in belief, had become ideologically quite polarized as well.

Between the two world wars a gradual dissimilation from the Hungarian people on the part of a significant part of the Transylvanian Jews occurred, which can be traced back to several causes. One of the most important reasons was anti-Semitism, but the gradual estrangement from the Hungarians was stimulated by events in Hungary as well, including the White Terror, the *numerus clausus*, the gradual shift of the Hungarian political leadership to the right and then the Jewish laws. Romanian state pressure did not favor the survival of Hungarian identity consciousness either.

In addition to the Zionist group, which could claim more and more adherents, the number of those who assumed a commonality of fate with the Hungarian people and considered the assimilationist course to be acceptable continued to remain significant. Numerous large entrepreneurs and economic operators of Jewish origin assumed an active role in the financial maintenance of Hungarian cultural and social organizations, although alongside them there were plenty of those who made sacrifices to make the Zionist and nationalist structures function. In Transylvanian Hungarian literature and cultural life the participation of creative artists of Jewish origin continued to remain significant: it is enough to think only of the directors of the Hungarian Theater in Kolozsvár (Jenő Janovics and Imre Kádár), or writers such as Benő Karácsony, Ernő Ligeti, Oszkár Bárd, György Szántó and Rodion Markovits.

In the National Hungarian Party of Romania several politicians of Jewish origin oversaw leading functions.⁵⁶ Just as the Jews of Hungarian identity joined the voters of the National Hungarian Party, pro-nationalist Jews regarded the Jewish Party of Romania as its representative. The Jewish Party of Romania during both the 1931 and 1932 parliamentary elections succeeded in sending five deputies to the Romanian legislature. Among the deputies, József Fischer and Ernő Marton were Transylvanians. The majority of the party's constituents came from the Jewish population of the

annexed areas. In 1931 and 1932, in Transylvania more than 24,000 voted for the party, which represented about 36–38 percent of Romanian Jewish votes.⁵⁷ If we compare the number of votes cast to the number of Transylvanian Jews entitled to vote (approximately 35,000 persons), then we can see that the Jewish Party of Romania enjoyed the confidence of about 70 percent of the Transylvanian Jewish electorate.

Jewish Identities in Transylvania

Overwhelmingly, Hungarian Jewry experienced the dissolution of the Monarchy as a tragedy. Opening the general assembly of the National Israelite Office of Transylvania and the Banat held in the autumn of 1924 in Arad, the Neolog rabbi of Kolozsvár, Mátyás Eisler, who incidentally sympathized with the Jewish national movement, highlighted the uncertainty and bewilderment following the change of rule: “We lost our entire intellectual connection, our linguistic and cultural relations to the past, and the future loomed before us as an empty, great question mark, and there was no other ideological content in us with which we could have filled it. *Quo vadis?* This question cast a pall in our souls.”⁵⁸

Ernő Ligeti, in his 1941 book, looking back at the events of 1918–1919, put it similarly: “Incessant restlessness took hold of us, and we lived in a panicked sense of fear. Because the safety fuses of Hungarian state life blew out on us, we only groped about in the dark, and if from time to time our sense of fear did cease and give way to optimism, even then the uncertainty surrounded us like an impenetrable fog.”⁵⁹

The fact that differentiation strengthened within the Transylvanian Jewish community, and that the Jewish national movement could make inroads, was the result of the anti-Semitism flaring up at the end of the First World War, the international situation and the Romanian regime’s policy in support of dissimilation. Thus it is not by chance that the Zionist movement, until then enjoying scant popularity, gained strength and massed into an organized framework (Jewish

National Union of Transylvania). Yet it is important to emphasize the fact that the awakening Zionist movement was not anti-Hungarian, but rather – more or less – assuming the Hungarian linguistic and cultural background, it embarked upon the work of Jewish nation-building, urging the strengthening of Jewish self-consciousness and the building of Palestine.

In the attitude of the Transylvanian Jews towards the new situation, several alternatives were articulated. One was the continued acceptance of assimilation, to identify with the problems of the Hungarian people. An example of this is the publicist from Nagyvárad Nándor Hegedűs, who on several occasions got into the Romanian Parliament under the colors of the National Hungarian Party. Hegedűs was moving from Hungarian Jewishness to becoming completely Hungarian, often putting his Jewishness in parentheses.⁶⁰

One of the most prominent representatives of the Jews with a Hungarian identity was the Neolog chief rabbi of Nagyvárad, Lipót Kecskeméti. In both his articles and his sermons he attacked the Jewish national ideals, asserting to the end that the Jewish people in the *galut* were capable of surviving only as a religious community.⁶¹

Another alternative was Zionism, changing from a Hungarian Jew into a Jewish Jew, a path that designated emigration to the ancestral homeland as an ultimate goal. At first this path found very many opponents in Jewish circles, and in the initial period a significant number of the Neolog and Orthodox rabbis also turned against it, arguing that in the long run the Zionist movement would lead to the weakening the Jewish communities and a reduction of their numbers. Therefore, the announcement of Mózes Glasner, the Orthodox chief rabbi of Kolozsvár, to the council on July 15, 1919, that he intended together with his wife to settle in Palestine, caused a great stir. In 1923 he took this very step.⁶² For the Jewish National Union of Transylvania, Glasner's *aliyah* proved an outstanding demonstration. At his farewell party organized by the Union's Executive Council a crowd of several hundred gathered in the great

hall of the *Redout* in Kolozsvár on May 3 and three days later, too, many accompanied the departing rabbi to the railway station.⁶³

The Zionists, those defining the Jews as a nation, set themselves apart from the Hungarians and tried to prove the unfeasibility of the assimilationist path. Naturally, this did not mean that they denied Hungarian culture or did not acknowledge those bonds that linked them to the Hungarians. Mátyás Eisler, for example, held this opinion of the Jews' relationship to the Hungarian people: "As far as the interconnection of Hungarians and Jews is concerned, there are a great number of us who feel great sympathy for the Hungarian people, together with whom we formed a nation, and through joint effort with whom we built a highly developed state life. We have a considerable share in Hungarian culture and we are not indifferent to the way and the direction in which it develops."⁶⁴

According to Ernő Marton, "Assimilation was the great school of life, in which the Jews paid for the tuition with their blood, but in which they also learned much. Without assimilation they perhaps could not have even reached the forms of their national life, or at least not so rapidly and with such revolutionary intimacy."⁶⁵

For the various Orthodox and Hasidic strata that had not assimilated into the Hungarian nation, the change of rule did not cause a larger-scale identity crisis. The reason may be sought in the fact that religion and religious traditions provided them with a secure support base. These functioned on the basis of the same system even independently of regime change. Their identity was defined by religious principles and not national criteria.⁶⁶

The outstanding example of the Hasidic-type separatism was Joel Teitelbaum, who in 1934 went from Nagyvárad to the rabbi's seat of the Orthodox community of Szatmár. Teitelbaum condemned every variety of Zionism, including the religiously observant Mizrahi movement. In 1933, while still rabbi of Nagyvárad, he had issued an *issur*, or religious ban, against the local Mizrahi group.⁶⁷ In the *yeshiva*, founded by Jehuda Grünwald and taken over by Teitelbaum in 1934, just as in very many other similar Transylvanian educational institutions under Hasidic influence (Dés, Margitta, Nagyvárad,

Máramarosziget and Szaplonca), the pupils could not study secular subjects at all, or only barely. The majority of Hasidic rabbis did not permit the acquisition of secular learning, because of their fear of assimilation and later between the two world wars Zionism.⁶⁸ In their opinion both Zionism and assimilation endangered religiousness and Jewish traditions.

Yet it would be an error to describe the entire Hasidic world as obstinately anti-Zionist. The Hasidic rabbi Israel Hager, who in 1915 had fled from Tsarist troops from Vijnîța (Vyzhnytsia) in Bukovina to Nagyvárad, openly supported the Zionist movement.⁶⁹ In the 1930s, mainly under the effect of the Jewish persecutions in Germany, and then under the Romanian disenfranchising measures, among other Hasidic religious leaders too we can encounter persons who seemed to support, albeit with reservations, the Palestine-building work of the Jewish national movement. In May 1938, and thus in the shadow of the citizenship reviews decreed by the Goga–Cuza government and the first Jewish law in Hungary, in Borsa and Felsővisó the Hasidic-oriented community presidents assumed leading posts in local Zionist groups, previously an almost unthinkable event.⁷⁰

Adaptation to the new regime, and rapprochement with the Romanian people, offered a further alternative. Yet this counted as a detour even in the eyes of the Jewish people: the communities in question deemed efforts that stepped beyond the minimum of loyalty towards the state and the competencies necessary for integration in Romania (linguistic, cultural and economic) to be betrayal. As a consequence of linguistic and cultural differences, joining the Union of Romanian Jews did not become accepted either. This is demonstrated the case of the lawyer Miksa Klein, who was marginalized following the formation of the Transylvanian branch of the Union of Romanian Jews within the Jewish National Union, and it was only in the Jewish Party of Romania, which came into existence with the support of Zionist organizations of the different regions, that he once again attained a major role.⁷¹

The Jewish population joining left-wing supranational, non-Zionist movements essentially dropped out of the Jewish world and

community life. Thus did Kohn Hillel, among the founders and early leaders of the Jewish National Union, come to the Zionist left-wing movement and then, from 1924 onwards, to the illegally operating Communist Party. His entry into that party in 1931 at the same time brought about the final break with the Jewish National Union and the Zionist movement as well.

Under Romanian conditions, the national movement, that is, acceptance of belonging to the Jewish people, promised to be the most viable – if not conflict-free – path for the Transylvanian Jewish community. The Romanian authorities did not in fact place obstacles in the way of the separation of Hungarian-speaking Jews from the Hungarian nation; indeed, a 1924 law prohibited them from attending institutions using other teaching languages apart from “Jewish” and Romanian. Naturally, the turn towards Zionism was by no means free of individual internal and external struggles and conflicts.

With the change of rule, the Jewish national movement received an opportunity to evolve. Thus the event, experienced as a tragedy by the Jews, also provided an opportunity and justification for asserting the timeliness of this current. Those committed to Zionism stated that the atrocities and anti-Semitic manifestations parallel to the events of 1918–1919 played a decisive part in the national awakening.⁷² Following Hitler’s takeover of power there appeared in the anti-assimilationist arguments of the Transylvanian Zionist movement the example of the German Jews as well, who like their Hungarian co-religionists had similarly blended into German society, yet became pariahs in the 1930s.⁷³

Notes

- 1 The establishment of Jewish communities belonging to differing cultural circles is incidentally not a unique phenomenon in the region: it is enough to think of only Poland, Czechoslovakia or Lithuania.
- 2 The 1930 population census registered 756,930 persons of the Israelite faith in Romania. This represented 4.2 percent of the total population; *Recensământul general al populației României din 29*

- decembrie 1930* [General Census of the Population of Romania from December 29, 1930], 2 (Bucharest, 1938), p. xxiv.
- 3 Árpád E. Varga, “Az erdélyi magyarság asszimilációs mérlege a XX. század folyamán” [The Assimilation Balance of the Transylvanian Hungarians during the Twentieth Century], *Regio* 2002 (1): 178–181.
 - 4 Árpád E. Varga, *Népszámlálások a jelenkori Erdély területén* [Population Censuses on the Territory of Present-Day Transylvania] (Budapest, 1992), pp. 141–149; Traian Rotariu, ed., *Recensământul din 1941. Transilvania* [The Census of 1941. Transylvania] (Cluj-Napoca, 2002), p. 335.
 - 5 *Populația evreească în cifre. Memento Statistic* [The Jewish Population in Numbers. A Statistical Memento] (Bucharest, 1945), pp. 41–42. See also Tuvia Frilig, Radu Ioanid and Mihail E. Ionescu, eds., *Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania* (Iași, 2004), pp. 67–68. (http://www.inshr-ew.ro/pdf/Final_Report.pdf, retrieved: October 5, 2011.)
 - 6 Éva Kovács, *Felemás asszimiláció. A kassai zsidóság a két világháború között (1918–1938)* [Uneven Assimilation. The Jews of Kassa between the Two World Wars (1918–1938)] (Somorja–Dunaszerdahely, 2004), pp. 26–29.
 - 7 Zvi Hartman, “A Jewish Minority in a Multiethnic Society during a Change of Governments: The Jews of Transylvania in the Interwar Period,” *Shvut* 9 (2000): 162–163.
 - 8 István Sulyok and László Fritz, eds., *Erdélyi Magyar Évkönyv 1918–1929* [Transylvanian Hungarian Yearbook 1918–1929], vol. I (Kolozsvar, 1930), p. 112.
 - 9 Ladislau Gyémánt, *The Jews of Transylvania. A Historical Destiny* (Cluj-Napoca, 2004), p. 256.
 - 10 *Ibid.*; *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930*, 2, p. lxxxix; János Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon* [The Jewish Question in Hungary] (Budapest, Budapest, 2001), p. 189.
 - 11 In addition to Kolozsvar, among Transylvanian towns Nagyvárad, Máramarosziget and Szatmárnémeti also had Jewish populations over 10,000; *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930*, 2, pp. xlii–xliii.
 - 12 During the 1910 Hungarian population census nationality was not asked. In 1920 and 1930, as a result of the pressure by the Romanian authorities and the method of the censuses, with few exceptions

- every Israelite was registered as being of Jewish nationality. By contrast, during the 1941 Hungarian population census for Northern Transylvania only 2,661 of the 16,763 Israelites of Kolozsvár declared themselves to be of Jewish nationality; Árpád E. Varga, *Erdély etnikai és felekezeti statisztikája, IV: Fehér, Beszterce-Naszód és Kolozs megye. Népszámlálási adatok 1850–1992 között* [Ethnic and Confessional Statistics of Transylvania, IV: Fehér, Beszterce-Naszód and Kolozs Counties. Census Data between 1850 and 1992] (Budapest–Csíkszereda, 2001), p. 667; Dr. József Kepecs, ed., *A zsidó népesség száma településenként (1840–1941)* [The Size of the Jewish Population by Settlement (1840–1941)] (Budapest, 1993), pp. 180–181.
- 13 *A Magyar Szent Korona Országainak 1910. évi népszámlálása. V* [Population Census of the Lands of the Hungarian Holy Crown for the Year 1910. V] (Budapest, 1916), pp. 470–471.
- 14 Tamás Csíki, *Városi zsidóság Északkelet- és Kelet-Magyarországon. (A miskolci, a kassai, a nagyvárad, a szatmárnémeti és a sátoraljaiúj helyi zsidóság gazdaság- és társadalomtörténetének összehasonlító vizsgálata 1848–1944)* [Urban Jews in Northeastern and Eastern Hungary. (A Comparative Study of the Social and Economic History of the Jews of Miskolc, Kassa, Nagyvárad, Szatmárnémet and Sátoraljaiúj hely 1848–1944)] (Budapest, 1999), p. 54.
- 15 Kepecs, *A zsidó népesség száma*, pp. 28–31 and 110–307; Rotariu, *Recensământul din 1941*, pp. 184–311.
- 16 *A Magyar Szent Korona Országainak 1910. évi népszámlálása*, pp. 470–471.
- 17 In Szatmárnémeti the Szatmár Zionist Association (*Szatmári Cionista Egyesület*) was formed in 1905 even with the active participation of the Status Quo rabbi Sándor Jordán; Csaba Csirák, ed., *Szatmári zsidó emlékek* [Szatmár Jewish Memories] (Szatmárnémeti, 2001), p. 82.
- 18 The stronger absorption effect exerted by the Swabian petite bourgeoisie and middle bourgeoisie and the weaker Magyarization indicators of the Jews of Temesvár compared to those of Arad or Nagyvárad is pointed out by Béla Borsi-Kálmán as well: Béla Borsi-Kálmán, “A Bánság és Temesvár a századfordulón és az első világháború előestéjén. II” [The Banat and Temesvar at the Turn of the Century and on the Eve of the First World War. II],

- Pro Minoritate* 2001 (1): 158; *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930*, 2, pp. xlii–xliii; *A Magyar Szent Korona Országainak 1910. évi népszámlálása*, pp. 470–471.
- 19 See also Éva Kovács's conclusions in connection with the Czechoslovak population censuses: Kovács, *Felemás asszimiláció*, pp. 26–27.
- 20 See, for example, the case of Poland or Czechoslovakia; Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington, IN, 1987) pp. 25–26 and 143–145. Cf. Don Jehuda, *A magyarországi zsidóság társadalom- és gazdaságtörténete a 19–20. században*. Tanulmányok [The Social and Economic History of the Jews of Hungary in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries] (Budapest, 2006), pp. 58–61.
- 21 Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România 1919–1938. De la emancipare la marginalizare* [The Jews of Romania 1919–1938. From Emancipation to Marginalization] (Bucharest, 2000), p. 63.
- 22 *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930*, VII, pp. lxxvii–lxxxix.
- 23 Tamás Kiss, “Támpontok az erdélyi etnikai rétegződési rendszer vizsgálatához, I” [Bases for Examining the Ethnic Stratification of Transylvania, I], *Pro Minoritate* 2010 (2): 21.
- 24 *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930*, 2, pp. lxxxv–lxxxix; Sulyok and Fritz, *Erdélyi Magyar Évkönyv*, p. 112; Viktor Karády and Péter Tibor Nagy, *Educational Inequalities and Denominations, 1910*. III. Database for Transylvania (Budapest, 2009), p. 42; Attila Gidó, *School Market and the Educational Institutions in Transylvania, Partium and Banat between 1919 and 1948*. Working paper (Cluj-Napoca, 2011), p. 92.
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 Csíki, *Városi zsidóság Északkelet- és Kelet-Magyarországon*, p. 240.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 241.
- 29 Avram Rozen, “Jews in Romanian Industry,” in Liviu Rotman and Raphael Vago, eds., *The History of the Jews in Romania between the Two World Wars*, vol. III (Tel Aviv, 2005), p. 91.
- 30 Aladár Várady and Géza Berey, eds., *Erdélyi Monográfia* [Transylvanian Monograph] (Satu Mare, 1934), pp. 58–60.
- 31 For the background to the problem, see Anikó Prepuk, *A zsidóság Közép- és Kelet-Európában* [The Jews in Central and Eastern

- Europe] (Debrecen, 1997), pp. 164–165, and Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars*, pp. 171–178.
- 32 Eugen Glück, “Contribuții noi cu privire la frământările evreilor din Transilvania în anii 1918–1920” [New Contributions Regarding the Anxieties of the Jews of Transylvania in the Years 1918–1920], in Alexandru Roz, ed., *1918–1998. Aradul și Marea Unire* [1918–1998. Arad and the Great Unification] (Arad, 1999), p. 108.
- 33 Iancu, *Evreii din România 1919–1938*, pp. 102 and 263.
- 34 The legal decree significantly restricted the basic freedoms, economic activity and property rights of persons classified as Jewish, as well as forbidding mixed Jewish–Romanian marriages; Lajos Nagy, *A kisebbségek alkotmányjogi helyzeté Nagyromániában* [The Constitutional Position of the Minorities in Greater Romania] (Kolozsvár, 1944), pp. 73 and 168.
- 35 *Ibid.*, pp. 255–257.
- 36 Iancu, *Evreii din România 1919–1938*, p. 97.
- 37 For more on this, see the following: *ibid.*, p. 98; Nagy, *A kisebbségek alkotmányjogi helyzeté*, pp. 77–81; Attila Gidó, “Jogkorlátozás, kirekesztés és antiszemitizmus Kolozsváron (1918–1940)” [Legal Restriction, Exclusion and Anti-Semitism in Kolozsvár (1918–1940)], in Randolph L. Braham, ed., *Tanulmányok a Holokausztról IV* [Studies on the Holocaust IV] (Budapest, 2006), pp. 17–58.
- 38 Lucian Leuștean, “Evreii ardeleni și conflictul dintre români și maghiari, pe teme educaționale, din primii ani interbelici. Un document și câteva considerații” [The Transylvanian Jews and the Conflict between Romanians and Hungarians, on Educational Subjects, from the First Interwar Years. A Document and Some Considerations], *Studia et Acta Historiae Iudaeorum Romaniae* 2005: 188–213; Raphael Vago, “Romanian Jewry During the Interwar Period,” in Randolph L. Braham, ed., *The Tragedy of Romanian Jewry* (New York, 1994), pp. 29–57.
- 39 Iancu, *Evreii din România 1919–1938*, pp. 116–117; Nagy, *A kisebbségek alkotmányjogi helyzeté*, pp. 103–107.
- 40 György Gaal, “Az erdélyi zsidóság az első világháborút követő időszakban” [The Transylvanian Jews in the Period Following the First World War], *Korunk* 1991 (8): 1030.
- 41 The Israelite denomination received the most state support between 1928 and 1931. In each of these years they were granted 10 million lei; Gyémánt, *The Jews of Transylvania*, p. 250.

- 42 Nagy, *A kisebbségek alkotmányjogi helyzete*, p. 166; Iancu, *Evreii din România 1919–1938*, p. 239. I discuss the question of economic and social exclusion more extensively in Gidó, “Jogkorlátozás, kirekesztés és antiszemitizmus,” pp. 17–58.
- 43 *Situația materială și morală a advocaților din Ardeal și Banat* [The Material and Moral Situation of the Lawyers of Transylvania and the Banat] (Cluj, 1935), pp. 11–18.
- 44 Jean Ancel, *Contribuții la istoria României. Problema evreiască 1933–1944. I* [Contributions to the History of Romania. The Jewish Problem 1933–1944. I] (Bucharest, 2001), p. 57.
- 45 Iancu, *Evreii din România 1919–1938*, p. 249; Nagy, *A kisebbségek alkotmányjogi helyzete*, p. 165.
- 46 *Új Kelet*, March 29, 1938, no. 72, and April 5, 1938, no. 78.
- 47 For Germany Romania was important primarily from an economic standpoint; the solution to the “Jewish Question” had secondary significance: see Jean Ancel, “German–Romanian Relations during the Second World War,” in Braham, ed., *The Tragedy of Romanian Jewry*, pp. 57–58.
- 48 Iancu, *Evreii din România 1919–1938*, p. 257.
- 49 “Sebestyén József tervezete a zsidó társadalom megszervezésére. 1938. január 10., Arad” [József Sebestyén’s Plan for the Organization of Jewish Society. January 10, 1938, Arad], in *Zsidó Hitközségi Levéltár, Arad* [The Archives of the Jewish Community of Arad], folder 97, 26–32.
- 50 Nagy, *A kisebbségek alkotmányjogi helyzete*, p. 81.
- 51 Ancel, *Contribuții la istoria României*, p. 80.
- 52 Irina Livezeanu, *Cultură și naționalism în România Mare 1918–1930* [Romanian translation of *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building & Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930*] (Bucharest, 1998), pp. 182–209.
- 53 Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe*, p. 199.
- 54 Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger, *A zsidóság története Erdélyben (1623–1944)* [The History of the Jews in Transylvania (1623–1944)] (Budapest, 1995), pp. 213–220.
- 55 See Attila Gidó, “Erdélyi zsidó intézmények a két világháború között” [Transylvanian Jewish Institutions between the Two World Wars], *Korunk* 2002 (4): 44–52.
- 56 György, *Iratok a Romániai Országos Magyar Párt történetéhez*, pp. 412–417.

- 57 *Monitorul Oficial al României*, June 10, 1931, no. 131, pp. 5426–5452; July 26, 1932, no. 173, pp., 4470–4599.
- 58 Dr. Mátyás Eisler, *Jelentés az Erdély–Bánáti Országos Izraelita Iroda működéséről. A Szövetségnek 1924. november 17-én, Aradon tartott nagygyűlése számára* [Report on the Operations of the National Israelite Office of Transylvania and the Banat. For the General Assembly of the Alliance Held on November 17, 1924, in Arad], *Az Erdély-Bánáti Izraelita Hitközségek Szövetségének Közleménye*, 1 (Cluj–Kolozsvár, 1925), p. 4.
- 59 Ernő Ligeti, *Súly alatt a pálma. Egy nemzedék szellemi élete. 22 esztendő kisebbségi sorsban* [The Weighted-Down Palm Tree. *The Intellectual Life of a Generation. Twenty-Two Years in Minority Fate*] (Kolozsvár, [1941]), p. 10.
- 60 Sándor Balázs, “Etnikum, kultúra, politikai opció” [Ethnic Group, Culture, Political Option], *Korunk* 1991 (8): 971.
- 61 Lipót Kecskeméti, *Vallási zsidóság és nemzeti zsidóság. Templomi beszédek* [Religious Jewry and National Jewry] (Nagyvárad, 1922), p. 13. See also in the same volume Kecskeméti’s 1921 sermon entitled “A nemzeti elv lázában” [Crazed by the National Principle].
- 62 Imre Szabó, *Erdély zsidói. Talmudisták, chászidok, cionisták. I* [The Jews of Transylvania. Talmudists, Hasidim, Zionists I] (Cluj, 1938), p. 135.
- 63 *Új Kelet*, May 4, 1923, p. 61, and May 8, p. 64.
- 64 *Keleti Újság*, November 25, 1920, p. 258.
- 65 Ernő Marton, *A zsidó nemzeti mozgalom Erdélyben* [The Jewish National Movement in Transylvania] (Cluj, 1922), p. 33.
- 66 Hartman, “A Jewish Minority in a Multiethnic Society,” p. 169.
- 67 *Új Kelet*, March 18, 1933, p. 64.
- 68 Cvi Moskovits, *Jesivák Magyarországon. Adalékok a zsidó hitközségek 1944. áprilisi összeírásának történeti értékeléséhez* [Yeshivas in Hungary. Contributions to the Historical Interpretation of the Census of Jewish Communities in April 1944] (Budapest, 1999), pp. 38–49.
- 69 Eugen Glück, “The Rabbinical Court of Vijnița while Active in Oradea (in the View of the Local Population),” *Studia Judaica* (1994): 161.
- 70 *Új Kelet*, May 27, 1938 (no. 118).
- 71 Klein during the 1931 elections occupied first place on the Jewish Party of Romania’s list in Szilágy County, and in 1933 he was

elected as a city councilor in Kolozsvár; *Monitorul Oficial*, nr. 131, June 10, 1931, p. 5427; ANIC, Fond Ministerul Justiției. Direcția Judiciară. Comisia Centrală Electorală, dos. 16/1933. 19.

- 72 See Dr. Ignác Weiss, *A zsidóságról a zsidóságnak* [About the Jews for the Jews] (Brassó, 1928), pp. 16–17, and Marton, *A zsidó nemzeti mozgalom Erdélyben*, pp. 32–33.
- 73 See Miksa Klein's article "Hídverés a négy országrész zsidósága között (Az Országos Izraelita Iroda és a zsidó egység)" [Bridge-Building among the Jews of the Four National Regions (The National Israelite Office and Jewish Unity)], *Népünk*, June 22, 1934, p. 6.

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THE ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS AND GEOGRAPHICAL ORIGIN OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKFORCE OF KOLOZSVÁR/CLUJ BETWEEN 1896 AND 1940¹

This study is part of a larger research project, the topic of which is the development of the composition of the Transylvanian industrial workforce according to ethnicity, language, religious denomination and birthplace in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the period to be presented, political, economic, social and demographic processes that were decisive for not only the region but also for Central Europe were taking place. In 1920 Kolozsvár ceased to be part of Hungary *de jure*, and thus – in a broader sense – part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy as well, and was attached to Romania. This political and territorial change launched economic and demographic processes differing from those previously present. The demographic historical aspects of the decades before and after the change in state sovereignty have already been studied, but only a few have dealt with the ever-increasing number of industrial workers, or have only done so according to the official Communist ideology between 1948 and 1989. It is this gap that we will try to partially fill with this study.

Kolozsvár in the late nineteenth century was the eleventh-most populous town in the Kingdom of Hungary.² Within Transylvania it grew into the settlement with the largest number of inhabitants and at the same time the financial, commercial, administrative and educational-cultural center of the region. The central government greatly contributed to the settlement's development in the modern era by having located the regional-level administrative institutions here, and it was here also that the second university of contemporary Hungary was founded in 1872. In addition to educational institutions, with the construction of the university clinics the town emerged as the region's number one healthcare center. Thanks to all these

factors, based on the so-called *Central Place Theory* (*Zentraler Ort*), it occupied third place among the ten regional centers in the Hungarian half of the Dual Monarchy.³

Interestingly, the city's dynamic development was due not to industrialization according to the classic nineteenth-century model, but rather to the other branches, such as commerce, finance and services. Those employed in industry did figure in the statistics in relatively large numbers throughout, since their percentage among breadwinners living in the city was 30 percent in 1900 and 35 percent in 1910. However, the appearance is deceptive, for the proportion of those working at companies that counted as genuine industrial establishments, according to the understanding of the era, among those employed in industry barely exceeded 40 percent in 1900 (2,454 persons), while in 1910 it was only 45 percent (3,295 persons).⁴ Based on these data more than half of those employed in industry were small artisans or craftsmen (*kézműves*). On the other hand, the proportion of industrial workers, despite the fact that it increased in real numbers, amounted to merely 10 percent of the city's breadwinners in this period.⁵ The number of industrial enterprises (in Hungary in this era those with more than 20 employees counted as such) was still quite low on the town's territory and among these, too, of the three plants employing more than 100 employees two were state-owned. The State Tobacco Factory had the biggest number of workers, with more than a thousand, followed by the Repair Shop of the Hungarian State Railway Company (*Magyar Államvasutak Javítóműhelye*), while the third was the match factory, which was moved to the city in 1899.⁶ After 1910 these were joined by the Renner Leather Factory, which in the period after the First World War in fact grew into the city's largest company, under the name "Dermata."⁷ The almost three decades after 1890 represented a slow development for the city's industry, but already in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the war signs appeared that anticipated the more dynamic growth of the sector. The First World War and the subsequent change in state sovereignty (when Transylvania was attached to Romania under the terms of the

Paris Peace Treaties of 1920) did not interrupt this tendency, since, despite the somewhat changed circumstances, a upswing occurred. Although the world economic crisis of 1929 made its impact felt here too, on the whole in the period between the two world wars the city's industry flourished. In addition to the Dermata Leather Factory, in the 1920s companies such as the IRIS Chinaware Factory and the RAVAG Metalworking Factory were founded, and then in the 1930s the Ady Stockings Factory and the Schul Silkware Factory began operation.⁸

At the same time as the numbers of factories were multiplying, the numerical increase of the industrial workforce naturally also commenced. The new establishments were located on the town's northern and northeastern edge, along the main railway line, and so it was here that the worker quarters evolved as well. In the vicinity of the IRIS Chinaware Factory the Iris Quarter developed during the 1920s and 1930s, and next to it there grew the Bulgária [Bulgaria] Quarter, as well as the Kerekdomb (Dâmbu Rotund) Quarter.⁹ This growing number of industrial workers displayed a quite varied picture in terms of their origin by place of birth, and their religious and ethno-linguistic identity as well. In order for us to understand just what happened during the 45 years that we have designated, we must first become acquainted with the trends in the composition of the town's population (both in ethno-linguistic terms and by place of birth) between 1880 and 1941.

In the Dualist Era the town of Kolozsvár underwent the great demographic processes of the era. The town became the destination for more and more persons who were attracted to it due to their desire for learning or for realizing their potential, or simply because of having heard of the working possibilities as a direct result of the town's development. Immigration, actually the settling down of persons who were born in other regions, increased from one decade to the next. We may observe this process in the chart below. While 50.36 percent of the population indicated the town of Kolozsvár/Cluj as their place of birth on the 1880 census, by the end of the Dualist Era this number had declined to under 50 percent. In the

middle of the interwar period this even declined to under 40 percent. Simultaneously, the number of persons born in other counties was growing.¹⁰

*Origins of the Citizens of the Town of Kolozsvár/Cluj
(in Proportion of the Total Population)*

Year	Town of Kolozsvár/Cluj	Kolozs/Cluj County	Other counties
1880	50.36%	13.41%	32.37%
1890	49.32%	12.63%	37.05%
1900	46.55%	12.24%	39.02%
1910	42.66%	12.92%	42.53%
1930	35.60%	16.42%	44.09%

The area from which people came to Kolozsvár/Cluj during the Dualist Era and in the interwar period is rather large. We can delimit three circles: an internal one, that of Kolozs/Cluj County; a second, which includes directly neighboring counties, such as Solnoc-Dăbâca (Szolnok-Doboka), Turda-Arieş (Torda-Aranyos), Mureş-Turda (Maros-Torda), Sălaj (Szilágy) and Bihor (Bihar); finally, a third comprising other, not directly neighboring, counties, such as Alba de Jos (Alsó-Fehér), Sătmar (Szatmár), Odorhei (Udvarhely), Trei Scaune (Háromszék), Hunedoara (Hunyad), Arad, Maramureş (Máramaros), Timiş (Temes), Caraş-Severin (Krassó-Szörény), Sibiu (Szeben), Făgăraş (Fogaras), Tîrnava Mare (Nagyküküllő) and Tîrnava Mică (Kisküküllő). We can thus speak of a circle with a radius of 200–300 kilometers. Naturally, immigrants arrived from outside these three circles as well, mainly from the other counties of contemporary Hungary, but also from the Austrian half of the Empire. In addition, immigrants settled in the city from the German Empire and the neighboring Kingdom of Romania as well.

As far as the ethnicity, language and religious affiliation of the town's citizens are concerned, during the Dualist Era Hungarian-

speakers were in an absolute majority, becoming a relative majority after 1920, and once again an absolute majority in 1940.¹¹

*The Ethnic and Religious Affiliation
of the Citizens of Kolozsvár/Cluj*

Year ¹²	Total number of the town	Romanians (percentage of the total)	Hungarians (percentage of the total)	Germans (percentage of the total)	Others (percentage of the total)	Jews (speaking Yiddish) (percentage of the total)
1890 ^a	32,756	9.8%	84.0%	4.1%	2.1%	-
1900 ^a	49,295	12.3%	82.9%	3.6%	1.3%	-
1910 ^a	60,808	12.3%	83.4%	2.8%	1.4%	-
1920 ^b	83,542	33.8%	49.8%	2.5%	13.9%	12.7%
1930 ^a	100,844	34.5%	54.3%	2.7%	8.5%	6.6%
1930 ^b	100,844	34.6%	47.3%	2.5%	15.6%	13.0%
1941 ^a	110,956	9.0%	88.1%	1.6%	1.3%	0.7%
1941 ^b	110,956	8.8%	86.5%	1.4%	3.2%	2.4%

Among the persons hired in industry, more than 85 percent were Hungarian-speakers and 9.8 percent were Romanian-speakers in 1900. In 1910 the percentage of Romanians grew to more than 12 percent.¹³ Because of the lack of data it is very difficult to precisely reconstruct the breakdown by ethnic origin of the employees of different factories of Kolozsvár/Cluj. The only certain data that we have are from 1900 and 1910. The chart on the next page shows the breakdown of the employees according to the mother tongue of the three most important industrial units in the town.

As far as the place of birth of these people is concerned, we have an ephemeral source, a list of 647 employment records for employees of the Tobacco Factory from the period 1890–1894. According to these, 38 percent were born in the town of Kolozsvár/Cluj and 29 percent in Kolozs/Cluj County. Thus 68.5 percent came from the town or from the immediate vicinity of the town. As regards ethnicity, 26.6 percent of these employees were Romanians and the rest Hungarians.¹⁴

*The Ethnic Affiliation (after their Mother Tongue)
of the Workers of the Three most Important Factories
in Kolozsvár/Cluj in 1900 and 1910*

Plant	Repair Shop of the Hungarian State Railway Company		State Tobacco Factory		Match Factory	
	1900	1910	1900	1910	1900	1910
Number of workers	326	513	1,080	1,307	134	226
Romanian	n.d.	12	n.d.	229	n.d.	60
Hungarian	292	491	875	929	113	163
German	n.d.	7	n.d.	9	n.d.	1

As a result of the changes that followed the end of World War I, the town underwent great demographic changes. In 1930, 12 years after the end of the world conflagration, the town had acquired a different demographic appearance. The size of the Romanian-speaking, ethnic Romanian population had grown significantly. The percentage of Hungarian-speakers declined, but their absolute number grew. We attribute this phenomenon to the fact that, as we mentioned before, the town was more of an administrative and financial center than an industrial one. Thus, at the same time as the withdrawal of Hungarian administration at the end of World War I, a great number of Hungarians left the town, and in their place the Romanian administration arrived, along with a great number of Romanians. Our assumption is supported by the results of the 1930 population census. Its pages reveal an interesting fact concerning the ethnic apportionment of the professions: while the number and the percentage of Romanians active in administration, education and the judiciary, together with their dependents, grew to 11,099 (65 percent), in the industrial sector their number remained far below that of Hungarians: 5,529 Romanians (21.2 percent) compared to 14,985 Hungarians (59.9 percent). In order to gain a more accurate picture, we edited the following chart, which presents the precise distribution by different economic sectors of the two major ethnic communities who lived in the town in 1930.¹⁵

*The Comparison of the Hungarian and Romanian
Employers Distribution by Different Economic Sectors
in Kolozsvár/Cluj in 1930 in Percentage*

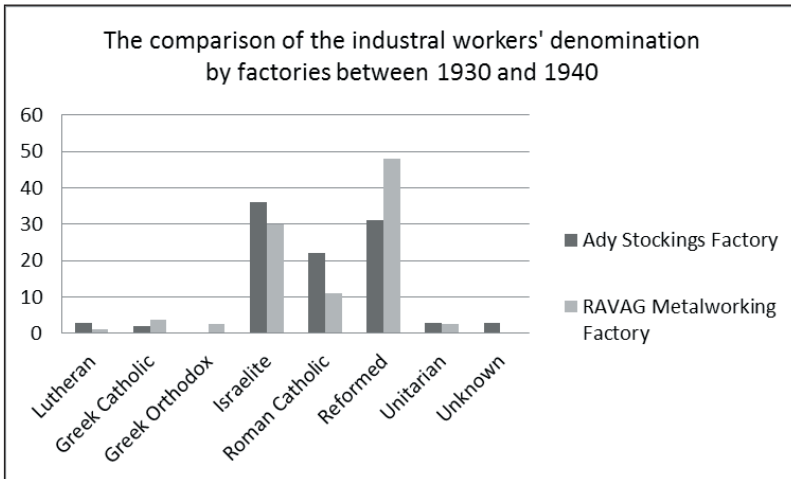
	Agriculture	Industry	Trade and Finance	Transport	Admin.	Other/ unknown	Total
Romanian	7.47%	18.30%	6.82%	11.97%	31.80%	23.61%	100%
Hungarian	6.22%	37.82%	11.11%	11.77%	7.49%	25.55%	100%

According to the census data, 59.9 percent of industrial employees were Hungarian, 21.2 percent Romanian, 2.4 percent German and 15.1 percent Jewish.¹⁶ Thus Hungarians generally predominated among industrial workers. We note that the 1930 Romanian population census noted the Jews as a nationality and as the Israelite denomination as well, whereas the previous Hungarian population censuses recorded them only as the Israelite denomination.

Analyzing the ethnic origin of workers of different factories in this period, we reach interesting conclusions. Without generalizing, we present the following three cases. The first is the case of the IRIS Chinaware Factory, founded in 1922 by a group of Romanian bourgeois with the help of the municipality. Here in 1929 out of 275 employees 42 percent declared themselves Romanian, 52 percent Hungarian, 3 percent German and 1 percent Jewish.¹⁷

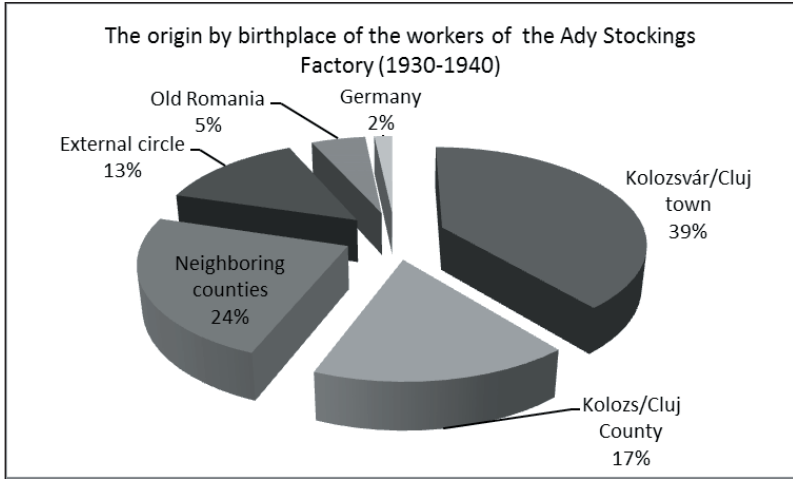
Another case is constituted by the RAVAG Metalworking Factory, founded in the 1920s by Max Rappaport, which as a result of constant growth became an important industrial unit. During the period 1935–1940 63 percent of the employees in this factory declared themselves Hungarian, 30 percent Jewish, and 6.3 percent Romanian.¹⁸ The third case is that of the Schul Silkware Factory, where among those of its workers employed in the years between 1930 and 1940 those declaring themselves Romanian were in the majority with 56 percent, with Hungarians at 38 percent and Jews at 5 percent.¹⁹

As far as the denominational distribution of the workers is concerned, it shows an even more colorful picture, since it faithfully reflects Transylvanian denominational conditions. In Transylvania, because of denominational conditions that evolved during the modern era, strong links can be demonstrated between ethnicity and religion. While the population of Romanian ethnicity belonged almost exclusively to the Greek Catholic and Greek Orthodox denominations, the Hungarians were divided among the Roman Catholic, Reformed (Calvinist), Unitarian and Evangelical (Lutheran) Churches. Among the Transylvanian Hungarian population a slight numerical preponderance can be detected in favor of the Protestant denominations. The overwhelming majority of ethnic Germans belonged to the Lutheran faith, and a minority to the Roman Catholic Church. Specifically in the period between 1934 and 1940 the labor force of the plants in Kolozsvár, on a denominational basis, were distributed as follows: in the case of the RAVAG Metalworking Factory the Reformed were the most numerous (48 percent), followed by the Israelites (30 percent), then the Roman Catholics (11 percent). Members of the other Churches appeared in much smaller percentages.²⁰ As the graph below also reveals, among employees of the Ady Stockings Factory between 1930 and 1940 the Reformed were the second-most populous group (31 percent), whereas with their 36 percent the Israelites occupied first place, the Roman Catholics were the third-largest denomination with 22 percent, and the others ranged between 2 and 3 percent.²¹

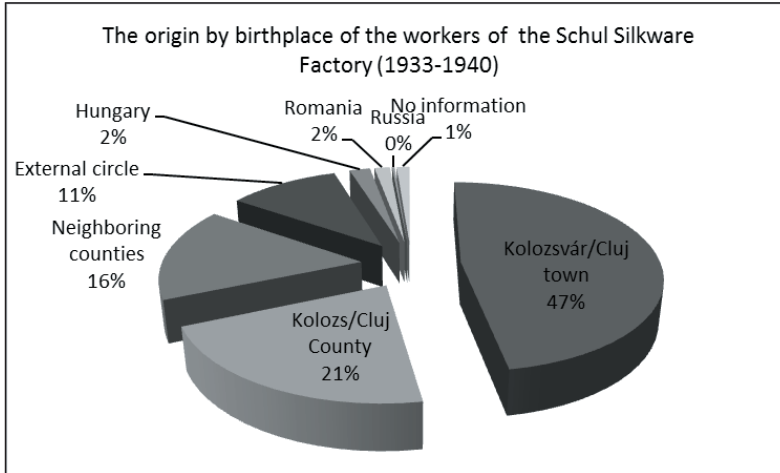


The industrial workers, just like the town's other inhabitants, may be divided into several groups with regard to their place of birth: 1) those born in the city, 2) those born in the county, 3) those born in the immediately neighboring counties, 4) those born in the indirectly neighboring counties, an area that at the same time forms the external circle, 5) those born in other counties of the Dualist-Era Kingdom of Hungary, and 6) those born in the Romanian territories beyond the Carpathians, in other words the Old Kingdom of Romania. More than 50 percent of RAVAG's workers were born in Kolozsvár, one quarter of them in the neighboring counties, 9 percent in the territory belonging to the external circle, and barely 8 percent of them in Kolozs County. At the same time, the proportion of those who were born in other counties of Dualist-Era Hungary was rather high. In the case of light-industry plants there was a slight deviation. As can also be seen below, now only somewhat more than one third of the workers of the Ady Stockings Factory were born in the town. But the proportion of those born in the neighboring counties surpasses that of the natives of Kolozs County, just as in the case of RAVAG (one quarter).

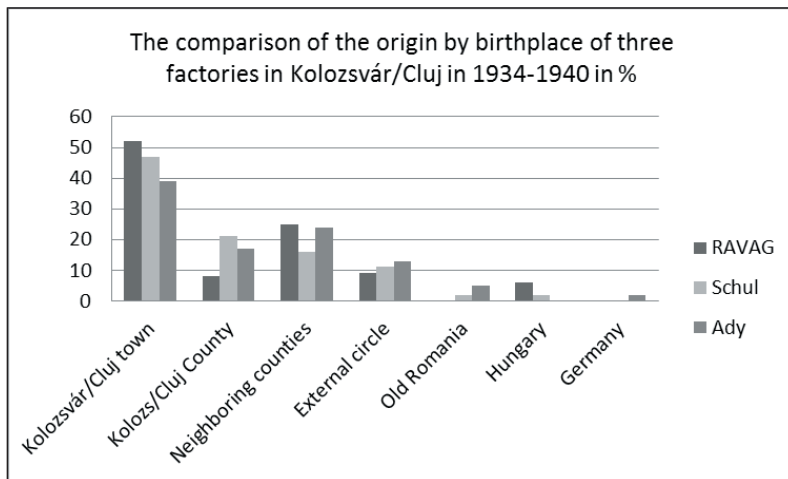
The situation of the workers of the Ady Stockings Factory is best illustrated in the chart below:



In the case of the Schul Silkware Factory the proportion of those born in Kolozsvár was now noticeably greater than at the Ady Factory, but what is striking is that the proportion of those from Kolozs County was above 20 percent. Those originating from the neighboring counties were pushed back into third place. At the same time it may be observed that at both companies those born in foreign states outside the territory of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, such as Germans and Russians, were present in a measurable proportion.



If we juxtapose the data of the three companies' employees, we obtain the following picture:

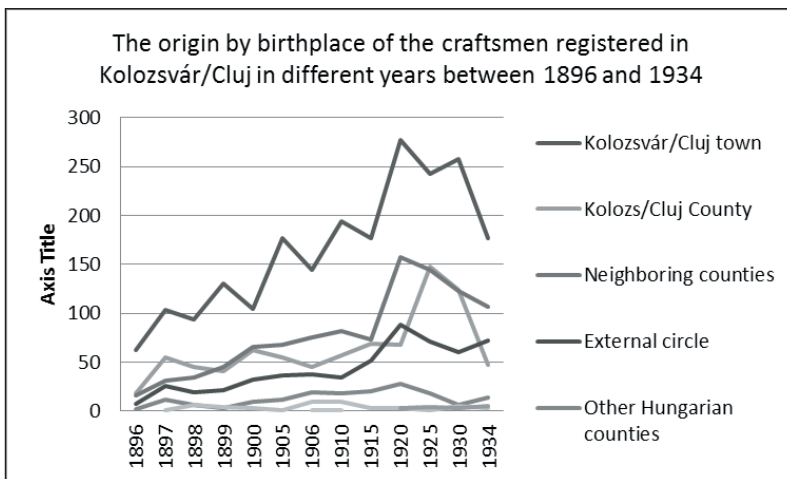


The origin by place of birth of individuals belonging to the various denominations is interesting. Sixty-three percent of the Reformed (Calvinist) workers of RAVAG were born in Kolozsvár and 21 percent of them in the neighboring counties, while Kolozs County figures only minimally. Thirty-three percent of the Israelites (Jews) were born in the city, while 44 percent were born in the neighboring counties and 13 percent in the other counties of Dualist-Era Hungary. Barely 4 percent of them were born in Kolozs County. Fifty-six percent of Roman Catholic workers were born in the city, and 22 percent were born in Kolozs County. The majority of Greek Catholics originated from Kolozs County or neighboring counties.²² Fifty-five percent of Reformed employees of the Ady Stockings Factory first saw the light of day in Kolozsvár, but only 14 percent of Israelites did so, while 42 percent of them originated from the neighboring counties, and the rest from further away still. Fifty-three percent of Roman Catholics were natives of the city. An interesting phenomenon may be observed among the Israelites: namely that more than 40 percent of them arrived in the city from the neighboring counties to seek work.

However, the industrial workforce must not be completely separated from the tradesmen (*kisiparosok*) and skilled artisans or master craftsmen (*mesteremberek*). Not only did the gradually spreading manufacturing industry conquer the market of the tradesmen, but also journeymen dissatisfied with their fate, or ruined artisans, sought work for themselves in the factories. Thus the former tradesmen further swelled the ranks of the skilled factory workers. In the Hungarian half of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy the decline of handicrafts, more precisely the reduction in the number of artisans pursuing independent enterprises, can be demonstrated statistically even from the 1890s onwards.²³ We do have information that the tradesmen were not in an easier situation in Kolozsvár either, but for the present we can only presume that many of them, too, sought work in heavy industry.

We have taken our data on the tradesmen of Kolozsvár from the original registry sheets of the employment records (*munkakönyvek*)

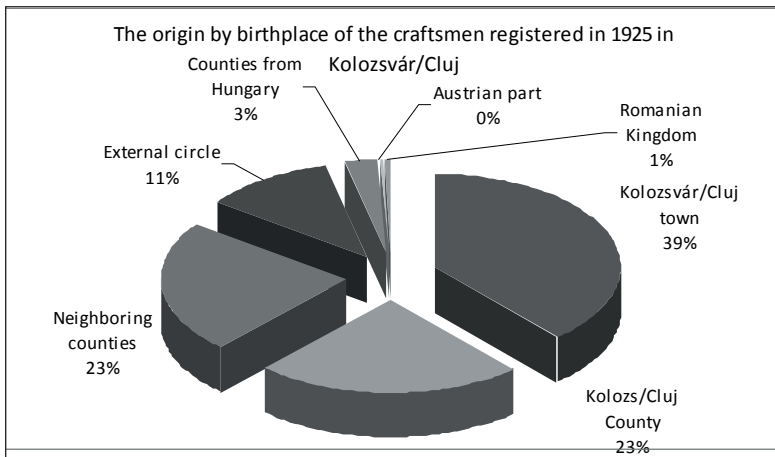
issued by the Kolozsvár Tradesmen's Association (*Kolozsvári Ipartestület*). These, however, have survived only from the years between 1896 and 1934. Until early October 1914, in addition to name, occupation, year of birth and place of birth, the registry sheets also included religious denomination. The latter, however, subsequently disappears from the columns, and thus from this time onwards we unfortunately no longer possess information of this type. After a partial analysis of the data for several decades an interesting picture unfolds before us. As the graph below also reveals, the trend in the number of tradesmen who received their employment books in Kolozsvár faithfully reflects the drop caused by economic growth or the great world economic crisis itself.



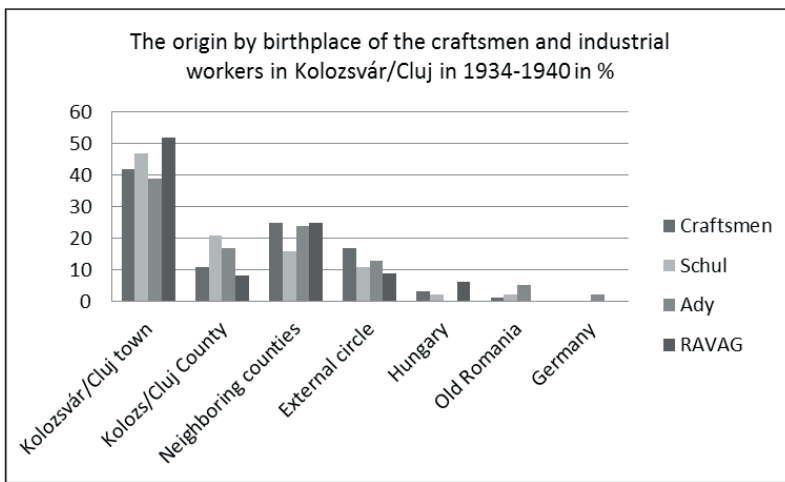
While up until 1925 a constant rise can be demonstrated, afterwards a continuous decrease can be observed. With regard to distribution by place of birth, persons born in the Austrian half of the Empire are present throughout the interwar period. The general grouping is the same as with the factory workers: 1) the city; 2) Kolozs County; 3) the neighboring counties; 4) the more distant counties (external circle); 5) the other counties in the

Hungarian half of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy; 6) the Austrian half of the Monarchy; 7) the Romanian territories beyond the Carpathians; 8) other European states.

Among the tradesmen, those born in the town were always present in the largest number, while second place could be occupied alternately by those coming from the neighboring counties or those from Kolozs County. Next came those originating from the external circle, and then those from even further away. This logic was upended only in the 1920s, when both the natives of the neighboring counties and those born in the external circle exceeded those coming from Kolozs County. We have not yet succeeded in clarifying the precise reason for the phenomenon, but we presume that the change in state sovereignty that occurred probably played a large role in this movement. In the next year analyzed by us, 1925, the usual conditions now began to return (see the graph below). Almost 40 percent of the tradesmen who obtained their employment books were natives of the city, approximately a quarter were born in the county and another quarter in the neighboring counties.²⁴ This means that 85 percent of applicants originated from a circle with a maximum radius of 150 kilometers.



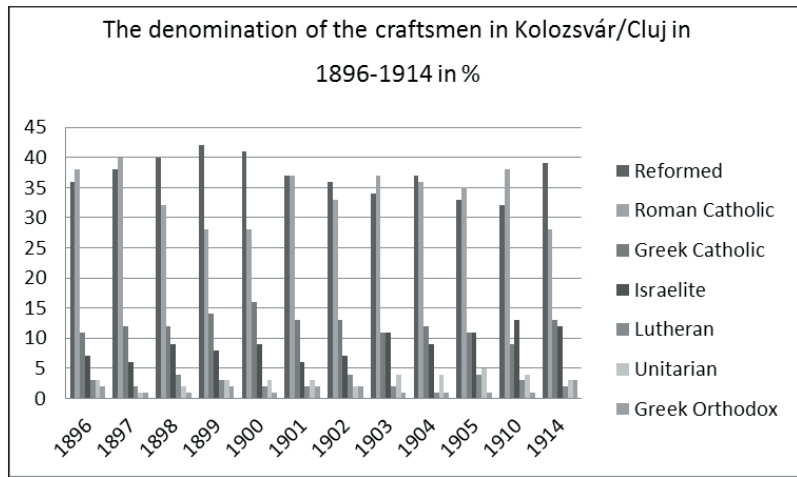
If we compare the data of tradesmen holding employment books to those of the workers of at least three factories for the same period, we obtain a rather interesting picture. In the graph below we lined up the data of the tradesmen who obtained employment books in 1934 and those of the industrial workers employed in the same period at the RAVAG Metalworking Factory, the Schul Silkware Factory and the Ady Stockings Factory.²⁵



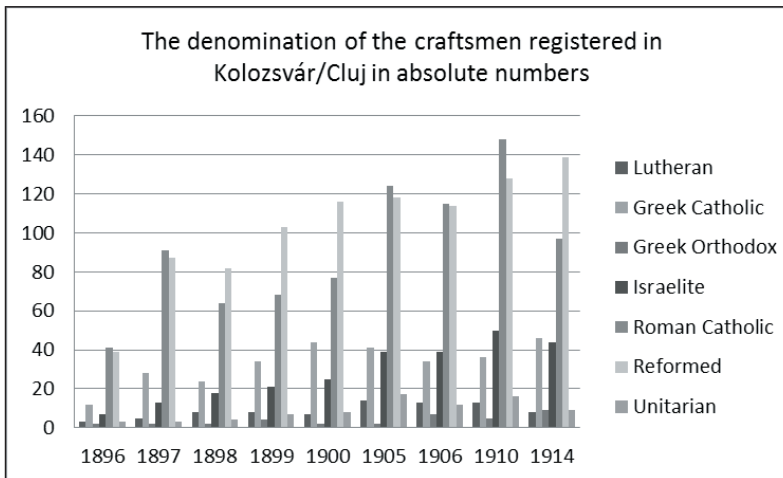
As we can see, in all four cases employees born in Kolozsvár were the most numerous. Among the employees of the Schul Factory second place was taken by the natives of Kolozs County, whereas among the tradesmen, just like the workers of the Ady and RAVAG factories, it was taken by those from the neighboring counties. Among the tradesmen there were more of those arriving from the external circle than the natives of Kolozs County. What is striking is that only at the Schul Factory did the natives of Kolozs County come in second place, whereas at the others those born in the neighboring counties occupied this position. This can be explained by the fact that this was the only factory where the Romanians were in an absolute majority, and the majority of the Romanian workers came from the town and its immediate surroundings

(Kolozs County). Another interesting phenomenon is the fact that the proportion of those who had arrived from the external circle was largest among the craftsmen. We assume that this phenomenon is primarily a consequence of the fact that Kolozsvár's tradesman society, just like the whole town itself in this period, was largely Hungarian, while more than 60 percent of the population of Kolozs County was of Romanian ethnicity at this time. Thus could it happen that the recruitment base of the tradesmen, after the town, consisted of the neighboring counties and beyond, rather than the county surrounding Kolozsvár.

As we already indicated previously, we have data concerning the denominational affiliation of the tradesmen only for the period between 1896 and 1914.²⁶ Again we would like to emphasize the fact that from November 1914 onwards the indication of religious denomination disappeared from the columns of the employment registry sheets serving as sources. For this reason, in this year we do not know the denomination of 23 percent of those registered. The data appearing for this year apply only to persons making up the remaining 77 percent. Thus, despite the fact that in the graphs below it seems as if the number of those registered had declined, in fact their total number had increased further!



The denominational composition of the tradesmen of Kolozsvár faithfully reflects that of the town's total population. In the settlement the adherents of no single Church were in an absolute majority: the Protestants were the greatest in number, and they were followed by the Roman Catholics and then the members of the other communities. The situation was similar to this among the craftsmen as well. As can also be seen in the graph above, it was the Reformed and the Roman Catholics who alternated in first place, followed in third place by the Greek Catholics, who after 1900 were overtaken by the Israelites. Members of the two smaller Protestant denominations (Lutheran and Unitarian) ranged around a few percentage points throughout, just as did members of the Greek Orthodox Church. The percentages, however, do not show the rate of numerical increase. Yet in the period examined the number of those who obtained an employment book constantly increased, and, as can be observed in the following graph, the number of Israelites showed the most spectacular rise.



The proportion of Israelites, however, would surpass the 10 percent threshold only at the start of the twentieth century, to end up in third place by 1910. The number of Greek Catholics, overwhelmingly of Romanian ethnicity, shows a continuous increase until 1900, then afterwards a slight decrease, only to rise once again towards 1914. In percentages they reached the highest level with 16 percent by 1900, which afterwards decreased, then rose slightly towards 1914. The two most populous denominations, the Reformed and Roman Catholics, increased in absolute numbers throughout. Their proportions display fluctuating values, however. Roman Catholics appeared in the highest proportion (40 percent) in 1897, after which they continuously lost ground until 1900; from this time onwards their percentage once more climbed. For their part the Reformed were part of the opposite process: beginning in 1896 their share increased until 1899, when they reached the highest level (42 percent). Thereafter their proportion began to decline until 1910, but from then onwards it once again increased until 1914, when again they assumed first place. The loss of ground of these two largest denominations around 1905 was closely connected to the inroads made by the next two in line, the Greek Catholics and the Israelites. It should not be ignored either that it was at this time that the members of the two smaller Protestant denominations were present in the largest percentage (4 percent and 5 percent respectively).

As far as the mobility of the tradesmen's groups of various denominations is concerned, in the case of the Reformed the town itself was the most important source of recruits: within this group the proportion of those born in Kolozsvár ranged between 40 and 50 percent. The highest level was more than 60 percent in 1905. Calvinists originating from Kolozs and the neighboring counties were the highest in number at this time (50 percent in total), when the denomination itself rose to first place, between 1898 and 1900 to be precise. Thus the excess population, thanks to which this Protestant denomination formed the most populous category among those obtaining an employment book in these three years, originated from the county and the neighboring counties. It is also

in this period that the proportion of those originating from counties located far from the town, the so-called external circle, also attains its highest level. Among the Roman Catholics those born locally throughout represented a majority of around 50 percent, and often above that. Catholics arriving from the other zones attain their highest level in 1900. Among the members of the Roman Catholic group can be found those who arrived in Kolozsvár from the most distant areas. Here were present throughout those coming from the more distant counties of Hungary,²⁷ and those born in the Empire's Austrian half²⁸ also appeared in the years around the turn of the century. However, it was the members of the Israelite confession who proved to be the most mobile, for even during this brief period a visible shift in proportion took place between those born in the town and those arriving from the neighboring counties, in favor of the latter. While at the start of the period that we researched those born in Kolozsvár were still the most numerous among Israelites who received an employment book, within a few years those born in the neighboring counties took over first place. In addition to the Roman Catholics, it is among the Israelites that we encounter tradesmen who arrived from truly distant areas. The percentage of settlers from the Austrian half of the Empire (Galicia) was relatively low, but they arrived in greater numbers from the external circle and the most distant areas of the Kingdom of Hungary. Compared to that of the denominations discussed so far, the recruiting territory of the Greek Catholics, in their majority Romanian-speaking, was completely different. Already from the beginning of the period under discussion it was those originating from Kolozs County who assumed the lead. Despite the fact that those born in the city also represented a substantial mass, most Greek Catholics arrived from Kolozs County and the neighboring counties. A negligible number moved to the settlement in the period under discussion from the outer circle and the other areas of the Kingdom of Hungary. It should be noted that they really could not have come from elsewhere, because in that era 90 percent of the Greek Catholic populace lived in Transylvania's northern areas, around Kolozsvár and its relatively close environs.

In summary, in the period presented the composition of the labor force of Kolozsvár according to language, ethnicity, religion and place of birth underwent a perceptible change, but it retained a few definitive elements. In the ethnic sphere, despite the fact that after the First World War the town ended up in Romania, the Hungarian element remained decisive, and those born in the town, despite the fact that their proportion slowly decreased, preserved their weight, while the denominational structure remained just as colorful as it had been at the start of the period. What changed was the proportion among the various ethnic groups and denominations. The percentage of Jews (or Israelites, depending on how they were categorized, by ethnicity/language or by denomination) constantly increased, just as that of the majority Greek Catholic Romanians did. Because of the town's Hungarian character and Kolozs County's Romanian ethnic majority, the recruitment area of the town's labor force remained the town as well as the neighboring counties and beyond. This tendency would continue until the period after the Second World War.

Notes

- 1 An earlier version of the study appeared in Ioan Bolovan, Rudolf Gräf, Harald Heppner and Ioan Lumperdean, eds., *Demographic Changes in the Time of Industrialization (1750–1918)*. *Transylvanian Review*, vol. XVIII, supplement no. 1 (Cluj-Napoca, 2009), pp. 51–52.
- 2 Ernő Deák, “Das Profil einer Mittelstadt im Spiegel der Zahlen. Klausenburg in der Ausgleichepoche,” in Ulrich Burger and Rudolf Gräf, eds., *Klausenburg: Wege einer Stadt und Ihrer Menschen in Europa* (Cluj-Napoca, 2006), p. 136.
- 3 Gábor Gyáni and György Kövér, *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a reformkortól a második világháborúig* [The Social History of Hungary from the Age of Reform to the Second World War] (Budapest, 1998), p. 60; Pál Beluszky and Róbert Györi, “A városi láz, a nyugtalanság és a fejlődés’: Magyarország városhálózata a 20. század elején” [“Urban Fever, Restlessness and Development”: the Town Network of Hungary at the Start of the Twentieth Century], *Korall* 11–12 (2003): 213.

- 4 Robert Nagy, “Die Rolle der Infrastruktur und der Industrie in der Entwicklung Klausenburgs zwischen 1867 und 1914,” in Burger and Gräf, eds., *Klausenburg: Wege einer Stadt und Ihrer Menschen in Europa*, pp.157–158.
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**TRANSYLVANIA
DURING WORLD WAR II**



Tamás Sárándi

EDUCATION POLICY IN NORTHERN TRANSYLVANIA DURING THE PERIOD OF MILITARY ADMINISTRATION

The Hungarian military administration set up in the autumn of 1940 in Northern Transylvania considered one of its most important tasks to be the regulation of the situation of Hungarian-language education, along with the inculcation in youth (first and foremost that of the ethnic minority) of loyalty to the nation. As in other areas, here too the military administration confronted great difficulties, primarily because of the lack of teachers arising from flight. Nevertheless, it largely succeeded in achieving this goal, since by late November education had commenced in almost every village, and a large proportion of school-age children were attending school.

Educational policy was one of the important elements of the “small Hungarian world” beginning in the autumn of 1940 also because the guiding principle of the basis for the Teleki nationality policy, the ideal of Saint Stephen, was the guarantee of cultural and linguistic rights in exchange for loyalty to the nation. And in any case it is education that may be regarded as the yardstick of linguistic rights. In other words, through the establishment of a proper educational policy and school network the success of the entire Hungarian nationality policy can also be judged. This crucial work commenced immediately following the Hungarian army’s entry, and one of its most important phases fell precisely within the period of the military administration that operated between September and November 1940. In the present study we attempt to trace the first steps in the process, devoting heightened attention to non-Hungarian-language education. With regard to ethnic minority education, secondary and higher education displayed great deficiencies, and therefore we place elementary public school education at the center of the inquiry.

Overview

Prior to 1918 education was conducted basically in Church schools, and this was valid for both Hungarian-language and ethnic minority education. Serving as a basis was the Nationalities Law of 1868, which in a liberal spirit guaranteed the nationalities elementary instruction in the mother tongue and freedom to found schools. Following this in the period of Dualism a dual process can be observed: on the one hand, the school network, and specifically elementary education, expanded; simultaneously, on the other hand, the teaching of the Hungarian language continuously gained ground, which in many cases entailed a reduction in the number of ethnic minority schools. This process began in 1879, when the Hungarian language was made compulsory, and then culminated in 1907 in the so-called Lex Apponyi, the aim of which was to bring non-state public education under supervision as well as increasing the efficacy of Hungarian-language instruction. This at once also signaled the change in the Hungarian governments' education policy and their relations to the nationalities.¹

The Nationalities Law of 1868 assured the Churches of the right to freely establish schools, and thus by 1918 the Romanian Churches possessed a developed network of elementary schools, but secondary schools, on the other hand, lagged significantly behind Hungarian education. In the year when the 1907 law was passed, of the 5,000 public schools operating in Transylvania 1,435 were owned by the Orthodox Church and 1,141 by the Greek Catholic Church (51 percent of the schools); however, only 25 percent of the children attending these spoke Hungarian. In 1,447 schools the Hungarian language was not taught at all.² Prior to 1918 the Romanian Churches possessed six secondary schools (two Greek Catholic gymnasias and four Orthodox secondary schools), eight teacher training colleges (five Greek Catholic and three Orthodox), and seven theological seminaries (four Greek Catholic and three Orthodox).³

After 1918 this process came to a halt and in certain cases was reversed. From this time onwards the Romanian state placed the emphasis primarily on state education and its development. In a brief period, in the early 1920s the Hungarian school network, and first and foremost Church education, underwent a growth, at least as far as the number of schools is concerned. Then following this – emphatically from the second half of the 1930s onwards – Hungarian Church education began to be pushed into the background, primarily in favor of state, and specifically Romanian-language, education. Various reasons were cited either to establish Romanian sections in Hungarian Church elementary and secondary schools or to close the entire school.⁴ Thus by the mid-1930s 26 percent of Hungarian children were attending Hungarian denominational schools, and 5.4 percent the Hungarian section of a state school, while 42 percent attended Romanian schools.⁵ Simultaneously, Romanian Church schools were also completely marginalized, albeit for different reasons. After 1918 the Romanian Greek Catholic and Orthodox Churches – seeing their mission heretofore as having been fulfilled – voluntarily relinquished their schools in favor of the state.⁶ Romanian-language education underwent a significant growth in the period between the two world wars, although this development was realized in the state schools.⁷ By 1940, after the shift in suzerainty, a situation prevailed whereby the Romanians almost completely lost their control over their schools; moreover, the Hungarian population in many places did not possess a sufficient number of school places for schooling Hungarian students.

Hungarian Education Policy Notions

The Hungarian state had clear notions regarding education policy, although those carried with them rather great contradictions. The question first arose at the Transylvania Conference held in Kolozsvár in the autumn of 1940, where the Romanian question was also placed on the agenda. At the conference the Hungarian government's notions regarding educational policy were outlined, and in agreement with

the Transylvanian Hungarian minority leaders the government came out in favor of maintaining denominational education and strengthening it with state assistance. To this end, Gábor Paál asked that certain provisions of the 1925 Romanian education law, which tied the establishment of schools to state permission, remain in force. István Bethlen, who was of the opinion that the state must not withdraw from education, also agreed with this.⁸

The contradiction inherent in the educational policy thinking of the Hungarian government was at the same time also one of the biggest challenges: that is, the question of whether the Hungarian state would be capable, through state education, of exercising supervision over ethnic minority (in the case of Transylvania, primarily Romanian) education and thereby the mentality of Romanian schools.⁹ For by 1940 a peculiar situation had arisen with the transformation of the Romanian confessional schools, one that the Hungarian state could exploit and apply according to its own interests. Between the two world wars Romanian education was in fact conducted almost completely in state schools, which after 1940 passed into the ownership of the Hungarian state.¹⁰ This situation suited the interests of the Hungarian state, and it came out in favor of maintaining Romanian-language state education, even despite the fact that it spent amounts on ethnic minority education similar to what it spent on the much more developed Transylvanian Hungarian (although mostly Church-based) education. While in the case of Hungarian education the government came out in favor of supporting Church education, in the case of ethnic minority education it championed state education. The Hungarian government in fact did not authorize the setting up of Romanian confessional schools; at the same time, though, it attempted to maintain the number of state schools that operated prior to 1940, and in them wherever necessary it maintained Romanian-language education. In order to diminish the logic behind subsequent questions about opening Romanian schools, the government attempted to maintain in the schools' structure the state of affairs in 1940: that is to say, in only a few cases did it authorize the opening of a Roman Catholic

or Calvinist school at the expense of a state school. In the case of Church schools after 1940 everywhere, the schools could revert to Hungarian as the language of instruction; however, a large number of the previously closed or nationalized Church schools remained in state ownership.¹¹

The introduction of the Romanian language was also raised at the conference, István Bethlen recommended making it compulsory in secondary school education and legal training, and Prime Minister Pál Teleki also agreed with this. Among the Transylvanian participants it was first and foremost Gábor Paál who vehemently opposed the proposal: in his opinion the teaching of the Romanian language “*would cause confused thinking.*” Teleki, citing ethnic sensitivity, thereupon recommended the introduction of the Romanian language only from 1941 onwards.¹²

In 1940 the Hungarian military administration took over a disordered Hungarian school network. It regarded the construction of a fully fledged Hungarian school system as its primary task, and attempted to achieve the above outlined contradictory plan in practice as well. By virtue of the military administration’s temporary nature, however, the government’s plans could not be realized in every case in this area either.

The Situation of Education in the Autumn of 1940

The specialist literature contains various figures regarding the number of schools in the returned territories; because of this it is not possible to assess the state of affairs in 1940 precisely. Subsequent data provide help only regarding the distribution ratio of schools, and allow us to conclude that the number of Hungarian schools in any event increased after 1940. According to the Bulletin published after the cessation of the military administration, 2,500 public schools operated in Northern Transylvania.¹³ The number of those schools where teaching was conducted in Hungarian (or also in Hungarian) may be put at more than 1,600; of these 187 were Roman Catholic,¹⁴ 355 Calvinist,¹⁵ 615 state Hungarian schools,

138 state Hungarian schools where the language of some minority was also taught, and 375 state mixed schools.¹⁶ According to this, 68 percent of schools also instructing in Hungarian were state ones: that is, many more than the specialist literature up to now has supposed. According to data likewise from 1942, in Hungary national minority education took place in 1,682 public schools, and 1,200 of these were Romanian.¹⁷ The number of German schools may be put at 50–55; the majority of these operated in the Saxon villages in the vicinity of Beszterce, and over time these were handed over to the management of the *Volksbund*.¹⁸ Contemporary sources estimated the number of secondary schools at 119; here, however, the number of non-Hungarian secondary schools was insignificant.¹⁹ A comparison of the data reveals unmistakably that there is overlap among the schools: that is, the mixed schools and those where, in addition to Hungarian instruction, teaching was also done in the nationalities' language were taken into account more than once. Moreover, it also turns out that the distribution of schools accorded with the ethnic proportion, and thus the Romanian nationality also possessed an appropriate number of schools. However, the data do not in every case conform to reality, since much more eloquent than the mere number of schools is the character of the school (purely Romanian, mixed or Hungarian, although with Romanian also taught for two hours a weeks), as well as the appropriate language knowledge of those teaching there. There are no precise statistics of this type of distribution of schools from the period of the military administration; however, using the scattered data, below we will attempt to make certain claims relating to this as well.

The biggest problem of the military administration in the area of education was the lack of teachers, and this was emphatically valid for the nationality schools. According to a sample study on refugees from Szatmár County, 325 teachers fled the county: this represents 17.7 percent of all refugees, and after the officials this category is the most populous. The flight of teachers commenced as early as the summer of 1940, before the announcement of the Second Vienna Award (more than 30 percent of persons who fled

before August 30 were teachers), and lasted throughout the entire year. The greatest number, however, left the territory after the entry of Hungarian troops, when 68 percent of the fleeing teachers left.

The great shortage of teachers that occurred because of the flight affected first and foremost the state, mainly the nationality schools, since the local teachers of Romanian nationality did not feel that they themselves or their workplaces were safe. In the case of the Hungarian denominational schools the teaching staff – who were of Hungarian nationality anyway – remained in place, and the shortage of teachers in this type of school derived from the increase in the number of schools. We do not have precise data on the ethnic composition of the teaching staff before 1940, but those of Hungarian nationality were certainly underrepresented. Besides the reduction in the number of Hungarian schools, also contributing to all this was the fact that – lacking appropriate language ability – a significant portion of Hungarian graduating students failed the school-leaving exam, and thus did not obtain a diploma.²⁰ One of the main tasks of the military administration was the replacement of these fleeing teachers, so that education might commence as soon as possible.

After 1940 approximately 3,200 teachers taught in the approximately 2,500 public schools of Northern Transylvania. A decisive majority of these (88.8 percent) were of Hungarian nationality. Regarding Romanian teachers remaining in the territory, the specialist literature uses several figures, and puts their number somewhere between 660 and 860. In accordance with the distribution of the schools, the biggest number of teachers (81 percent) taught in state schools.²¹ From a comparison of the data it also becomes evident that with the 600–800 ethnic Romanian teachers who remained in the territory it was not possible to begin teaching in the approximately 1,250 nationality schools, and therefore an attempt was made to fill the gap with Hungarian teachers. According to the Directive published prior to the entry, the missing teachers were to be replaced first by individuals who had been dismissed for being Hungarian, secondly by such teachers of “*irreproachable conduct*” who until now had not had jobs, and thirdly by retired teachers.²² In

reality, because of the great shortage, and the insufficient number of Transylvanian graduates, it was also necessary to employ categories not mentioned in the Directive. This made no mention of the potential appointment of teachers from Hungary, and understandably teachers who had fled from Southern Transylvania could not be considered either. Accordingly, the replacements could arrive from several sources, including Transylvanian Hungarian graduates in the territory who had obtained a diploma in the interwar period but had not been hired in the period of Romanian rule (whom the Directive also took into account). According to data, in the state schools alone 3,381 such teachers were employed.²³ The other source was the group of officials who arrived from Hungary: approximately 750 teachers arrived in the territory in the autumn of 1940.²⁴ The third source emerged from the Southern Transylvanian refugees. They arrived in the territory either because they had been transferred in late August 1940 or because, like their Romanian colleagues, they did not feel secure in their jobs and instead decided in favor of flight. Their group, however, initially posed a dilemma to the military administration and with it the entire Hungarian government. Their labor would have been needed because of the great shortage of teachers; however, the Hungarian government's position in the initial period was that the refugees must not be employed, and indeed, their return must be urged. Despite this the military administration from the start employed them.²⁵ According to subsequent data, approximately 450 Southern Transylvanian refugees resided in the reannexed territory; among them at first only 10–12 were employed, and those only on a temporary basis as well.²⁶

The military administration formed in the autumn of 1940 had a tripartite division: district or city, county and army commands. In this case the district (*járás*) represented the first and at the same time the most important administrative level. In the system of the civil administration this corresponded to the chief magistrate (*főszolgabíró*), or in the case of a town the mayor. It consisted of three parts: a military part (command level), the civilian part (the group of administrative rapporteurs) and the so-called auxiliary

personnel. In an ideal case this meant 20–22 people. The command level consisted of three persons: a commander (generally an officer or noncommissioned officer oversaw this task), a deputy commander and an adjutant; these were all the designees of the Ministry of Defense. The civilian part consisted of six rapporteurs, among whom the most important was the administrative rapporteur. In addition, rapporteurs dealing mainly with finances and accounting assisted the work of the district commander. The auxiliary personnel (clerks, couriers, drafters) formed the most numerous group, approximately 10–13 persons.²⁷ The district military commander's scope of authority included special administration (including education); at the same time, he was also invested with a police jurisdiction, and he was responsible for putting the administrative decrees into practice as well. It was the district commanders who supervised education, including the appointment of teachers and the commencement of instruction. The district commands did not in every case have an educational rapporteur; however, there are cases when the district commander indicated that for the sake of proper operation the appointment of such a rapporteur would also be needed.²⁸ The county command in the civil administration corresponded to the deputy lieutenant (*alispán*), but had a broader jurisdiction. This was also composed of three parts, only the circle of administrative rapporteurs was much broader. There were 19 rapporteurs assisting the county commander's activity, delegated by six ministries: the interior, agriculture, industry and commerce, finance, religious affairs and public education, and transport.²⁹ The county commanders were usually generals; they were responsible for special administration at the county level, as well as for coordinating the work of the district commanders. The third level was represented by the army's administrative group; this corresponded to the level of the provincial governor, and this controlled the entire administration.³⁰ The importance of education is indicated by the fact that at the county level the commands in every case did have an educational rapporteur.

Sources dating from the period of the military administration for the most part confirm what has been said until now. After the administration had been set up, the situation reports, which recounted the successes achieved but also the shortcomings, arrived one after the other. Under the latter heading education was continuously present, because of the great shortage of teachers. For example, in the Kápolnokmonostor District of Szatmár County there were 21 state schools; however, 70 percent of the school buildings were under Hungarian ecclesiastical ownership, which suggests that at one time Church schools had operated in these. In the district 33 teaching jobs existed, and 21 percent of these were not filled; characteristically each was a state teaching job.³¹ A similar report arrived from the Avas District, likewise in Szatmár County: here 22 schools operated in 16 communes, and the greatest need was for teachers, with the district commander indicating a shortage of eight school teachers and 12 kindergarten teachers.³²

The start of instruction and the appointment, and possible hiring, of the teaching personnel, developed similarly to the other areas of the administration. After the shortage had been assessed, the so-called “screening” of all administrative employees commenced, in the course of which the behavior of the teacher in question towards the Hungarians in the interwar period was examined, and it depended on this whether he/she could keep his/her job or was dismissed. All this had been laid out in the Directive. In the case of the previously returned territories of Upper Hungary and Subcarpathian Ruthenia, screening committees were established; however, because of the negative experiences of these, they were no longer employed in the case of Transylvania. Thus about the process that took place here we have very little information. The local commanders asked the members of the Transylvanian Hungarian community considered to be reliable (leaders of the Hungarian National Party, priests and teachers), and based on the recommendations of the latter a decision was made about the person in question.³³ This process further increased the shortfall;³⁴ however, we do not have precise data about how many persons lost their jobs because of this. It is a fact that the

shortage of teachers was greater than had been previously expected, and thus in spite of the hirings and appointments dozens of places remained unfilled, and those lacking the proper qualification also had to be employed. Alluding to this is the decree issued at this time that allowed those who had completed an eight-year period of education at secondary school also to be employed as kindergarten teachers.³⁵

Despite all these things, attempts were made to observe the provisions in the Directive, and appoint primarily graduates of Transylvanian origin. Indicative of this is the case of Elvira Cserghezean, who in her November letter indicated to the commander of the Maros District in Maros-Torda County that she would like to teach in Transylvania. The commander, however, did not promise her a job, since he claimed that first the locals had to be employed, and only in the absence of local applicants could the employment of a person from Hungary be considered.³⁶

The Measures of the Military Administration in Connection with Education

The importance of education is shown by the fact that the army commands attempted to regulate its course in several comprehensive decrees. On October 5, 1940, Bálint Hóman issued Decree No. 24024/1940 on the temporary regulation of education in Northern Transylvania.³⁷ The commands – despite the fact that according to the decree during the duration of the military administration they were the ones responsible for putting the decree into practice – did not order the automatic implementation of the decree, but rather regulated the course of education in separate decrees. According to Decree No. 1495/1940, issued in early October, education was to proceed just as it had in the 1939–1940 school year, meaning that the schools' state or denominational character would remain. The favoring of Church schools can be unequivocally seen, since launching a state school was considered to be necessary only in the case that the Church school was not able to carry out the task. All this

was made still more emphatic by that part of the decree according to which the building of the state school was to be ceded to the Church school, should its size be suitable for the purposes of education.³⁸ Just as no change occurred in the character of the schools, neither did the military administration wish to make changes to the course of teaching in the case of non-Hungarian-language education, introducing only a weekly six hours of supplementary Hungarian instruction.³⁹ All these were in harmony with the aforementioned decree of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education. During November further amendments were attached to the decrees, first and foremost relating to ethnic minority education. It was prescribed that in mixed settlements where enough parents for a class requested minority instruction, a non-Hungarian-language section must be set up. If the parents did not request that such a section be set up, but one third of the children did not have Hungarian as their mother tongue, it was mandatory to instruct the children in their mother tongue two hours a week.⁴⁰ This in part contradicts the aforementioned ministerial decree, since in the case of state schools it provided for the setting up of ethnic minority classes or sections and did not make it dependent on a parental request.⁴¹ The deficiency of the decree lay in the fact that it did not regulate the minimum number of national minority students. In the case of confessional schools it was the Church in question that decided on the language of instruction, and this was confirmed by the decree of the military command as well.

Also indicating the prominent role of education was the fact that as early as October 1940 – that is, still during the military administration – the school inspectorates were established. The eleven counties were divided into three school districts, with headquarters located in Szatmárnémeti, Kolozsvár and Marosvásárhely.⁴²

During October, wherever it was possible, instruction commenced.⁴³ At the beginning of the month the military units were ordered to vacate the requisitioned school buildings and hand them over in an operational state.⁴⁴ In addition to teaching the material, the raising of the students in a patriotic spirit, which in the case

of the ethnic minority pupils meant a fostering of national loyalty, was equally important. According to the issued Directive in the first days following the start of teaching, “the task of the schools is not education, but rather being together, the reassurance of the children and the presenting of events, the nurturing of patriotic feeling.” This same thing was emphasized in the selection of the newly hired teachers as well; in the case of those selected it was important that their appointment be “a guarantee that youth will be raised in a patriotic spirit.”⁴⁵

Below I would like to present the results of a study, which better illuminates the composition of the schools at the time of the military administration, and may provide data regarding the composition and language competence of the teachers. I carried out the study in two districts in Szatmár County;⁴⁶ the availability of sources played a role in the choice. The importance of the results of the study and its general applicability are reduced by the fact that the data apply to the teachers and not the character of the school; however, in our opinion certain tendencies can still be discerned. In the 60 settlements included in the study, 96 teachers worked: 61.4 percent of these were of Romanian, 36.4 percent of Hungarian and 2 percent of German nationality. Compared to the ethnic ratio, this appears to be good, since – although the proportion of Hungarian teachers is twice that of the Hungarian population – in the case of the Romanians the proportion approaches the actual ratio, and rather it is in the case of the Germans that it shows an unequivocal underrepresentation. However, it is still not possible to draw exaggerated conclusions from this, since the fleeing teachers came from the ranks of the Romanians, and obviously these were replaced by Hungarians.

In the settlements examined, schools with one teacher operated in 35 villages, those with two teachers in 15 villages and those with three or more in ten villages.⁴⁷ The reason why all this was important is because the greater number of teachers the school employed, the greater the shortage could be, and the greater the percentage of newly hired (in this case, presumably Hungarian, possibly unsuitable) teachers was.

In the case of schools with one teacher,⁴⁸ 51.3 percent of the teachers were retained (that is, those who had taught in the settlement even prior to 1940, and had also passed the screening) and 37.8 percent were hired.⁴⁹ Of the newly hired teachers 91 percent were Romanian and only 8.1 percent Hungarian, meaning that the hired Romanian teachers had taught previously in the territory of the county, only in another settlement.⁵⁰ Examining the ethnic composition of the teachers, the percentage of the Romanians is 67.5 percent, while that of the Hungarians is 24.3 percent, meaning that the percentage of Romanians better approximates the ethnic ratio than in the case of all teachers combined. Proceeding upwards (that is, by the more teachers that taught in a school) this percentage declines, and in the case of schools with three or more teachers the percentage of those hired is now 66 percent and the percentage of the teachers of Hungarian nationality reaches 91 percent.⁵¹ (See *Figure 1* on the next page.)

All this supports what has been stated so far: that is, that the more teachers that were needed, the more the rate of retained teachers decreased, and in parallel to this the proportion of ethnic Hungarians grew, since it was they who replaced the fleeing Romanians.

Illustrating what has been said thus far in a graph, we obtain the following picture (*Figure 2*). I compared the data relating to the type of school (how many teachers) with the number of those hired, supplementing all this with the language ability of the hired teachers.⁵² It can be gathered that the percentage of those hired grew proportionately to the size of the school (from 37 percent to 66 percent), the percentage of ethnic Hungarians grew (from 8 percent to 75 percent) and simultaneously the percentage of those who knew Romanian declined (from 98 percent to 78 percent), but in the case of the last category, too, it is well above two thirds.

Figure 1

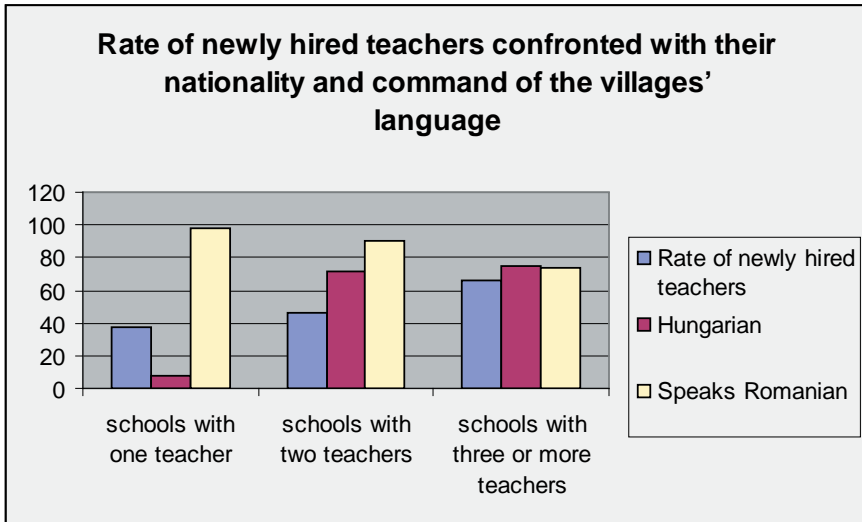
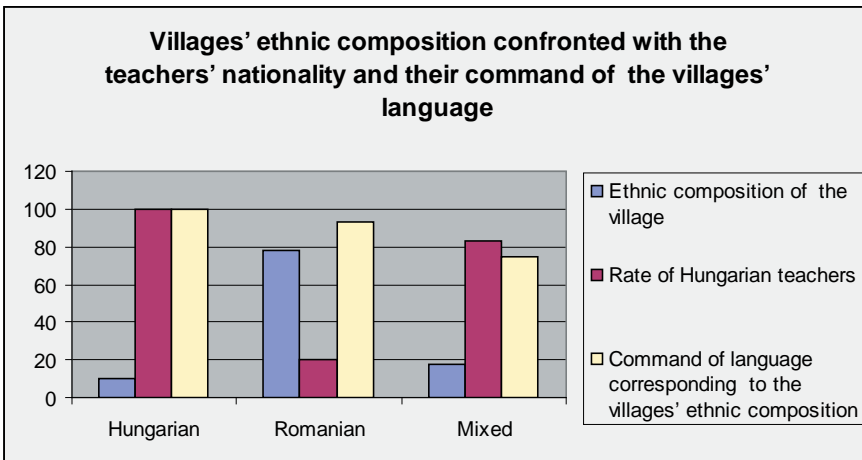


Figure 2



For a better understanding, in the section below I have taken the ethnic distribution of the villages as a basis, and have compared this with the teachers' nationality, this time with the language ability appropriate to the village.⁵³ In the case of Hungarian villages⁵⁴ the percentage in both cases is 100 percent, thus requiring no particular explanation. In the case of Romanian villages the percentage of teachers of Hungarian nationality is 20 percent; however, 93 percent of them spoke the Romanian language. In the case of mixed villages the percentage of Hungarian teachers is much higher (83.3 percent), since the Romanian teachers who remained in place were largely transferred to the purely Romanian villages. The appropriate language ability (Romanian or German) in this case is the worst, but even so is 75 percent, which may be called good.

In addition to all this, during the military administration other tendencies are also observable. According to János Szlucska, at the time of the military administration the parents voted for the language of instruction. We have no data on such a comprehensive assessment or vote; however, there are several examples of similar cases. For instance, the letter of the principal of the Romanian-populated Maroskövesd (Maros-Torda County) makes the following clear: it is the opinion of the parents that until the third grade the children will learn to read and write in their mother tongue, and thus beginning from the fourth grade they request that the language of education be Hungarian only. The notary certified the veracity of the letter's content; despite all this, it may be presumed that the request arose after the vigorous intercession of the authorities.⁵⁵ We encounter a similar phenomenon also in the case of the Kápolnokmonostor District (with a 95-percent Romanian population) in Szatmár County, where, according to the report of the district commander, at the parents' request instruction was completely in Hungarian, with Romanian used only on a supplementary basis and in religious education.⁵⁶ In the case of Felsőbánya, where 37 percent of those enrolled were Greek Catholic, instruction was completely in Hungarian (in the state school as well) on the grounds that the Greek Catholics also understood the Hungarian language verbally.⁵⁷

A similar situation can be observed in the case of German education too, and specifically in the case of the Swabians of Szatmár. Here between the two world wars a re-Germanization process also supported by the Romanian state had taken place, as a result of which by 1940 in almost every village inhabited by Swabians the German language was once more reintroduced in the schools.⁵⁸ Despite the minority treaty signed at the same time as the Vienna Award – which guaranteed free development to the German ethnic minority – a great decline occurred in the area of instruction. Because of this, in the autumn of 1940, Jozef Schönborn, the parliamentary deputy of the Szatmár Swabians – who became a deputy against the will of Pál Teleki – forwarded a memorandum to the minister of education and religious affairs, Bálint Hóman. In this he complained that whereas prior to 1940 German-language instruction had been given in 26 settlements, after the reannexation of the territory it was still possible to study in German in six communes only; there was a promise to begin German-language instruction in three communes, in another three communes there was mixed education, and in four communes the language of instruction was still not decided, while in 13 communes the children studied in Hungarian. The German Embassy also forwarded a similarly worded letter to the Ministry. The military commanders were thereupon instructed that they should inform the priests wherever possible not to openly promote the enrollment of children in Hungarian schools, and especially not from the pulpit.⁵⁹ Following this in late November the commanders were instructed in Decree No. 12608/1940 that in those settlements where previously a German school had operated and the military administration had ended it, it must be reopened, irrespective of the number of children.⁶⁰ Despite all these following 1940 a break occurred in German education in the Szatmár region, since the decisive majority of schools operating in the Swabian settlements were Roman Catholic denominational schools, where the Church maintaining the school could decide on the teaching language, thus giving wide scope to the priests' influence.

A different situation arose in the case of the Saxon schools around Beszterce, where the question of closing schools was not raised. The Saxons living in the reannexed territory possessed 47 schools, all of them owned by the Lutheran Church. However, education did not proceed without conflicts here either. Unlike in Szatmár, here the struggle ensued not for linguistic rights, but rather for influence over the schools, since the Lutheran Church in 1941 had handed over its schools to the *Volksbund*, drifting increasingly in the direction of National Socialism.⁶¹

Due to the transitional nature of the military administration, and because of conflicts between the military commanders and the rapporteurs designated alongside them, the local commanders in many cases arbitrarily made decisions that contradicted the issued Directive or the government's plans.⁶² The resolution of the commander in Kolozsvár, in which he returned the previously requisitioned schools to the Churches, including the Romanian Churches, may be regarded as one such.⁶³

Besides fostering a sense of loyalty to the nation, the military administration attempted to increase the number of children enrolled in school as well. In the time between the two world wars a significant part of the school-age children in fact did not attend school regularly.⁶⁴ All this is also supported by the report of the local commanders. According to the commander of the Avas District in Szatmár County, only 40–50 percent of children attended school in the district's poorer villages.⁶⁵ For the sake of the goal, the military commanders were ordered in a decree to enroll every child in school officially, and to ensure that during enrollment the nationality and religion of the child in question would be taken into account. In the event of repeated unexcused absences the prospect of fining the parents was held out, with the fine set at no less than 16–32 fillérs per day.⁶⁶

Below I will attempt to present, through a concrete example, the process that took place in the autumn of 1940, which bears the characteristics of the era's education policy in miniature. At the same time, it reveals a problem also neglected by Transylvanian

Hungarian sociological research, the conflict among the Hungarian denominations. According to János Szlucska, between the two world wars in several cases it was because of the denominational antagonisms that Hungarian schools had ceased; however, in this period this was no longer typical, and the conflict was much rather between the state and Church schools.⁶⁷ Despite this several data point to the fact that after 1940 denominational conflicts were very much alive.

The case presents the situation of the former Reformed (Calvinist) school of Sáromberke, a commune in Maros-Torda County. According to the local Reformed minister's account, in 1919 the 95-percent Calvinist village had decided in favor of setting up a denominational school, which, however, was closed in 1924, or rather continued to operate as a state school. Citing the fact that the village was completely Hungarian⁶⁸ and Reformed in its absolute majority, the minister asked the authorities to abolish the state school and restart the Reformed school, and at the same time requested the handover of the building of the state school as well. At the same time the minister also raised an objection against one of the school's teachers, who in his view "*through her behavior became unsuited for nurturing the souls of Hungarian children,*" since the teacher in question had married a Romanian and had changed her religion to Orthodox as well.⁶⁹ The school's other teacher – whose conduct at this time the minister still considered to be exemplary – he also recommended for promotion.⁷⁰ The matter came before the county commander, who judged the case to be beyond his competence, in his opinion only the civil administration could decide on reopening a Church school.⁷¹ At the same time he also ordered the investigation and screening of the teacher to whom the minister had objected.⁷² However, even after the start of the school year the cleric continued to press for the opening of the denominational school, citing a decree issued by the army, according to which in settlements where only one denomination existed and in Romanian times denominational education had been eliminated, it could be reopened.⁷³ Contradicting this was the decree issued by the Ministry regulating the education

of Northern Transylvania, according to which in the 1940–1941 school year the character of the schools remained untouched: in other words, in the case of Sáromberke the state school must continue to operate. In addition to maintaining the Church's demand for a school,⁷⁴ the minister once more raised an objection against the teaching staff too, since according to him it was detrimental to the Reformed Church that two of the three teachers were Roman Catholics, and the male teacher did not possess a cantor teacher's certificate.⁷⁵ As a close to the memorandum, the minister noted that there could be harmony between the Church and the school only if the teachers were actively to take part in the inner life of the Church as well.⁷⁶ We have no data regarding the settlement of the case.

Summary

In summary we may state that at the time of the military administration, despite the difficulties, a large part of the set goals was achieved: in the course of October in most settlements teaching commenced and full Hungarian-language education was successfully realized, and with this the grievances suffered between the two world wars were overcome. Despite the mass hirings, in a number of cases instruction could not be started, and 1,000 teaching positions remained unfilled at the end of the military administration as well.⁷⁷

Education policy was one of the supporting pillars of the period's nationality policy, and the inadequacy of this could in fact call the entire nationality policy into question. The biggest problem of the non-Hungarian-language education policy was the lack of teachers, which arose because of the large-scale flight of the Romanian teachers.⁷⁸ Contemporary sources also mention this, and the statistics on the refugees also support this. Thus the ensuing gap had to be filled in a brief period of a few weeks in such a way that the plans of the government, which wanted to ensure the nationalities wide-ranging primary education in the mother tongue, would also be realized in the meantime.

From all this the potential Hungarian–Hungarian conflict also followed, when, despite the fact that the government supported Church education publicly as well, for the sake of preventing the potential requests from the nationalities (primarily the Romanians), the restoration of confessional education was not permitted, but rather there was an insistence upon state schools in the case of Hungarian-language education too – see the case of the school in Sáromberke.

The great lack of teachers on the one hand presented the military administration with a difficult situation, while on the other at the same time it also provided a way to achieve the educational policy plans.⁷⁹ Hungarians after all could be appointed in place of the Romanian teachers, and thereby the supervision of education and the nurturing of a sense of loyalty to the nation were assured. Despite all this, a positive picture of ethnic minority education emerges. On the one hand, mass transfers were carried out in late September and early October: they attempted to appoint the Romanian teachers who remained behind to purely Romanian settlements, and transfer the Transylvanian degree-holders to Hungarian and ethnically mixed villages. On the other hand, care was taken to ensure that the appointed teachers had the proper language knowledge. Schools with more than one teacher represented a bigger problem, where they could no longer appoint sufficient Romanian or local teachers, and in several cases teachers from Hungary were also utilized.⁸⁰ Deficiencies can be observed in the mixed settlements: here not in every case was ethnic minority education enforced, and thus in the long run the possibility of assimilation – albeit subtly – also arose. At the same time, in several cases there is an example of purely Hungarian education happening in settlements and districts with Romanian majorities. According to contemporary sources, all this occurred at the parents' request; however, in many cases the “influencing” of the parents in a number of cases may be presumed.

The deficiencies of the military administration also appearing in other areas (its all-embracing character, conflicts between local

commander and ministerial rapporteur, or between commander and government commissioner, and the selection of unsuitable advisors) are present in the area of education policy as well. This is seen also in the fact that – despite the fact that in early October the Ministry had already in a separate decree regulated the steps necessary in the area of educational policy – the commanders passed separate decrees that sometimes contradicted the regulation⁸¹ or infringed upon it.⁸² It can also be observed that the commanders yielded to the local leaders of the Hungarian population, even at the cost of violating the decree. This occurred mainly in the case of the German schools in Szatmár: the commanders in a number of cases had the German-language state school closed, while in the confessional school the language of instruction reverted to Hungarian, with the commanders citing the fact that between the two world wars the introduction of the German language had occurred even with the population's opposition.

To sum up, it may be stated that in the area of education, too, the basic principle of the Teleki nationality policy, whereby it was overwhelmingly Hungarians who also spoke Romanian that oversaw elementary school education, seems to have been realized, and this provided a chance to control education and promote a sense of loyalty to the nation.

Notes

- 1 Zoltán Zilizi, "A Lex Apponyi végrehajtása a Lipót megyei evangélikus német népiskolákban" [The Implementation of the Lex Apponyi in the German Evangelical Schools of Lipót County], *Sic itur ad astra* 2006 (3–4): 237.
- 2 János Szlucska, *Pünkösdi királyság. Az Észak-Erdélyi oktatásügy története 1940–1944* [Kingdom for a Day. The History of Education in Northern Transylvania 1940–1944] (Budapest, 2009), p. 12.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.
- 4 As a consequence of these measures more than 60 percent of students in the town's Romanian secondary schools were Hungarian children.

- 5 Szlucska, *Pünkösdi királyság*, p. 24. The remaining 26 percent remained unschooled, and thus one of the main measures of the Hungarian military administration in the area of education was to increase the rates of schooling.
- 6 Levente Benkő, “Magyar nemzetiségpolitika Észak-Erdélyben 1940–1944” [Hungarian Nationality Policy in Northern Transylvania 1940–1944], *Pro Minoritate* (Autumn 2002): 20–22. After 1940 these became Hungarian state schools.
- 7 E.g., the case of Szatmárnémeti, where prior to 1918 not one Romanian secondary school operated, but by 1940 the number of these had reached five.
- 8 Nándor Bárdi, “A múlt, mint tapasztalat. A kisebbségből többségbe került erdélyi magyar politika szemléletváltása 1940–1944” [The Past as Experience. The Change in Transylvanian Hungarian Political Views after Shifting from Minority to Majority 1940–1944], in Gábor Czoch and Csilla Fedinec, eds., *Az emlékezet konstrukciói. Példák a 19–20. századi magyar és közép-európai történelemből* [Constructions of Memory. Examples from Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Hungarian and Central European History] (Budapest, 2006), p. 21.
- 9 As a matter of fact, in the period Romanian priests and teachers were considered to be the maintainers of Romanian national feeling, and it was in them that the spokesmen of the separatist strivings arising in the late nineteenth century were seen as well. For more on this, see Benedek Jancsó, *A román irredentista mozgalmak története* [The History of the Romanian Irredentist Movements] (Máriabesenyő-Gödöllő, 2004), and Sándor Biró, *Kisebbségben és többségben. Románok és magyarok 1867–1940* [In Minority and Majority. Romanians and Hungarians 1867–1940] (Csíkszereda, 2002).
- 10 Bárdi, “A múlt, mint tapasztalat,” p. 22.
- 11 Szlucska, *Pünkösdi királyság*, p. 52.
- 12 Bárdi, “A múlt, mint tapasztalat,” pp. 20–23. By contrast, according to Szlucska via Decree No. 172747/1940 the teaching of the Romanian language had been introduced into secondary schools as early as the autumn of 1940; Szlucska, *Pünkösdi királyság*, p. 227. We consider the observation of Nándor Bárdi to be significant. He has pointed out that at the so-called Transylvanian Conference it was the participants from Hungary who set the tone, and the Transylvanians called attention only to the dangers. Yet, contrary to the myth, the

introduction of the Romanian language was a decision of state policy brought in from outside against the minority experiences of the Transylvanians.

- 13 *Tájékoztató a katonai közigazgatás működéséről a felszabadult keleti és erdélyi részekben* [Information Bulletin on the Operation of the Military Administration in the Eastern and Transylvanian Areas] (Budapest, 1941), p. 97.
- 14 According to other data, 204 Roman Catholic schools operated in Northern Transylvania.
- 15 According to other data, 311 Reformed (Calvinist) schools operated in Northern Transylvania.
- 16 Szlucska, *Pünkösdi királyság*, pp. 42–46.
- 17 Various sources provide differing figures for the number of Romanian schools as well. According to Romanian sources, 1,966 Romanian public schools operated; according to archival sources, the number is 1,830, while József Pusztai-Popovics puts the number of Romanian schools at 1,200, which János Szlucska by and large also accepts.
- 18 Szlucska, *Pünkösdi királyság*, pp. 170–173.
- 19 *Tájékoztató*, p. 97. This number did not increase much later either: according to a 1942 figure, 2,508 public schools operated in the territory. While prior to 1940 61 Romanian schools had operated, after 1940 only 10 could continue to operate (one higher elementary, four state gymnasia (or sections), two Greek Catholic practicing gymnasium, two Greek Catholic teacher training colleges and one commercial school).
- 20 Because of this in 1941 former Hungarian students who had failed previously for lack of language competence were examined for weeks, in an effort to grant them a diploma.
- 21 Szlucska, *Pünkösdi királyság*, pp. 56 and 194.
- 22 *Utasítás a katonai közigazgatás megszervezésére a felszabaduló Erdély területén* [Instructions for Organizing the Military Administration on the Liberated Transylvanian Territory] (Budapest, 1940), p. 75. Despite this the Bulletin issued after the end of the military administration, mainly in the case of secondary schools, now indicates the appointment of teaching staff from Hungary. For more on this, see *Tájékoztató*, p. 98.
- 23 Szlucska, *Pünkösdi királyság*, p. 56. According to Nándor Bárdi's data, 2,000 such teachers were employed. See Bárdi, "A múlt, mint tapasztalat," p. 22.

- 24 Szlucska, *Pünkösdi királyság*, p. 64.
- 25 For more on the refugee issue, and on the dilemma concerning their possible employment, see Béni L. Balogh, “Az erdélyi magyar menekültkérdés szociális vonatkozásai 1939–1944 között” [The Social Dimensions of the Transylvanian Hungarian Refugee Issue between 1939 and 1944], in Sándor Pál-Antal, Gábor Sipos, András W. Kovács and Rudolf Wolf, eds., *Emlékkönyv Kiss András születésének nyolcvanadik évfordulójára* [Anniversary Book for András Kiss’s 80th Birthday] (Kolozsvár, 2003), pp. 29–34. This same dilemma crops up in the case of public employees or officials as well, not only in the teachers’ case. Behind the dilemma was the drastic reduction in the number of Hungarians in Southern Transylvania.
- 26 Szlucska, *Pünkösdi királyság*, p. 69.
- 27 Direcția Județeană Satu Mare a Arhivelor Naționale (Szatmár County Archives), Fond 14 Prefectura Județului Satu Mare – Administrația militară maghiară [Szatmár County Prefecture – Hungarian Military Administration, henceforth DJSM- Prefectura], *Kimutató az Ugocsa járási katonai parancsnokság összetételéről* [The Composition of the Military Command of Ugocsa District], dos. 9, p. 40. This figure could change, however, sometimes supplemented by rapporteurs for public health, public food supply or even education.
- 28 DJSM- Prefectura, *Avasi járási katonai parancsnok a vármegyei parancsnoknak* [Avas District Military Commander to the County Commander], dos. 4, p. 16.
- 29 DJSM- Prefectura, *Kimutató a vármegyei parancsnokság összetételéről* [On the Composition of the County Command], dos. 4, p. 51.
- 30 Elemér Sebestyén and Péter Szabó, “Magyar katonai közigazgatás Észak Erdélyben és a Székelyföldön 1940 őszén” [The Hungarian Military Administration in Northern Transylvania and the Székelyföld in the Autumn of 1940], *Századok* 2008 (6): 1385–1386.
- 31 DJSM- Prefectura, *Helyzetjelentés a kápolnokmonostori járásról* [Situation Report for the Kápolnokmonostor District], Oct. 28, 1940, dos. 6, pp. 6–9. A similar situation may be observed in the Nagybánya District, where out of 46 schools 43 were state and 3 confessional; DJSM- Prefectura, *Helyzetjelentés a nagybányai járásról* [Situation Report for the Nagybánya District], Oct. 21, 1940, dos. 5, p. 227.
- 32 DJSM- Prefectura, *Helyzetjelentés az avasi járásról* [Situation Report for Avas District], Oct. 29, 1940, dos. 6, pp. 219–224. It is typical that

in every case the district commander requests that a teacher from Hungary be sent.

- 33 *Utasítás*, pp. 11–12. The Directive concerning this stipulates only that the military commanders “*obtain the data concerning education from the teachers and priests of the Hungarian confessional schools.*” *Utasítás*, p. 75.
- 34 This is referred to by the Avas District commander in his report, according to which in the district teaching staff was still being reviewed at the end of October, and according to his calculations this would further increase the existing shortage. DJSM- Prefectura, *Helyzetjelentés az avasi járásról* [Situation Report for the Avas District], Oct. 29, 1940, dos. 6, pp. 219–224.
- 35 Direcția Județeană Mureș a Arhivelor Naționale (Maros County Archives), Fond 14 Prefectura Județului Mureș – Comandamentul militar [Maros County Prefecture Collection – Military Command], inv. 500, *Administrative Group of the 1st Army to the County Commanders* [henceforth DJM- Prefectura], Oct. 14, 1940, dos. 16, p. 5. This solution is also referred to in the Bulletin, when it mentions that in many cases an attempt was made to fill the gap with an individual holding a secondary-school diploma or employing a representative of the intellectual professions. *Tájékoztató*, p. 98.
- 36 DJM- Prefectura, *Marosi járási katonai parancsnok levele Cserghezan Elvirának* [Letter of the Maros District Military Commander to Elvira Cserghezan], Nov. 23, 1940, dos. 205, p. 376.
- 37 See *Magyarországi rendeletek tára 1940* [Compendium of the Decrees of Hungary 1940] (Budapest, 1941), pp. 3143–3146.
- 38 DJM- Prefectura, *1. hadsereg közigazgatási csoportja a vármegyei parancsnokoknak* [Administrative Group of the 1st Army to the County Commanders], Oct. 9, 1940, dos.16, p. 14.
- 39 DJM- Prefectura, *Maros-Torda vármegyei parancsnok az elemi iskolai igazgatókhoz* [Commander of Maros-Torda County to the Elementary School Principals], Oct. 1940, dos. 16, p. 17.
- 40 DJM- Prefectura, *Maros-Torda vármegyei parancsnok az elemi iskolai igazgatókhoz* [Commander of Maros-Torda County to the Elementary School Principals], Nov. 5, 1940, dos. 2703, p. 1.
- 41 “*In state public schools the language of teaching, as a rule, is the Hungarian language. However, in such communes in which the population is not Hungarian-speaking, public school instruction is conducted in the language of the population, while in mixed*

communes – in proportion to the number of school-age children – in parallel classes or sections, or in separate schools in Hungarian and other languages.” Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education Decree No. 24024/1940, Section 7, Paragraph 1, *Rendeletek tára* 1940, p. 3145.

- 42 Sebestyén and Szabó, “Magyar katonai közigazgatás Észak Erdélyben és a Székelyföldön,” p. 1411.
- 43 In a number of cases, teaching could not begin, because of the lack of teachers. In the Kápolnokmonostor District of Szatmár County, teaching was interrupted in four state schools. DJSM- Prefectura, *Helyzetjelentés a kápolnokmonostori járásról* [Situation Report for the Kápolnokmonostor District], Oct. 28, 1940, dos. 6, pp. 6–9.
- 44 DJM- Prefectura, *Maros-Torda vármegyei parancsnok a járási parancsnokoknak* [Commander of Maros-Torda County to the District Commanders], Oct. 2, 1940, dos. 16, p. 18.
- 45 *Utasítás*, pp. 75–76.
- 46 These are the districts of Nagybánya and Erdőd in Szatmár County, representing 67 villages, of which seven settlements were dropped due to a lack of data. The proportion of Romanians in the two districts was 71.3 percent, while that of the Hungarians was 13.6 percent, the remainder representing mainly Germans. Of the 60 settlements included in the study 78 percent can be regarded as purely Romanian villages, 10 percent purely Hungarian and 18 percent mixed.
- 47 The results of the study are also weakened by the fact that there are no data about how many teachers the school actually should have had, and so we can deduce the character of the school only from how many teachers were employed where. Only in 17 cases can it be established unequivocally that there were not enough teachers (of these in seven cases there was no teacher at all), but this number was almost certainly larger in the light of the great shortage of teachers.
- 48 We discuss these separately also because this kind of school operated in the majority of purely Romanian settlements (65 percent).
- 49 Those teachers were also regarded as hired who had taught in the reannexed territory previously, although in a different settlement.
- 50 In a number of cases it can be observed that the Romanian teachers moved from a purely Hungarian or mixed settlement to purely a Romanian settlement.
- 51 Proceeding upwards, the proportion of teachers from Hungary also increases among the hired Hungarian teaching staff: while in the

- case of schools with one teacher we do not find any such teachers, and in schools with three teachers their proportion now reaches 20 percent.
- 52 I base this on when the teacher began teaching. I assume that whoever was first employed in the Romanian period most probably obtained the diploma during this time, and moreover could almost certainly speak Romanian at an appropriate level.
- 53 By this I mean that the teacher in question spoke the language of the majority of the village (Romanian in the case of a Romanian village, the language of the minority in the case of a mixed village).
- 54 I have classified the villages based on ethnic distribution into three categories: Hungarian, Romanian or mixed villages. I have regarded the villages as purely Hungarian or Romanian villages if either ethnic group was in an absolute majority in the settlement, and mixed if in addition to the majority population the proportion of one nationality reaches 20 percent.
- 55 Direcția Județeană Cluj a Arhivelor Naționale (Kolozs County Archives), Fond 151 Administrația militară maghiară din Nordul Transilvaniei [Hungarian Military Administration for Northern Transylvania, henceforth DJC- Administrația], *Maroskövesdi iskola igazgatójának levele a szászrégeni tanügyi osztálynak* [Letter of the Principal of the School in Maroskövesd to the Education Department in Szászrégen], Nov. 6, 1940, cutia 16, dok. 1394, p. 3.
- 56 DJSM- Prefectura, *Helyzetjelentés a kápolnokmonostori járásról* [Situation Report for the Kápolnokmonostor District], Oct. 28, 1940, dos. 6, p. 6–9. A similar case is recounted by the commander of the Avas District, according to which it was the express request of the inhabitants that the teachers to be appointed know only Hungarian. DJSM- Prefectura, *Helyzetjelentés az avasi járásról* [Situation Report for the Avas District], Oct. 29, 1940, dos. 6, p. 219–224.
- 57 DJSM- Prefectura, *Helyzetjelentés Felsőbánya városából* [Situation Report from the Town of Felsőbánya], dos. 6, pp. 58–61.
- 58 For the interwar history of the Swabians of Szatmár, see Bernadette Baumgartner, *Kisebbség a kisebbségben. A Szatmár megyei németek a két világháború között 1918–1940* [A Minority within the Minority. The Germans of Szatmár County between the Two World Wars 1918–1940], PhD dissertation, manuscript.
- 59 Szlucska, *Pünkösdi királyság*, p. 169.

- 60 DJSM- Prefectura, *1. hadsereg közigazgatási csoportja a vármegyei parancsnokoknak* [Administrative Group of the 1st Army to the County Commanders], Nov. 21, 1940, dos. 14, p. 54.
- 61 Szlucska, *Pünkösdi királyság*, p. 173.
- 62 For more on the relations between the military commanders and the rapporteurs, see Tamás Sárándi, “Kisebbségpolitika a közigazgatási gyakorlatban a katonai közigazgatás idején Észak-Erdélyben” [Minority Policy in the Administrative Practice during the Military Administration in Northern Transylvania], *Limes* 2010 (2): 75–96.
- 63 Szlucska, *Pünkösdi királyság*, p. 206. The decree was withdrawn by government commissioner Endre Hlatky.
- 64 According to Szlucska, in 1935 35 percent of Hungarian children remained unschooled.
- 65 DJSM- Prefectura, *Helyzetjelentés az avasi járásról* [Situation Report for the Avas District], Oct. 29, 1940, dos. 6, p. 219–224. The commander set as the goal of raising this rate by the end of November to 70–80 percent.
- 66 DJM- Prefectura, *Maros-Torda vármegyei parancsnok az elemi iskolai igazgatókhoz*, Nov. 5, 1940, dos. 2703, p. 1.
- 67 Szlucska, *Pünkösdi királyság*, pp. 17 and 49.
- 68 According to the minister’s account, the 57 individuals of Romanian nationality living in the village fled after the Vienna Award.
- 69 A significant number of the changes in religion that took place between the two world wars occurred in order to retain or obtain a job.
- 70 DJM- Prefectura, *Sáromberki református egyház levele a Marosfelső járási katonai parancsnokhoz* [Letter of the Reformed Church of Sáromberke to the Military Commander of Marosfelső District], Sept. 20, 1940, dos. 1, p. 24.
- 71 The county commander’s decision is surprising, since despite the issued decrees in several cases the reports speak of how the denominational education had resumed. This is also confirmed by the Bulletin on the military administration.
- 72 DJM- Prefectura, *Maros-Torda vármegyei parancsnok a Marosfelső járási katonai parancsnoknak* [Commander of Maros-Torda County to the Military Commander of Marosfelső District], Sept. 27, 1940, dos. 1.
- 73 I have not succeeded in locating the text of the Decree No. 1404/1940 cited by the priest.

- 74 The minister stressed the point that they wished to maintain the Church school in such a way that it would not mean excess cost to the congregation and would not have to raise the contribution because of this.
- 75 This is the same teacher whom in the previous letter he had praised for his conduct and recommended his promotion. From a perusal of the memorandum it emerges that behind the urging of the promotion was the idea of “getting rid” of the teacher in question.
- 76 DJM- Prefectura, *Sáromberki református egyház jegyzőkönyve* [Memorandum of the Reformed Church in Sáromberke], Nov. 3, 1940, dos. 18.
- 77 *Tájékoztató*, p. 98.
- 78 According to Péter Szabó’s figures, in the case of Máramaros County 40 percent of rural teachers fled; Sebestyén and Szabó, “Magyar katonai közigazgatás Észak Erdélyben és a Székelyföldön,” p. 1412.
- 79 It was Romanian teachers and priests who were considered to be the upholders of the Romanian national idea in the interwar period. The attitude towards them is clearly indicated by the opinion of the Kápolnokmonostor District commander, according to whom the teachers remaining behind had become superfluous, since they did not know Hungarian anyway; DJSM- Prefectura, *Helyzetjelentés a kápolnokmonostori járásról* [Situation Report for the Kápolnokmonostor District], Oct. 28, 1940, dos. 6, pp. 6–9.
- 80 All this despite the fact that the Bulletin did not consider the appointment of teachers from Hungary to Romanian elementary schools to be proper either; *Tájékoztató*, p. 98.
- 81 See the case of the minister of Sáromberke, who knew of the existence of a decree that made the reopening of the confessional school possible.
- 82 Despite the decree of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education, the setting up of a non-Hungarian-language class or section was tied to parental request.

János Pál

THE JEWISH QUESTION IN THE NATION- AND CHURCH-BUILDING STRATEGY OF THE UNITARIAN CHURCH BETWEEN 1940 AND 1944

Introduction

The policy of the Unitarian Church between 1940 and 1944, and specifically its conduct displayed towards the Jews, must be interpreted within the context of the institution's history.

Emerging in Transylvania as a radical branch of the Reformation, Unitarianism in the seventh decade of the sixteenth century attained a numerical dominance within the Hungarian ethnic community, and beyond the province's western borders, it burst forward with great dynamism in the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary, too. This was that brief period when the church's leaders still thought about the future of Unitarianism in European-wide perspectives. With the death of King John Sigismund, however, the political background support ceased,¹ and the discriminatory religious policy that commenced with a series of Catholic and Reformed princes led to a gradual loss of ground. The discrimination increased in the first century of Habsburg rule and represented the nadir in the institution's history until that time.

With the exception of the "detour" of 1848–1849, it was the Compromise of 1867 that put an end to the discriminatory conduct towards the church and formed the starting point for a vigorous process of development which occurred under the sign of expansion: the modernization processes under way in the country created favorable conditions for the liberal religion, which until the outbreak of the First World War almost doubled the number of its adherents. The rapid advance is indicated by the fact that by the late nineteenth century Unitarianism, which until then had lacked antecedents of any kind in the capital, gained a foothold in Budapest

as well and built a church in the direct vicinity of the parliament building. The positive occurrences and optimistic mood of the age were symbolized by the prophecy nascent in this period that proclaimed Unitarianism as the *religion of the future*.²

With the annexation of Transylvania to Romania this favorable tendency was interrupted, behind which lay the new state's assimilationist policy and the realities of its ethnic conditions. For expansion at the expense of another Hungarian denomination was deemed unfeasible from both a practical and a moral point of view.

In 1940, with the Second Vienna Award these conditions ceased, and Kolozsvár saw the time had arrived for the church, overcoming the "injustices of history," to attain its rightful position in the life of the nation. All this they sought to achieve by the thematization of questions made topical by the Vienna Award (*Hungary's place in East Central Europe, social question, problems of the middle class*), reinterpreting the Unitarian past and faith principles, and incorporating right-wing ideas.

The Background to the Church's Anti-Semitism: Causes

Church-Building in Terms of Expansion

The chief ideologists of the church thus perceived the Second Vienna Award of Augustus 30, 1940 as the starting point for an era which would result in expansion of an extent that had been experienced in the sixteenth century and the elimination of the frustrating minority status.³ They were convinced that it had been the unfavorable religious policy of the various governments that had been primarily responsible for the highly disadvantageous situation of Unitarianism vis-à-vis other denominations and that with the new state sovereignty these hindering factors had ceased. Moreover they absolutely believed that in the resultant new world order, the Hungarian nation in its struggle – on the mental plane also – for survival and supremacy in the Carpathian Basin would have an indispensable need for Unitarianism, which alone was capable

of activating the creative force of the nation. According to their thinking, therefore, the conditions for expansion were present from both the political and national-existential point of view.

The attempt to eliminate the distressing minority state and the fulfillment of the prophecy of the “religion of the future” moreover appear quite markedly in the church literature of the era and indicates that it occupied a central place in the church policy of the period under discussion. Theology teacher Dániel Simén’s call for a revision of the traditional policy of tolerance is unequivocal proof of movement in this direction. In 1941 at the ministers conference held in Budapest he warned his colleagues that although the Unitarian Church had made every sacrifice for religious tolerance serving interdenominational peace, this had resulted only in loss of ground and immeasurable damage, consequently in the age of the “*actio catolica*” and “*ecclesia militans*” they must break with the unconditional policy of tolerance advocated previously, because it threatened their existence, but recommended exploiting the possibilities provided by the theater of war in the East, where the ancestral homeland beckoned with missionary opportunities.⁴

The guiding principle of expansion would later be articulated in a concrete form. In 1943, the ethicoreligious education program elaborated by János Erdő and László Lőrinczi and adopted at the Supreme Consistory – under the self-explanatory chapter heading “Conquering and Fighting Unitarianism” (*Hódító és harcoló unitarizmus*) – contains the following:

Over the course of history Unitarianism has earned the title of the religion of tolerance. Since then it has maintained this position as tradition. Yet we see that among the Christian denominations, fired by the bellicose spirit of the modern age, by maintaining this position we endanger our survival. Precisely for this reason our ethicoreligious education must be imbued by, in addition to tolerance, the desire for conquest and the readiness to fight.⁵

The spread and presence of the expansionist idea in everyday church thinking are also indicated by the words of the chief

curate József Gelei's policy speech, which cautioned against megalomaniacal ambitions and urged moderation.⁶ On the other hand, in his address before the Supreme Consistory for the year 1943, which articulated ecclesiastical policy guidelines, he, too, now said: "[...] our Unitarian dream of greatness: *a strong Unitarian Church in the great Hungarian homeland.*"⁷ In this same address, a few thoughts later, he defined the ultimate goal of his ten-point program as/in the establishment of a Unitarian Church "with a large membership."⁸ Naturally his optimism in this direction – like that of his contemporaries – was rooted in the belief which the ethico-religious education program formulated as follows: "Unitarianism is the religion of the Hungarian future."⁹

*Unitarianism as
Supreme Achievement of the Hungarian Religious Genius*

The church built its expansionist policy on the thesis of Unitarianism's Hungarian character, while/and its basis was formed by the geographical place and circumstances of its establishment as well as the novel, intentional interpretation of the Reformation.

The starting point for the idea was provided by the idea of Ferenc Dávid's Hungarian origin. This erroneous notion had evolved in the late nineteenth century and was connected with the nationalizing aspirations of the age, at the same time in the age of intensifying national discourse and denominational rivalry his person – in addition to the spreading of liberal religious views – already served as an outstanding propaganda device in the hands of the Unitarians, based on the following logical formula: Hungarian reformer (Ferenc Dávid), Hungarian religion (Unitarianism). The analogies of later events therefore had already taken shape at the turn of the century.

In 1940 Ferenc Dávid's Hungarian origin once again came to the forefront of the expansionist church policy, but by re-evaluating the Reformation and its role it placed Unitarianism, which until then had earned the Hungarian label through the person of the bishop, in a different temporal plane and thus in a different theological light.

The ideological author of the thesis, Simén, in 1941 gave the following description of Unitarianism: “our ancient Hungarian religion in the fertilization and consummation of Jesus is none other than Hungarian Christianity or evangelical Hungarian-ness; *the crystallization of pure Christianity and the eternal Hungarian spiritual values into a religious idea, Unitarianism.*”¹⁰ Simén’s definition logically sketches in a few lines that new train of thought, updated and adapted to the requirements of the age, which derived the Hungarian nature of Unitarianism not from the person of the bishop, but rather with the reinterpretation of his role and the Reformation projected it back to a much earlier time, changing the religious historical context by interpreting the Unitarian Reformation not as the return to the authentic Judeo-Christian foundations, but rather as the moment of the suppressed Hungarian religious soul’s awakening to self-consciousness. Dávid’s role as reformer likewise changed and expanded. Seeking the unity of God and the authentic doctrines of Jesus, the theologian, by virtue of his Hungarian origin, suddenly stepped forward as the expressor and proclaimer of the nation’s religious feeling, the propagator of Hungarian culture and language.¹¹ Thus, Unitarianism is the synthesis of the ancient Hungarian religion and the pure ideal of Jesus, the reincarnation of the former; the result of a centuries-, millennia-old “spiritual maturity,” which appeared at the time of the Reformation, when “[...] the ancient Hungarian faith, ridding itself of the outer trappings appended to it, indeed, forced upon it, and the many attendant inhibiting, oppressive feelings, bathing in the pure spirit of the Gospel, found itself and was healed.”¹²

The crystallization of this idea into an axiom in ecclesiastical discourse is well reflected in writings originating in the era under examination, which abound in descriptions of the type such as we encounter in the February 1944 issue of *Unitárius Közlöny*: “In Ferenc Dávid’s thoughts an ancient monotheistic religiosity dreaming dreams from Árpáadian times awakened to consciousness and liberated forces artificially tied down.”¹³

In parallel with the unfolding of the Hungarian character, expansion also required an answer to the issue of usefulness, and the church's theoreticians sought to meet this challenge by thematizing the current political and social questions of the era. However, in most cases the interpretations resulted in exaggerated conclusions and tendentious claims precisely due to the fact that in every case the Hungarian character of Unitarianism formed the starting point. It was this latter description that also decided moreover on designating the role of building and defending the nation, and we can find its most complete formulation in the essay of János Abrudbányai, dean of the Unitarian Theological Academy, entitled "Unitarianism and Racial Theory" (*"Az unitárizmus és fajelmélet"*), where the author discussed the range of the Unitarian religion's duties in the contexts of the Judeo-Communist conspiracy, supremacy in the Carpathian Basin, rivalry among nations, racialism and the social question.

The collapse of 1918 formed the starting point of Abrudbányai's writing, which – in his view – had prompted the nation to perform self-examination. In the course of this it had come to two realizations: it could count only on itself in rising up, and this was impossible lacking the proper self-knowledge. During the search for a way out "the Hungarian nation was faced with its own image," it confronted its fragmented and mosaic-like nature (biological, spiritual, mental) arising from history and it became aware of the need for a unifying spiritual factor, which could "build up the unitary Hungarian national community from the salvaged popular and national building materials."¹⁴ Because religion is a factor that creates such harmony and forms through the individual community, the Hungarian people must not ignore this viewpoint in the process of turning into a large nation. At the same time, it must also be taken into account that religion is closely connected with man's instinct, and therefore "what we need are a religion of such content and a spiritual guidance of such a stamp that are capable of meshing with the blood and life of the nation, the people and the Hungarians, and that, being its own, are thus capable of creating the necessary inner harmony, the strength making the people and the nation great."¹⁵

In the construction of the twenty-million-strong nation, he elucidated further, the thirteen-million-strong biological base was not sufficient, for this was needed an intellectual and ideological aid which the nation had not yet used in its life. It was the instinctive recognition of this truth that led to the Hungarian, like the German, also turning to the idea of the “racial religion.” The nation had awakened to the fact that “only and exclusively through its connection with the mighty, providential God could it obtain” its constructive strength.¹⁶ Unitarianism, with its positive outlook on life and the world, would be capable of this mediation, which directly, by excluding the intermediaries, creates the connection between God and man. The events of history proved that dogma Christianity oftentimes led to a dead-end by tying down the nation’s strength, at the same time the Hungarian people became aware that if it wants to remain in competition among the nations on the international stage, then it must place its life on new spiritual foundations, so that “for the eternal national struggle at the most opportune time, the greatest amount of strength may always pour into it from the source of all existence, God.”¹⁷ “In the rejuvenating outlook of the new Hungarian life” the view that Unitarianism is “the form of Christianity that is capable of performing the most effective work in rebuilding the Hungarian nation” increasingly becomes dogma.¹⁸

Unitarianism’s right to exist in the life of the nation was also justified by activity performed in the social sphere. Proof of this is that the Unitarian ministers had been the first to come forward to solve the economic and public welfare questions of the village, and had joined in the social work uplifting the people to an extent much greater than their numbers would suggest. This responsible conduct stemmed from the popular nature and oppressed, poor status of the Unitarian Church: it had not had kings and princes, it could thank the people for its survival and this is why it is capable of “fighting and working with such persevering struggle for the people,” and “living with it in such understanding community.”¹⁹

In Abrudbányai’s reading, therefore, Unitarianism must fill a nation-building, nation-protecting role. It must integrate into

its program the social, national (racial) and religious problems determining the nation's fate and it must provide solutions to them. According to him, one such marked sign that the church had started along this path was its distancing itself from the Jews, that is, the expulsion of those of Jewish origin from the church.²⁰

State Loyalty

Unconditional loyalty to the Hungarian state was one of the most characteristic features of church policy between 1940 and 1944, thus its behavior towards the Jews – beyond the ideological criteria – to a certain degree was certainly influenced by the feeling of loyalty. The church's anti-Jewish measures at the same time also possessed a powerful symbolic charge and created an excellent opportunity for favorably influencing the relations between the church and state as well as for advocating practical criteria. We encounter the signs of this duality in Gelei's speech, delivered before the Supreme Consistory and addressed to István Fáy, an undersecretary in the Ministry of Cults and Public Education, in which he attempted to win the goodwill and support of the state by asserting the church's loyalty.²¹

However, it was nevertheless not primarily practical factors that shaped and influenced the church's loyalty to the state. From dozens of speeches and writings it can be documented that it was ethnic and emotional factors and the negative experiences of twenty-two years' minority existence that formed the impetus of this behavior.²² Gelei's above-mentioned speech at the Supreme Consistory incidentally supports the same conclusion: the church's anti-Jewish measures were the consequence of commitment to the nation and the homeland, allusion to it was merely a notice to the government that it was assuming a pioneering role in the work of nation-building, and so Kolozsvár justifiably desired the state's support.

The Charge of Sabbatarianism

In the era of the principality the identification of Unitarianism with Sabbatarianism several times created an opportunity to launch an attack against the Antitrinitarian church under this pretense. The first event of this character took place in 1618, when Gábor Bethlen's campaign launched to liquidate Sabbatarianism brought in its wake the loss of a significant share of the Unitarian congregations in Háromszék (Trei Scaune).²³ György I Rákóczi's measure of 1638, likewise aimed at destroying the Sabbatarians, ended with an identical result, after the commission dispatched to seek them out listed the nonadorantist Unitarians also in same category as the former.²⁴

Throughout the nineteenth century the charge of Sabbatarianism was used with pejorative, exclusionary intent, almost suggesting that the Unitarian religion, by virtue of its strict monotheism, did not belong to the group of traditionally interpreted Christian religions believing in the Holy Trinity. Between 1940 and 1944, amidst the denominational strife flaring up once again, the negatively charged assertion of the connection between Unitarianism and Sabbatarianism and the identity of the two was once more placed on the agenda.²⁵

Beyond the negative historical experiences²⁶ and the defensive reflexes against the stigmatization, the large number of conversions²⁷ likewise guided the church towards the path of anti-Semitism. The church's intention to set itself apart incidentally can also be detected in those studies written as apologies, which attempted to refute any sort of connection between Ferenc Dávid and the Judaizers of the sixteenth century.²⁸

The Trauma of Trianon

Between 1940 and 1944 the unearthing of the causes forming the background to the country's dissolution, and their didactic presentation in order to avoid another catastrophe formed a constant

theme of ecclesiastical discourse. The interpretation of the Trianon peace treaty in Jewish context, however, created an additional point of conflict in relations between the church and the Jews.

In 1942 Dean Gábor Csiki explained the demise of the thousand-year statehood by stating that

in the most critical days [the nation] had allowed power to slip into the hands of a society alien in character, to whom neither the Lord God nor the concept of homeland was sacred. While the nation's best fought legendary battles out on the battlefields and spilled their blood into a river for the one God and the one homeland, here at home a society of alien blood and alien spirit had pitted Hungarian against Hungarian, inciting social antagonism and class hatred amongst them. And if there was someone who recognized the danger and saw that the true enemy was within the gates, he was done away with.²⁹

The above interpretation of the events at Trianon, the thesis of the Jews as having been responsible for the country's disintegration, according to our data, became a generally accepted and dominant view within the church and one often encounters narratives that discussed the history of Hungary's dismemberment in connection with the Jewish conspiracy of an international scale.³⁰

Changes in Personnel and Influence from Hungary

We may periodize the church policy between the two world wars according to two significant breaking points that noticeably determined later events. In both cases these fault lines occurred with respect to the episcopal elections and resulted in the restructuring that defined the church's top leadership. György Boros, who ascended to the bishop's chair after the death of József Ferenc, represented an exception to this. Not only through the identical social and political socialization but also the ecclesiastical administration he represented continuity by the fact that starting in 1923, as chief notary, in the capacity of suffragan bishop it had been practically he who governed the church. Starting from the mid-1930s, however, voices urging

reforms and a generational shift increasingly gained strength. The representatives of these emerged largely from that young age cohort whose world view had been decisively influenced by the political events and ideologies of the era as well as the negative experiences of minority existence. Also moved by personal interests, the reformist group – exploiting the discontent caused by the world economic crisis and the oppressive state policy – succeeded in 1938 in making György Boros resign, whose overthrow resulted, besides a change in the church's top leadership, in a generational shift as well and brought into the church's elite several ideologically still pliable figures who would play key roles in later events: János Abrudbányai and Dániel Simén became professors of theology, and Elek Kiss chief notary. Béla Varga was elected bishop. The second significant fault may be dated to November 1940, when Varga, because of his appointment as university professor as well as the internal power struggles occurring within the confines of the church, resigned from his post as bishop, and his resignation also brought about the vacating of the chief curator's chair as well.

The vacated two highest offices were filled at the Synod of Marosvásárhely on June 29, 1941, where Miklós Józán was elected bishop and József Gelei general curator. The latter's influential position ensured by his office and extremely agile role in the public life of the church exerted a decisive influence on its ideological orientation. The university professor, forced to settle in Hungary because of the Trianon catastrophe, experienced the disintegration of the Hungarian state as a personal trauma, and from his pronouncements we know that he accepted the quite popular view of the age which made the Jews responsible for the disintegration of the country.³¹ His return within the church thus resulted in the importation and popularization of extremist ideas. However, towards anti-Semitism, unmistakably drifting over from Hungary proper and appearing as an element of nation-construction, the Transylvanian side also evinced a quite great receptivity, because of the reasons outlined above. An enthusiastic supporter and popularizer of these views was János Abrudbányai, who in this influential capacity

likewise became one of the important shapers of general church opinion. According to data, the two men's lively activity in church society and literature proved decisive in the church's conduct towards the Jews: in his memoir József Ürmösi, secretary to the bishop, held Gelei and Abrudbányai responsible for the formation of the church's anti-Semitism.³² The few lines of Ürmösi's entry incidentally superbly reflect the script outlined above:

"Many of us," he wrote, "were caused pain and shame by this resolution, one of the chief culprits and organizers of which was Dr. József Gelei, university professor and the church's chief curator, who with his excessive nationalist chauvinism was virtually the scorcher of liberal-minded Unitarian thinking. In this Dr. János Abrudbányai [Fikker], dean of theology, with his campaign against the Jews, especially his newspaper article entitled 'Miért siratjátok?', later became his worthy companion."³³

In other words, the idea had begun with Gelei's arrival on the scene and within a short time acquired great popularity in the important circles of the church leadership. A glaring example of the latter is that in the Supreme Consistory meeting on November 16, 1941 173 of the 220 members of the supreme legislative body, consisting of ecclesiastic and lay members, voted to adopt the discriminatory proposal of the Congregation of Pestszentlőrinc concerning the believers of Jewish origin.³⁴

The Delimitation of the Church's Anti-Semitism in Space and Time

Regarding the temporal and spatial positioning of the anti-Semitism appearing in the church, our earlier statement, according to which this struck root under influence from Hungary, became institutionalized and definitive in the life of the church, appears grounded. To justify our claim we examined the output of ecclesiastical literature during the two decades prior to the year 1940. Based on the information found here it appears justified to state that in the Hungarian Unitarian Church of Romania a Jewish question and

anti-Jewish feeling did not exist in institutional form, on the level of ecclesiastical government before 1940, though from 1930 onwards a gradual rightward shift and alienation from the Jews characterized Transylvanian Hungarian society.³⁵ One explanation for this may be that the notable persons filling influential church offices viewed this question from the perspective of the liberal Christian value system (freedom of religion and conscience, denominational tolerance), and it was based on similar principles that they judged the totalitarian ideologies and regimes of the era. We believe that these personalities simultaneously played roles and represented forces that restrained, braked, and set course. We can encounter their criticism on several occasions on the pages of church publications and in our sources.³⁶

We must speak of this question somewhat differently in the case of the Unitarian Church of Hungary. Until the mid-1930s we find no trace of extremist, anti-Jewish manifestations here either. It is reflective of the normal relations between the church and the Jews that in December 1930 at one of the gatherings of the Ferenc Dávid Association in Budapest Lipót Kecskeméti, chief rabbi of Nagyvárad, gave a lecture, while on October 8, 1933 on the occasion of his 40th anniversary as a minister Miklós Józán was also greeted by Arnold Kiss and Simon Hevesi, chief rabbis of Buda and Pest respectively.³⁷ Beginning in the 1930s, on the other hand, the signs of a turn towards individualistic extreme right-wing ideas crop up quietly, in highly refined registers.³⁸

Nor can we speak of anti-Semitism on an institutional level in the case of the Unitarian Church of Hungary either prior to 1940. This may be explained on the one hand by the person of Józán, and on the other by the fact that in 1938 editorship of the church's lone official press organ (*Unitárius Értesítő*) was taken over by Sándor Szent-Iványi, who resolutely rejected all types of extremism and anti-Semitism.

The Development of the Church's Jewish Policy

The anti-Semitic discourse of the Unitarian Church, in accordance with the traditional and modern Hungarian anti-Semitic concepts, treated the Jews as a political, social, racial and moral problem, while the conclusions derived from this formed the impetus for its measures.

The church's Jewish policy of the period being discussed had two clearly distinguishable features: extreme radicalism and its rapid appearance following the Second Vienna Award. In 1940 the Representative Consistory still held the position that it regarded the children of Jews who converted years ago as Unitarians, and their admission to the college in Kolozsvár for the 1940–1941 school year could not be a subject for debate.³⁹ However, its decisions taken on June 11, 1941 – in connection with the exemption petition of two Jewish families who converted to the Unitarian faith in 1939 – now can be evaluated as a step on the path to radical anti-Semitism. First of all, monopolizing conversions (which belonged to the jurisdiction of the congregations), it informed its ministers that they might authorize the admittance of individuals of Jewish ancestry to their congregations only with supreme ecclesiastical approval. Secondly, it decided to turn to the Ministry of Cults and Public Education in a petition, in which it warned the latter of the “absurd situation” that Jews were converting to Christian religions in ever increasing numbers. At the same time it urged “[...] the taking of the necessary measures to be identified as soon as possible [...]” which the church had already implemented.

The events of the second half of the year resulted in the intensification of anti-Semitism. In October the Unitarian congregation of Pestszentlőrinc, on Minister István Pethő's motion, began compiling the list of Budapest church members qualifying as Jews under the terms of the state laws and revoking their electoral rights. The proposal submitted to the Representative Consistory came before the church's Supreme Consistory on November 16, where “*by an overwhelming great majority*” concerning the

adherents of Jewish ancestry it was declared that “in view of the expressly Hungarian character of the Unitarian Church of Hungary, only he who is not to be regarded as a Jew under the state laws in effect can be a member of the church with full rights.”⁴⁰

The Representative Consistory made the resolution known to its congregations in its circular of November 24.⁴¹ In this it instructed its ministers to prepare a list of the members of their congregations converted from the Jewish religion and to call on them in writing to verify by a fixed deadline: they do not qualify as Jews under the laws in effect.⁴² Those who can prove within the deadline set by the congregation that they are not to be regarded as Jews, were to be included or retained on the electoral list, but whoever fail to do this or are categorized as Jews based on Law IV of 1939, may not be added to the electoral list, and if they did appear on the list, their names must be expunged,⁴³ the circular also stated.

For the purposes of filtering out converted Jews more efficiently on May 11, 1942, the presbytery of Pestszentlőrinc came forward with the proposal that the parish office of every congregation prepare, based on the conversion registers, a list of its faithful of Jewish ancestry, and forward it to the Representative Consistory for copying. The latter would then deliver the full list of names to every parish office, thus making it possible to check who among their faithful changing their residence (congregation) were obliged to verify themselves.⁴⁴ On September 17, 1942, the Representative Consistory adopted the motion of Pethő and his associates and on October 12 ordered the compilation of the list of converted Jews and forwarding it to Kolozsvár.⁴⁵ That is, by early 1942 the mobility of Jewish persons in the church was under complete control.

The year 1944 was characterized by a strange duality. On the one hand, Kolozsvár demanded relaxed treatment, first and foremost for Christian Jews; on the other hand, however, it banned its officials from issuing exemption documents for those subject to the deportations, thereby denying any kind of community and solidarity with its faithful of Jewish origin.

On May 1 Józán, in tandem with the Transylvania Roman Catholic episcopal vicar and the Calvinist bishop of Transylvania, asked the representatives of Kolozs County and Kolozsvár to pass on “[...] the request of the abovementioned churches, stemming from Christian feeling, that Hungarian citizens of Jewish ancestry in general, and Jews who became Christians in particular, be shown treatment which accords with the requirements of the Hungarian mentality, Hungarian history and the Christian spirit.”⁴⁶ On this same day, jointly with the rabbis of Kolozsvár, a petition was addressed to the prime minister as well. On August 7 Kolozsvár in a separate petition turned to the government in the matter of Unitarians of Jewish origin, after Józán could not take part in the discussions of the heads of the Christian churches in Budapest because he was otherwise occupied.⁴⁷ In this – similar to their previous petition – it requested relaxed treatment for the deported Hungarian citizens of Jewish descent, first and foremost for baptized Unitarian Jews.⁴⁸

However, these steps were counteracted and neutralized by the Representative Consistory resolution of May 11, which on the matter of conduct towards the Unitarian Jews⁴⁹ declared that “[...] the Church officially does not deal with this issue at any official level, and if someone does something, he does so as a private person on his own responsibility.”⁵⁰ The resolution, as Abrudbányai also pointed out in his writings *Egyedül voltunk* [We Were All Alone] and *Miért siratjuk őket* [Why Do We Lament Them], originated as a response to the deportations, and essentially also closed off the last possibility of escape to its faithful of Jewish ancestry by prohibiting its ministers from issuing the documents necessary for exemption.

Biological and Intellectual Purity

The Question of Conversions

The examination of requests to convert is capable of illuminating most convincingly the church’s consistent insistence on the race-protecting role of Unitarianism. In June 1944, guided precisely by

this principle it monopolized the matter of Jewish conversions and apart from a few exceptional cases completely refused to consider receiving individuals of Jewish origin into the church. The rigid behavior displayed by the central leadership in the matter on a number of occasions garnered criticism even within the church. These criticisms however were motivated more by practical factors and criteria than philo-semitic sentiments. A graphic example of this is the criticism of the dean of the Duna-Tiszamenti District, Gábor Csiki, condemning the conduct of the Representative Consistory:

It is sad that the church, mainly the Budapest congregation, at one time indiscriminately welcomed the Jewish applicants into the church, who come under serious objection not only from a Christian but also from a national standpoint. [...] The Representative Consistory, however, to my knowledge has not yet admitted anyone, or rather has not given permission for admission to anyone, not even to those whose spouses are Unitarian. I recommend to the kind attention of the Representative Consistory the practice of the other Christian churches, which do not *a limine* refuse admission – just as the resolution of our Supreme Consistory does not aim for it either –, but rather in extraordinary cases, if *there truly is someone worthy* (my emphasis – J.P.) of admittance, after prior catechization the person in question is accepted.⁵¹

Also belonging in this group is Lajos Bíró, minister of Hódmezővásárhely, who although opposed to “our church being overrun by members of the Israelite Church,”⁵² nevertheless turned to the Representative Consistory with the request that in such cases when the church’s interests require it, receive those who can serve first and foremost the financial interests of the church.

Pointing to the bizarre character of the church leadership’s consistent “de-Judaizing” efforts, and extreme lengths to which it would go, incidentally are those cases when the acceptance became doubtful even for a person ethnically Hungarian but Israelite by denomination, primarily when welcoming him or her into the church could also bring with it the conversion of a person of Jewish descent. Indicating this racial exclusivity is the proposal of Sándor

Szent-Iványi, seeking to eke out a favorable ruling but using an anti-Semitic argument, which states: in view of the fact that the petitioner has no children and is already 60 years old, thus she cannot even have a child, thus it is out of the question that receiving her into the church would also result in an individual of Jewish origin being brought over, as on a previous occasion, when the Hungarian mother also brought her “half-Jewish” child with her.

Kolozsvár enforced this principle vis-à-vis the Sabbatarians as well. In its resolution of November 7, 1940 – although the racial stipulation was present – the Representative Consistory as yet did not place any sort of restriction on their admission;⁵³ later on, however, it would demand they produce the *Certificate* issued by the Ministry of Justice.⁵⁴ At the same time, this provision, and Józán’s reply to Lajos Bíró on the matter of Sabbatarian conversions (“The Sabbatarians of Bözödújfalú, and thus their descendants, fall under a separate judgment. Whoever is able to prove this in proper fashion may be baptized and received [into the church]. On the other hand, the Representative Consistory rigidly refuses to receive the Jews wandering in the desert of Sinai.”⁵⁵), likewise confirm that the judgment in the case of the Sabbatarians also occurred on the basis of the strict racial criterion. A striking example of this strict and suspicious behavior is that on August 10, 1944, the Representative Consistory postponed the request of two Sabbatarians to be admitted until the minister’s opinion had been forwarded on, although both possessed a discharge certificate received from the commander of the reception camp. One of them (of “100%” Hungarian ancestry) had been released precisely so that “[...] he might return to his original church as soon as possible.”⁵⁶

The Question of Jewish Intellectual and Moral Influence

The Jewish question cropped up not only as a biological but also as an intellectual, cultural and moral problem in church discourse, and took its most interesting form in a debate of a theological nature. In 1941 an anonymous article under the title “Problems”

(*Problémák*) appeared in *Unitárius Egyház*. Alluding to decadent Jewish morality, the author came forward with the proposal that the Old Testament be omitted from religious education and replaced instead with a “Hungarian Testament” that would present the heroic deeds of the Hungarians.⁵⁷

Reflecting on the question raised with varying degrees of intensity, the comments approached their subject more from an emotional point of view and document convincingly/conclusively that their value judgment was influenced to a significant degree by contemporary anti-Semitic discourse. Despite this the majority argued in favor of retaining the Old Testament, and Dániel Simén strove to resolve the contradiction by stating that “the Judaism of the Old Testament is different than that of the Torah, their pure national aspiration, which passed through the cleansing fire of much suffering, cannot be compared with the ideal of the chosenness of those ‘sitting in the theater box,’ the profundity and drama of their divine experience is quite simply unknown to the Jews living in cold religious formalism.”⁵⁸ According to him the problem must be approached independent of the Jewish question and thoughtfully, on the one hand, because it forms an organic unity with the New Testament, and on the other it contains elements of religious psychology and ideology as well as a divine image, which – standing close to the Szekler mindset – do not weaken but rather strengthen it in their religious and national feeling.⁵⁹ József Ürmösi also shared Simén’s view and recognized the justification for the teaching of the Old Testament. He argued similarly, declaring that the Jews’ “every trick and cunning, which they displayed in recent centuries with their racial organization, is all elaborated in the Talmud and this in fact is their guide and holy book.”⁶⁰ Thus, the roots of moral deviance originated not from the teachings of the Old Testament. Despite the positive stance, however, both Simén and Ürmösi – by making moral-based value judgments on the Jews – essentially accepted the thesis of moral decadence.

In June 1944 Lajos Máthé, Jr., the minister of Szentábrahám who had anonymously ignited the debate, returned once more to

the question and employing quite extreme rhetoric denied that there existed any qualitative difference whatsoever between the Jews of antiquity and the modern age in a moral sense, because moral depravity was a “racial essence.”⁶¹ As he wrote, just as the world must be cleansed “physically and mentally” of the Jews, similarly Christianity too must be rid of the latter’s spirituality, mentality and morals, therefore in addition to religious education let the Old Testament be excluded from preaching the Gospel, too.⁶²

Among the commentators, it was Jakab Kővári who proved the most authoritative. With his arguments based on theology and religious and cultural history he straightforwardly defended the Old Testament, declaring that “the Bible and together with this the Old Testament, far from having weakened it, strengthened national feeling in our Christian world on every plane.”⁶³

However, the question of Jewish morality and mentality crops up not only in an ethicoreligious context. Máthé saw the culture-destroying activity of the Jews in the mediocre performances of the touring companies as well.⁶⁴ The spread within the church of anti-Semitism focusing on morality and culture is indicated by the fact that the question formed the subject of discourse among theological students as well: for example, Attila Sós in his lecture attributed the decline of populist literature to the assimilated Jews and Swabians who had attained leading roles.⁶⁵

The Afterlife of the “Unitarian Jewish Law.” The “Silencing” of the Past

The passing of the Representative Consistory’s proposal No. 1454/1941 by the Supreme Consistory on November 16, 1941 meant its enactment into law and incorporation into the *Organizational Statutes*, the church’s charter. As a result of the political turnabout that ensued with the cessation of Hungarian state sovereignty, the Consistory on November 24, 1944, at the recommendation of the Legal Affairs Committee, rescinded the discriminatory resolution. That is, just as in 1940, the events that transpired in the fall of 1944

also led to a rapid metamorphosis of church policy. This forced shift, however, affected not only the official discourse but also the church's personnel, several members of whom had to revise their previously formed opinion about the Jews as well. This "mental revision," brought about by external compelling force, is indicated by the revocation of the anti-Jewish regulation as well.

In accordance with the provisions of the law decree of March 30, 1945, on May 8 the Representative Consistory ordered the setting-up of district and central purification commissions for punishing persons who professed extremist, anti-democratic views between 1940 and 1944. On May 29 the Representative Consistory recommended submitting the names of three persons to the Ministry of Religious Affairs: János Abrudbányai, who had been a member of the leadership of former prime minister Béla Imrédy's Hungarian Party of Renewal (*Magyar Megújulás Párt*) in Kolozsvár and had voiced his anti-Semitism on several occasions verbally in public and in writing in *Keleti Újság*; Imre R. Filep, central missions minister, who had likewise been a leading member of the Kolozsvár section of the Imrédy party, and who in this capacity "[...] on several instances had made propaganda trips in the countryside and displayed anti-democratic behavior [...];"⁶⁶ and Lajos Máthé, Jr., minister of Szentábrahám, for his anti-Semitic writing entitled "*Még egyszer az Ótestamentum*" [Once again the Old Testament] appearing in *Unitárius Egyház*. In the cases of Abrudbányai and Filep it recommended removal from their posts, and in Máthé's case two month's suspension.⁶⁷

The judgment of the cases of Mihály Lőrinczy, religious instructor and minister of Marosvásárhely (at a district assembly he had held an anti-Semitic lecture), Károly Kiss, minister of Bihar (he had conducted extreme right-wing activity), and Mór Rázmány central official (he had made anti-Semitic statements on several occasions and maintained them after the close of the war as well) was entrusted to Józán.⁶⁸

Elek Kiss's case at the Purification Commission's recommendation was not submitted to the ministry. The Representative

Consistory referred its settlement to its own jurisdiction. Since the purification commission also called on him to answer questions relating to the Jews (to these he replied in the negative), it seems clear that he, too, wound up in the center of the inquiries because of his anti-Jewish conduct. Kiss was requested to resign the office of chief notary as well, which, however, he refused, and since no one initiated disciplinary proceedings against him the Representative Consistory closed further discussion of his case.⁶⁹

In the end the Representative Consistory submitted to the ministry the names of three proposed people only: János Abrudbányai,⁷⁰ Imre R. Filep and Lajos Máthé, Jr. Anti-democratic activity and membership in the Imrédy party was the charge for Abrudbányai and Filep, while for Máthé it was the previously mentioned anti-Semitic newspaper article.⁷¹ In their cases first the ministry on September 9 decided to send out a three-person commission, which after an on-the-scene investigation would make a decision. The investigation did not take place, however, and the ministry's ordinance dated November 6 informed the church that "[...] those church figures who were relieved of their service, based on the purification laws aimed at purging the state apparatus, be restored to their legal rights, effective the date when the purification took place, an exception to this those ministers who left the country's territory and until to this moment have still not returned to their posts."⁷²

The church succeeded in settling the issue relatively soon and smoothly. It is thought-provoking that not even one single person from the ranks of the Representative Consistory fell within the scope of the purification commission's investigation. All this indicates that through the named persons the Representative Consistory, into which the church leadership was concentrated, attempted to deflect the danger primarily from itself. The small number of persons named by the purification commission and the minimization of the acts they committed similarly suggest the desire for a smooth settlement without making major waves, in which it succeeded.

Thus, an internal debate, a comprehensive and profound purification, on account of the central leaders' involvement and their intent to deflect the negative judgment, did not take place. The subsequent careers of those involved also points to the glossing over and setting aside of the past. József Gelei remained within the confines of the church and in April 1945 was elected a member of the Ecclesiastical Representative Consistory of the Unitarian Church of Hungary. János Abrudbányai became minister of the Unitarian Congregation of Kocsord. Imre R. Filep after his departure from Romania served from 1946 to 1953 in the Unitarian Congregation of Hódmezővásárhely, then following this in the Unitarian Congregation of Budapest (Nagy Ignác utca). In 1966 he became episcopal vicar, then in 1968 suffragan bishop of the Unitarian Church of Hungary. Elek Kiss, after Miklós Józán's death, was elected in September 1946 by the Synod of Székelykeresztúr as bishop of the Unitarian Church of Romania, an office which he filled until his death in 1971. Mór Rázmány as chief accountant retained his central official position in the administrative apparatus of the Unitarian Church of Romania. Mihály Lőrinczy retained his position as teacher of religion in Marosvásárhely and later, having passed the theology tutor's exam in 1946, was appointed professor in the Old Testament Department of the Unitarian Theological Academy in 1947. As far as can be known, the ministers who had openly professed anti-Semitic views also "remained untouched" and were exempted from any sort of ecclesiastical criminal proceedings.

The church's conduct towards the Jews, however, did not pass unnoticed in general consciousness. According to report for 1944 by Károly Ürmösi, minister of Kolozsvár, the decline in the number of conversions from the Israelite faith could be ascribed to the Jewish policy of the recent past. This he illustrated with an example as well. An Israelite from Bucharest during his stay in Kolozsvár indicated with 100% certainty his intention to join; later, however, he no longer came forward, presumably because of unfavorable information obtained subsequently, wrote Ürmösi.⁷³

The truth of Ürmösi's claim was verified by the tragic events of the following year as well. Miklós Józán also received an invitation to the celebration of the one-year anniversary of the Romanian *volte-face*, to be held on August 23, 1945 in Kolozsvár. The bishop appeared at the celebration, which started at nine o'clock and took his place on the grandstand. According to József Ürmösi, the "Jewish democratic groups" positioned on both sides of the dais began to demonstrate against him, chanting the following: "Go home, what is the head of a church demonstrating against Jews doing here."⁷⁴ Heading home after the celebration, the bishop was assaulted, first verbally, then physically, in the courtyard of the episcopal residence. The events, according to our sources, spiritually debilitated the bishop so much that they contributed, albeit indirectly, to his death.⁷⁵

Summary

In the evolution of the church's anti-Jewish conduct two factors played a central role: the *Second Vienna Award* and the *Hungarian character*. The first was a precondition of the second by creating those opportunities which activated the question of the religion's character and made possible its extremist interpretation through the erroneous view of the history of the church and Hungary. It may be ascribed to this that Kolozsvár, breaking with its tolerant policy looking back on traditions many centuries old, set out on the path of expansion and demanded for itself the right to guide and defend the nation intellectually and spiritually. Moreover, the radical view of the Hungarian character of Unitarianism led inevitably to an approach to contemporary questions from an extremist point of view, thus it is not coincidental that the church policy and rhetoric of the period under examination gravitated towards extreme right-wing views and in 1944 had reached the point that in its official stance it interpreted purification from the Jews as the first step in solving the "great questions of Hungarian fate," the laying of the foundation stone upon which a new national life would be built.⁷⁶

Naturally, there were those with philo-semitic sentiments as well; however, these were relegated to the background and according to our information lacked any opinion-forming weight. Among them should be mentioned Miklós Józán and Sándor Szent-Iványi, about whom we have reliable data regarding this. Into this category can be listed furthermore those ministers who in their submissions took a supportive attitude towards the requests of the Jewish petitioners for admittance: József Sigmond, Károly Ürmösi and Béla Köntés.

Notes

- 1 Ildikó Horn, *Hit és hatalom* [Faith and Power] (Budapest, 2009), pp. 79–159.
- 2 Sándor Kovács, *Unitárius egyháztörténet* [Unitarian Church History] (Kolozsvár, 2009), pp. 53–60.
- 3 *Keresztény Magvető* (henceforth *KerMagv*) 3 (1943): 100.
- 4 Dániel Simén, “Unitárius lelkész az új világ küszöbén [Unitarian Minister on the Threshold of the New World], in *Magyarság és vallás* [Hungarian People and Religion] (Budapest, 1942), pp. 53–55.
- 5 A Magyarországi Unitárius Egyház lelkész-szenteléssel egybekötött egyházi Főtanácsának 1942. évről elmaradt, Kolozsváron 1943. évi március hó 28-29. napjain tartott évi rendes üléseiről felvett jegyzőkönyve [Minutes of the annual regular sessions of the Ecclesiastic Supreme Consistory of the Unitarian Church of Hungary, postponed from the year 1942, held in Kolozsvár on the 28th and 29th of March, 1943 in conjunction with the ordination of ministers] (Kolozsvár, 1943), p. 115.
- 6 A Magyarországi Unitárius Egyház püspök-beiktatással egybekötött egyházi Főtanácsának Kolozsváron 1941. évi november hó 16–17. napjain tartott évi rendes üléseiről felvett jegyzőkönyve [Minutes of the annual regular sessions of the Ecclesiastic Supreme Consistory of the Unitarian Church of Hungary, held in Kolozsvár on the 16th and 17th of November, 1941 in conjunction with the installation of the bishop] (Kolozsvár, 1941), pp. 7–8. “I also know better than anyone how tiny our church is among the other Christian denominations. My sense of reality has never been confused by crazed ideas, hallucinations, or delusions of grandeur conceived in a vacuum and I guide others, too, onto the paths of common sense.”

- 7 A Magyarországi Unitárius Egyház lelkész-szenteléssel egybekötött egyházi Főtanácsának 1942. évről elmaradt, Kolozsváron 1943. évi március hó 28-29. napjain tartott évi rendes üléseiről felvett jegyzőkönyve, p. 7.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 124.
- 10 Simén, “Unitárius lelkész az új világ küszöbén,” p. 55.
- 11 *Idem*, “Bevezetés” [Introduction], in *Öntudatos unitarizmus* [Self-Conscious Unitarianism] (Kolozsvár, 1941), p. IV.
- 12 *KerMagv* 1 (1941): 1.
- 13 *Unitárius Közlöny* (henceforth *UK*) 2 (1944): 2.
- 14 János Abrudbányai, “Az unitarizmus és fajelmélet” [Unitarianism and Racial Theory], in *Magyarság és vallás*, pp. 91–102.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 103.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 105.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 108.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 109.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 119.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 120.
- 21 A Magyarországi Unitárius Egyház lelkész-szenteléssel egybekötött egyházi Főtanácsának 1942. évről elmaradt, Kolozsváron 1943. évi március hó 28-29. napjain tartott évi rendes üléseiről felvett jegyzőkönyve, p. 9: “We are not undeserving of this highest degree of state support [state aid]. We are not because we were the first among the churches who organized national education in our schools on our own – immediately at the moment of return to the maternal bosom, and thus it is no wonder if it was the youth of our gymnasium in Kolozsvár who first gave our nation, often given to lethargy, the exhilarating and encouraging strength by voluntarily reporting to the battlefield. It is no wonder if we were the first who enforced the laws passed by the state against the spread of the Jews in our ecclesiastical way of life.”
- 22 *Unitárius Egyház (UE)*, August 1, 1942, pp. 5–7.
- 23 *KerMagv*, 1912/3: 130; Kelemen Gál, *A Kolozsvári Unitárius Kollégium története* [History of the Unitarian College of Kolozsvár] (n. p., 1935), pp. 61–62; János Tözsér Kénosi and István Fosztó Uzoni, *Az Erdélyi Unitárius Egyház Története* [History of the Unitarian Church of Transylvania], vol. I. Introductory study written by Mihály Balázs, edited by Gizella Hoffman, Sándor Kovács and Lehel B. Molnár (Kolozsvár, 2005), pp. 17-72.

- 24 *KerMagv*, 3 (1912): 133–138; Gál, *A Kolozsvári Unitárius Kollégium története*, pp. 59–70; Kénosi Tözsér and Uzoni Fosztó, *Az Erdélyi Unitárius Egyház Története*, vol. I, pp. 17–72.
- 25 *UE*, November 1, 1942, p. 3; *Unitárius Értesítő (UE)* 8 (1943): 83.
- 26 *UK* 7 (1944): 2. “Perhaps because in our difficult historical battle it was only us they wanted to crucify with the charge of ‘Judaizing,’ perhaps for this reason were we the only ones in the emerging Hungarian life who at the dawn of the Jewish question’s fresh formulation made our position unmistakably clear to every Christian denomination and in contradistinction to them.”
- 27 “From an ecclesiastical standpoint this has significance also since because of the Jewish conversions in many places our church has been put in an unfavorable light, thereby it can prove also that with the Sabbatarians it welcomes not Jews but rather in reality those belonging to the Hungarian race returned to the Hungarian race,” wrote legal adviser János Szathmáry in his proposal to the Representative Consistory on the matter of the Sabbatarians; Erdélyi Unitárius Egyház Gyűjtőlevéltára (Central Archive of the Unitarian Church of Transylvania; hereafter: EUEGyLt.) Szt. I. 151.
- 28 *KerMagv* 3 (1943): 102–108; *KerMagv* 3 (1943): 124–130; *KerMagv* LXXV/4–5: 164–172; *KerMagv* 6 (1940): 246.
- 29 *Unitárius Szószék* 2 (1942): 42–43.
- 30 Abrudbányai, “Az unitárizmus és fajelmélet,” pp. 79, 82–84; *UE*, November 1, 1942, pp. 5–6; *UE*, May 1, 1944, pp. 1–2.
- 31 See his works *Nemzetnevelés* [Nation-raising] and *Merre haladjunk* [Where Shall We Head?].
- 32 EUEGyLt., Kiss Elek hagyaték [Elek Kiss Papers]. *Ürmösi József nyugalmazott lelkész és püspöki titkár élettörténete és önéletrajza (1950)* [The Life Story and Autobiography of József Ürmösi, Retired Unitarian Minister and Episcopal Secretary (1950)], p. 137.
- 33 *Ibid.*
- 34 EUEGyLt. Gé. 6/736/947.
- 35 Ferenc Sz. Horváth, *Elutasítás és alkalmazkodás között. A romániai kisebbségi elit politikai stratégiája (1931-1940)* [Between Rejection and Adaptation. The Political Strategy of the Minority Elite in Romania (1931-1940)] (Csíkszereda, 2007), pp. 116-135, 126-134 and 259-266.
- 36 *Boros György unitárius püspök naplója 1926–1941* [The Diary of Unitarian Bishop György Boros, 1926-1941] Edited, with

- an introductory study, by Sándor Kovács and Lehel B. Molnár (Kolozsvár, 2001), pp. 119, 180 and 185; “Christianity after the world war is menaced by a deadly peril. The mighty Germany declared war first on the Jews and removed from its homeland’s soil an extremely great number of valuable Jews. Next these Christian churches will follow. Luther’s homeland no longer has any need of either Luther’s religion or any other Christian religion, perhaps also because its founder, Jesus, was a Jew;” *KerMagv*, 6 (1937): 263 (Excerpt from György Boros’s lecture held in Dicsőszentmárton on November 14, 1937); *KerMagv*, 3 (1935): 133–140; *KerMagv* 4-5 (1937): 161.
- 37 *ÚÉ* 10 (1933): 90.
- 38 *Ibid.* 2 (1934): 19–20; *ibid.*, 8 (1938): 84.
- 39 Egyházi Képviselő Tanács jegyzőkönyve (Minutes of the Ecclesiastic Representative Consistory; henceforth: EKT jkv), Oct. 15, 1940, point 284, p. 342; not only converted but also Jewish students of the Israelite confession were discussed.
- 40 A Magyarországi Unitárius Egyház püspök-beiktatással egybekötött egyházi Főtanácsának Kolozsváron 1941. évi november hó 16–17. napjain tartott évi rendes üléseiről felvett jegyzőkönyve, pp. 55-56; the resolution was inserted into the church’s Organizational Law as well: József Ferenc and János Erdő, eds., *A Magyarországi Unitárius Egyház Szervezeti Törvénye* [Organizational Law of the Unitarian Church of Hungary] (Budapest, 1942), pp. 20-21; the proposal of the Congregation of Pestszentlőrinc, after the Legal Affairs Committee had rendered an opinion, was adopted by the Representative Consistory on Nov. 11, 1941; EKT jkv., Nov. 11, 1941, point 553, p. 57.
- 41 EUEGyLt. Szervezeti törvény és módosításai, értelmezése (Organizational Law and Its Amendments and Interpretations; henceforth Szt. I.), 1909/1941; EKT jkv., Nov. 24, 1941, point 570, p. 59.
- 42 *Ibid.* Szt. I. 151/1909/941.
- 43 *Ibid.* Sz. I. 1909/941.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 995/1925 (Conversions) 87/117/942. “There is no possible way of satisfying the applicable regulation other than if every congregation receives the list of all Jewish converts and from it identifies those who now belong to its bosom.”
- 45 *Ibid.*, 995/1925 87/ad 1192/942.
- 46 *Ibid.*, Vallásügyi minisztérium. Általános és elvi jelentőségű ügyek (Ministry of Religious Affairs. Matters of General and Theoretical Significance; henceforth Vü. Á.) 63/909/944.

- 47 “This is why we had to choose to petition in writing, so that we, too, may request the goodwill of the government first and foremost for our Unitarian brethren of Jewish origin, that they might be granted every preferential treatment that our racial kinfolk belonging to other received denominations are granted.” EUEGyLt. Vü. Á. 63/909/944.
- 48 *Ibid.*
- 49 EKT jkv., May 11, 1944, point 213, p. 219.
- 50 EKT jkv., May 11, 1944, point 213, p. 219; EUEGyLt. 995/1925 115/623/944.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 995/1925 133/869/944.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 995/1925 102/851/943.
- 53 EKT jkv., Nov. 7, 1940, point 303, p. 346; EUEGyLt. Vü. L. 53/1827/940.
- 54 “On the recommendation of the ecclesiastical legal advisor, the Representative Consistory suspends implementation of Representative Consistory Decree No. 1909/941 in the Unitarian congregation of Bözödújfalú. The minister *afia* [brethren] is to be called upon to, under Decree No. 71000/1941, with the help of the district legal advisor *afia* to take the necessary steps to obtain the certificates.” EKT jkv., April 16, 1942, point 168, p. 89.
- 55 EUEGyLt. 995/925 142/1410/942 (366/1942). The entry under the bishop’s note clarifies and declares that the the petitioner must produce the Certificate demanded by the Ministry of Justice’s Decree No. 71000/1940 to be admitted.
- 56 *Ibid.* 995/925 130/750/944.
- 57 *Unitárius Egyház (UE)*, September 1, 1941, pp. 2–3.
- 58 *UE*, December 1, 1941, p. 27.
- 59 *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- 60 *Ibid.*, August 1, 1944, p. 4.
- 61 *Ibid.*, June 1, 1944, p. 1.
- 62 *Ibid.*, pp. 1–2.
- 63 *Ibid.*, November 1, 1941, pp. 20–21.
- 64 *Ibid.*, April 1, 1944, pp. 2–4.
- 65 Az Unitárius Theológiai Akadémia Önképzőkörének Jegyzőkönyve [Minutes of the Unitarian Theological Academy’s Self-Teaching Circle], November 30, 1942. The pages of the minutes are unnumbered.
- 66 EUEGyLt. Purifikáció (Purification; henceforth Purif.) 1/ad302/945. In one version of the text to be forwarded to the ministry we can read

that the named person had accompanied Andor Jaross on his tour of the Székelyföld as well.

- 67 *Ibid.*
- 68 *Ibid.* Purif. 1/ad302/945.
- 69 EKT jkv., June 28, 1945, point 190, p. 262.
- 70 On April 15, 1946 Abrudbányai was convicted as a war criminal by the People's Tribunal in Kolozsvár and his property was confiscated; *Monitorul Oficial*, August 20, 1946, nr. 192, p. 9077; he fled to Hungary to avoid the sentence.
- 71 EUEGyLt. Purif. 1/302/945.
- 72 *Ibid.*, Purif. 8/1125/945.
- 73 *Ibid.*, Esperesi vizsgálószték I. (Dean's Court of Inquiry), 1944.
- 74 *Ibid.*, Kiss Elek hagyaték. *Ürmösi József ny. unitárius lelkész és püspöki titkár élettörténete és önéletrajza. I-ső rész* [The Life Story and Autobiography of József Ürmösi, Retired Unitarian Minister and Episcopal Secretary, Part One], p. 138.
- 75 *Ibid.*, Kiss Elek hagyaték. *Életrajzom*, p. 155. "This beating, even if indirectly, caused his death;"; *ibid.*, Kiss Elek hagyaték. *Ürmösi József ny. unitárius lelkész és püspöki titkár élettörténete és önéletrajza. I-ső rész*, p. 139. "From this time onwards his hitherto cheerful, genial state of mind deteriorated so much and he became so dispirited that it was barely possible to recognize him."
- 76 *Keleti Újság*, 1944/109, p. 1 (referring to Abrudbányai's article).

András Tóth-Bartos

THE REINTEGRATION OF NORTHERN TRANSYLVANIA FOLLOWING THE SECOND VIENNA AWARD, 1940–1944

Following the Second Vienna Award, the primary task of the Hungarian administration entering the Transylvanian territories¹ was the integration of the newly acquired areas. The reintegration occurred on multiple levels and in multiple directions, although it is not possible to sharply separate one from the other. In any case, the process affected to some extent the administrative, the political, the social and the economic life of Transylvania alike. Beyond the public and specialized administration, political representation, the network of civil organizations, the system of social subsidies and certain aspects of economic life were also transformed. The latter received a prominent place, and the Hungarian government elaborated an extensive system of subsidies and investment for starting up and giving an impetus to the Transylvanian economy.

In my study I wish to provide a brief glimpse into certain questions of the reintegration process; however, because of the complexity of the topic and the narrow limits I will cover only economic questions in more detail.

The Dimensions of the Reintegration

At the time of Northern Transylvania's occupation, the most important task was to maintain the continuity of governance and lay the groundwork for setting up the administration. Thus, together with the entering Hungarian troops, the military administration went into effect; the primary task of this was to start the lower-level administration, to deal with public supply and public education, and to manage the arising social issues. The latter also included handling the situation of refugees arriving from Southern Transylvania.²

Likewise it was the military administration's bodies that first carried out data collection and transmitted local ideas to the government in the interests of achieving the various economic measures.³

The military administration was established primarily on a temporary basis, and by November 1940 it had duly ceased its activity, giving way to the civilian administration. In the construction of the local administration one of the biggest problems was providing suitable experts, and thus the "parachuting in" of officials from the mother country had already begun during the military administration, and continued during the civilian one as well. Despite the fact that the greatest number of bureaucratic posts, mainly on the lower levels, were filled by locals, the issue of the encroachment of officials from Hungary proper in Transylvania remained a lasting source of conflict during the four years.⁴

The political representation of the returned territories was overseen by the deputies invited into the Hungarian Parliament. The list of Transylvanian deputies to be invited was submitted on October 8, 1940, most likely based on the recommendations of Prime Minister Pál Teleki. Mainly invited into Parliament were those politicians and public figures who between the two world wars had been active in the National Hungarian Party (*Országos Magyar Párt*), and later the Hungarian People's Bloc (*Magyar Népközösség*), and although places were reserved for the Transylvanian Romanian deputies as well, their invitation was made dependent, by invoking the principle of reciprocity,⁵ on the political representation of the Southern Transylvanian Hungarians. The representation later further evolved: the Transylvanian Hungarian deputies formed first a parliamentary group, then a separate party, under the name Transylvanian Party (*Erdélyi Párt*, henceforth EP). The party represented governmental interests too: Pál Teleki, for the sake of creating parliamentary stability, wanted to be assured of a politically unitary Transylvania, for the sake of which he attempted to restrict the expansion of parties from the mother country in Transylvania as well. In exchange the EP entered into a coalition with the governing party, and this would also be renewed even after Pál Teleki's death.⁶

The party strove to organize all of Transylvanian Hungarian society: as a means to achieve this it made use of the network of social and economic institutions set up before 1940, the leadership of which in most cases was intertwined with the political elite.⁷ It was the intellectual elite gathering around the EP who formulated that unique identity which they called “Transylvanian spirit.” This contained a self-image that, unlike the rival Transylvanian groups, followed the logic of power of the majority nation, while vis-à-vis the Hungarians of the mother country, who exercised the actual state authority, a regionally defined discourse was employed, in which character traits were attached to the Transylvanians, such as the classless society in which the new, positive Hungarian would appear.⁸ Thus on several points the differing interpretation of reintegration caused friction between the central leadership and the regional elite.⁹

Likewise a source of conflict was the network of Transylvanian institutions opposing the centralism of the administration in Hungary.¹⁰ One of the longest debates was generated by the integration of the Transylvanian cooperatives set up under the Romanian regime into the national network. The Transylvanian cooperatives, headed by the “Alliance” Center of Economic and Credit Cooperatives (“*Szövetség*” *Gazdasági- és Hitelszövetkezetek Központja*), headquartered in Kolozsvár, wanted to retain their independence first and foremost, vis-à-vis the Union of Hungarian Mutual Credit Associations (*Országos Központi Hitelszövetkezet*) in the mother country, as well as their (Transylvanian) central character. At the same time, they wished to bring the network of Romanian cooperatives under their supervision, but would also have considered it desirable to control the public assets as well, and requested a mandate to exercise the state’s right of preemption and the associated right of parceling.¹¹ The creation of a similar Transylvanian center out of the *Minerva Insurance Company* (*Minerva Biztosító Rt.*), headquartered in Kolozsvár, where insurance would have been taken out on county and communal assets, was also desired; however, the plan was not realized, partially as a result of

the resistance of similar such institutions in the mother country.¹²

In the area of social policy in Transylvania, too, the so-called “productive social policy” came to be applied. In this, charitable aid was exchanged for loans, lifting the beneficiaries out of passivity, linking all this with activity shaping child-raising, communal and religious mentality. In Transylvania first the Transylvanian Social Organization (*Erdélyi Szociális Szervezetet*, henceforth ESZSZ) was founded; its activity was directed towards managing the most important tasks, such as the financial support of the refugees, child protection and care of the sick. The ESZSZ was disbanded in 1941, its place taken over by the national agency established by Law 1940: XXIII, the National Public and Family Protection Fund (*Országos Nép- és Családvédelmi Alap*), as well as the body managing it, the National Social Inspectorate (*Országos Szociális Felügyelőség*). The purpose of the institution was the support of families with many children living in humble financial circumstances, linking this with the aforementioned socialization effort.¹³

Yet in the reintegration process the biggest emphasis fell on the economic issues.¹⁴ The economy of the region, which even prior to the First World War had already had serious disadvantages, had only been further weakened by the economic policy of Greater Romania and the world economic crisis. In addition to all this, the evacuation of the Romanian administration further paralyzed the functioning of the institutions in the territory to be handed over.¹⁵ In connection with the modernization of the economy from above,¹⁶ two arguments evolved after the Second Vienna Award. One was built on the discourse of grievances, which fed off of the minority experiences: that is, that as a consequence of 22 years of oppression the Transylvanian Hungarians had earned this support.¹⁷ The other appeared mainly in official propaganda, in which the state was personified as being understanding and ready to help, and thus an entity to which one must be grateful. Here also appears the motif of reparations, according to which it was the current leadership that must remedy all those errors that the governments before the First World War had committed.

Reintegration Apparatus

In addition to managing the most burning economic problems, the elaboration of the long-term fundamental principles and programs of development had already commenced under the military administration. The government relied both on the local experts and on the government bureaus and economic organs.

Prime Minister Pál Teleki looked upon questions connected to Transylvania as a personal cause, and in the first months he spent most of his time and energy on these.¹⁸ At his suggestion, from October to December several conferences were convoked in which he himself took part. The most important was the *Transylvanian Conference*, held on October 18–19, 1940, which provided an opportunity to debate the most important problems of the region, as well as to lay out the basic principles of subsequent measures. Included among the conference's agenda points were social and economic issues alike: debates about educational and nationality, the taxation and credit issues and the creation of jobs, as well as questions of a general nature concerning a revision of the Romanian land reform.¹⁹ The more concrete economic problems were dealt with in December 1940 at an agricultural and industrial conference held in Marosvásárhely. The main direction of the content of the second conference did not differ much from that of the previous one, and, just as in Kolozsvár, concrete resolutions were not taken here either; however, an opportunity arose to debate concrete, local-level problems and seek solutions to them.²⁰

It was not merely certain sub-departments of the ministries that dealt with the development of the reannexed territory or its various areas. A comprehensive program was drafted for the reintegration of Northern Transylvania within the Transylvanian Party as well, and this was also incorporated into the party's program. Béla Teleki put it thus: "We wish indeed to deal with the issues of the inseparably related Hungarian people, because it follows precisely from this belonging that Hungarian life forms an inseparable unit." However, "We wish to deal more emphatically with Transylvania's issues. This

automatically follows from the fact that, after 22 years of occupation, constructive work is needed there, and unification at the earliest possible time is so important [...], that it is we who spent the past 22 years there and thus can see the issues most clearly who must carry this out."²¹ In other words, the reintegration of the new territories was approached from a Transylvanian point of view: let the government help in closing the gap, but let it entrust the implementation to the locals, not upsetting the already existing framework(s). Economic strengthening through state investments also formed a part of the program: thus in the area of agriculture, for instance, the qualitative improvement and an increase in the efficiency of production were considered to be of primary importance, and the issue of revising the Romanian land reform and the settlement of the situation of public lands received particular emphasis.²² At the same time, the increased industrialization of Transylvania and the Székely or Szekler Land (*Székelyföld*), the exploration of subsoil resources, the expansion and development of the transport infrastructure and the electrification of the Transylvanian areas were requested.²³

The supreme institution of economic organization in Transylvania was the Transylvanian Economic Council (*Erdélyi Gazdasági Tanács*, henceforth EGT), formed on September 14, 1940, at Pál Teleki's recommendation. The EGT was primarily a forum where the economic leaders of Northern Transylvania could present and debate the region's major economic problems and together with the representatives of the central organs could seek solutions to these. Despite the fact that the Council did not have direct executive authority, it could still have a direct influence on Transylvanian economic life. On the one hand, this followed from the composition of the Council, among whose members could be found the heads of the various cooperatives and financial institutions as well as Béla Teleki; on the other, through the minister of agriculture, Dániel Bánffy, it was interwoven with the political leadership as well.²⁴ The influence of the EGT was increased moreover by the fact that in addition to its advisory role it functioned also as a primary filter. Its members judged the various Transylvanian organizations'

petitions for financial support and scrupulously made sure also that these requests came before the competent ministries only after the Council had rendered an opinion.²⁵

The organization of state investments and subsidies was overseen by the various departments and institutions of the specialized administration, in most cases with the help of the economic bureaus operating alongside the counties, but in the interests of more efficient organization local sections were also established. In 1941 the Transylvanian Section of the Ministry of Agriculture was established in Kolozsvár; this was intended to promote first and foremost more modern farming through technical training, the founding of model farms and various campaigns.²⁶ Subordinated to it was the Transylvanian Land Policy Department (*Erdélyi Földbirtokpolitikai Főosztály*), which dealt with the handling of land policy issues. The jurisdiction of the National Chamber of Agriculture (*Országos Mezőgazdasági Kamara*) was not extended to the Transylvanian areas, and so to organize the representation of agricultural interests in 1941 the Transylvanian Hungarian Economic Association (*Erdélyi Magyar Gazdasági Egyesület*, henceforth EMGE) received authority on a permanent basis.²⁷ Founded in the late nineteenth century, the association had been one of the most important organizations of the Transylvanian Hungarians even under the Romanian regime. Its membership following the Second Vienna Award grew continuously: between 1940 and 1943 it rose from 26,808 to 53,000 members, numbering 811 farmers' associations.²⁸ It was the EMGE that had to organize the disbursement and control of subsidies arriving from the state at the local level, and as a consequence of the chamber duties it had to continuously watch the situation of agriculture and monitor the mood of the agricultural class. Besides all this, it also assumed a prominent role in the area of agricultural technical training, by organizing courses and traveling lectures. The expenses needed to operate it were covered by the Ministry of Agriculture.²⁹

Problems and Responses

Financial and Tax Matters

Managing the financial problems of the newly acquired territories was one of the first tasks of the Hungarian authorities. Initially they concentrated on two important problems: solving the credit supply for private individuals and companies, in the interests of which in the first few months the Romanian currency had to be converted into pengős. Originally the conversion rate had been established at a rate of 1:40, but because this would have greatly burdened the Transylvanian financial institutions, at the intercession of the EGT the rate was modified to 1:30.³⁰ By October 12, 1940, 5.3 billion Romanian lei had been converted to pengős.³¹ The affordable credit was supposed on the one hand to provide capital to companies left without ready capital, and on the other to encourage entrepreneurial spirit. For individual entrepreneurs and those pursuing handicrafts, with the support of the EGT and the Budapest Chamber of Commerce and Industry credit was issued without bank collateral at 6.5 percent interest, up to a maximum of 500 pengős, to be paid back over six to ten months. In addition to encumbering the property, the small enterprises could also receive loans against work fulfilled or goods shipped.³² For medium-level and heavy industry the Transylvanian Industrial Labor Organizing Institute (*Erdélyi Ipari Munkaszervező Intézet*) provided loans. It gave loans exclusively for investments, which could equal the equity capital of the company taking out the loan. During the four years the institution made credit available to the amount of approximately 29 million pengős, the largest share of this going to mining companies.³³

Following the Vienna Award the other problematic point of the financial affairs of the Transylvanian areas was solving taxation. The gradual dismantling of the Romanian tax system and establishment of the Hungarian tax system did not proceed smoothly. In the first months the direct and sales taxes levied by the Romanian state remained in effect; at the same time, the extraordinary taxes, such

as those collected for equipping the Romanian army, were not abolished. Further problems were caused by the fact that while some taxes were collected according to the Romanian system, certain others were levied according to the Hungarian system. Thus, for instance, on the one hand the sales tax remained according to the Romanian system, which was higher than the Hungarian one, but on the other the fees levied on heating fuel were fixed according to the system in the mother country.³⁴ The heavy tax burdens hit not only the industrial but also the agricultural population: the agricultural taxes, in addition to being higher than those of the Romanians, did not, at the time when they were imposed, take into consideration the taxes already paid to the Romanian state, or the harvest decimated by the bad weather.³⁵ Tax concessions were granted mainly in the area of direct taxes (property and house taxes), but those engaged in handicrafts were likewise placed in preferential tax categories.³⁶

Agriculture and Land Policy

The region, in terms of its economic structure, displayed a primarily agrarian character. Forests covered 33.8 percent of its territory, and the agriculturally usable area (together with the pastures and meadows) amounted to 61.5 percent. The occupational structure of its inhabitants also conformed to this ratio: 69.6 percent of them were employed in some branch of agriculture, while the percentage of those working in industry and mining was 35.5 percent.³⁷ Grain cultivation accounted for the largest amount of arable production: mainly wheat and corn were produced, and to a lesser extent barley, rye and oats, but despite the fact that Hungary had been enlarged by a region overwhelmingly agrarian in nature, projected onto the country as a whole the proportion of arable land had declined and that of forests/woodlands had increased. A decline appeared in the area of average yields as well: the average yield of the Transylvanian counties for 1937 did not attain the results for the year 1913,³⁸ and they remained at half the average yield of the mother country in the year of the Vienna Award too, as the following table shows:

*Data for Major Arable Crops (1937 averages)*³⁹

Crop	Northern Transylvania	Ruthenia	Felvidék (Upper Hungary)	Trianon Hungary	Hungary (post-1940 territory)
	Sown area				
Wheat	25.74%	9.50%	24.43%	26.87%	26.04%
Rye	3.89%	9.66%	11.32%	10.94%	9.74%
Barley	4.47%	1.40%	13.88%	8.47%	8.10%
Oats	9.86%	12.77%	6.08%	4.22%	5.55%
Corn	24.29%	19.34%	8.57%	21.42%	20.71%
Potatoes	3.14%	19.67%	6.51%	5.27%	5.36%
	Average yield (q/cad. yoke)				
Wheat	5.90	5.80	8.10	7.60	7.30
Rye	6.00	5.90	7.70	5.90	6.00
Barley	5.60	5.80	9.00	6.90	7.00
Oats	4.40	6.10	7.60	6.80	6.00
Corn	7.50	7.20	9.30	13.30	11.80
Potatoes	44.00	49.40	52.90	49.90	49.50

The poor harvest results were ascribed to the poor quality and the less efficient production methods: the latter was attributed mainly to the cultivation of plants unsuited for the climatic conditions. Thus for example in the mountain district(s) cereals were produced too overwhelmingly, and this cultivation, as a result of the weather and soil conditions, could provide only low yields.⁴⁰ This was compounded by insistence on the traditional forms of farming as well; it was mainly in the Székely Land that the crop-rotation farming method, by that time long considered to be obsolete, was still widespread. To eliminate this and introduce contemporary farming, the government issued a separate decree.⁴¹ With regard to animal husbandry, it was mainly cattle- and sheep-breeding that were dominant. Even prior to the First World War, horse-breeding and pig-breeding were lower compared to the territories of Trianon Hungary, which further

declined after 1918, and thus by 1940 there were 286 cattle, 531 sheep, 126 pigs and 62 horses per 1,000 inhabitants.⁴² As far as the estate structure is concerned, in Transylvania the small and dwarf holdings (65 percent) were dominant, to a lesser extent (33 percent) the large estates,⁴³ a sizeable proportion of which was made up of the public and Church lands. As a consequence of the Romanian land reform of 1921 land holdings were further partitioned, thereby reducing yields; moreover, through the expropriation of public lands the incomes deriving from here also diminished. All this led to a decline in agricultural production and the rapid fall of the farming class into debt.⁴⁴

In the Hungarian government's revitalization policy agriculture received particular emphasis. The various seed drives, through which the farmers could buy grain seeds from the local propagation farms through the EMGE at a discounted price, facilitated the qualitative and quantitative improvement of cultivation. In 1943 the Ministry of Agriculture earmarked 642,105 pengős for 65,300 quintals of cultured oat and malting barley seeds.⁴⁵ Similarly, in order to promote fruit-growing, saplings were distributed, courses were held, and protection against vandals was officially mandated. Model silos for storing agricultural crops, manure storage facilities and stables were built at a discount or for free in villages of the Szekler Land. Similarly enjoying great popularity were the agricultural machinery sales, which reached the farming community likewise through the mediation of the EMGE.⁴⁶

Special attention was devoted to technical training. In this, along with the secondary and advanced agricultural schools,⁴⁷ the EMGE here too was allotted a significant role. Free courses, generally ten days long, were organized, on subjects that were adapted to the local conditions. During the study tours the management of the EMGE toured the county, organizing farm days and animal and crop exhibitions, as well as negotiating with the local leadership. During the course of 1941–1942 the EMGE held 54 courses in the counties of Northern Transylvania, with a total of 1,916 participants.⁴⁸

In the area of animal husbandry, too, qualitative improvement was the primary goal. County husbandry stations (*Vármegyei Állattenyésztő Állomások*), subordinated to the Ministry of Agriculture, were set up, and animal husbandry associations were founded. The improvement of livestock was supported through the acquisition and distribution of sires, the largest investment in this area being the bull ranch, on which six million pengős were spent. The raising of small animals was supported mainly through the distribution of poultry and Angora rabbits at a discounted price, but numerous breeders organized courses also. In addition to all this, serious care was devoted to animal health as well: under the direction of the EMGE every spring regular examinations and fumigations were performed.⁴⁹ Indispensable from the point of view of animal husbandry was the provision of suitable pastures, for the sake of which the so-called “green field campaigns” were extended to the Transylvanian territories as well, thus acquainting farmers with the essentials of protection against soil erosion and rational seed production.⁵⁰

The landed estate policy put into force by the Hungarian government was one of the fundamental problems, becoming a hotbed of conflict during the four years and inciting conflicts within the borders and in the foreign policy sphere as well. One part of the activity was confined to revising the Romanian land reform in Transylvania, which was at the head of the Transylvanian Hungarians’ list of requests. Yet the government, fearing a radical upheaval of the Romanian land holdings, as well as having learned from the errors committed during the revision of the Czechoslovak land reform,⁵¹ resorted to legal steps rather than direct state intervention: those injured by the land reform could attack the decisions taken by the Romanian authorities via litigation.⁵² The other sides of the land policy activity included increasing the Hungarian land holdings through open-market purchases, and external and internal colonizations. The largest resettlement achieved during the four years was the relocation of the Szeklers of Bukovina to the Southern Country (*Délvidék*);⁵³ however, this only partially affected

the Transylvanian territories. The Hungarian state spent more than nine million pengős on goals related to land policy.⁵⁴

It would be difficult to draw up a balance sheet as to the scale of the investments procured by the agricultural administration in the Northern Transylvanian territories after the Second Vienna Award. The subsidies flowed in countless forms and through countless channels, and thus it is difficult to judge the extent of the state subsidy during a given campaign, and moreover the documents relating to this are also incomplete. Based on the available sources, however, it can be demonstrated that the largest share of subsidies dedicated to the reannexed territories (56 percent) went to the Northern Transylvanian areas.

*Expenses of the Ministry of Agriculture
in the Reannexed Territories⁵⁵*

Item	Délvidék (Southern Country: Bácska- Baranya)	Northern Transylvania	Felvidék (Upper Hungary)	Ruthenia
Animal breeding	405,736	9,127,905	947,332	1,429,950
Viticulture	40,000	571,000	36,000	20,000
Horticulture, nurseries	75,000	372,000	155,300	0
Cooperatives	80,000	9,830,541	1,110,872	231,053
Economic investments	220,000	9,263,500	280,000	500,000
State forestry investments	1,402	494,087	16,193	867,104
Water conservation	5,454,189	11,280,232	12,135,698	2,053,130
Soil preparation	1,161,000	6,830,000	9,280,000	2,648,000
Planning and building	0	5,040,700	138,590	5,200,000
Technical training	2,608,000	7,902,000	1,190,000	318,000
Experimental investment	57,000	2,118,500	55,000	344,500
Plant hygiene	9,000	33,000	9,000	0
Plant cultivation	n. a.	5,268,106	n. a.	n. a.
Totals	10,111,327	68,131,571	25,353,985	13,611,737

Industry and Infrastructure

In the area of industry, too, significant regional differences are apparent, mainly to the detriment of the Transylvanian territories. Between the two world wars the number of Transylvanian factories shrank by 44 percent,⁵⁶ and while in Trianon Hungary there were on average 4.30 factories per 100 square kilometers, in Transylvania this figure was 1.14. There were industrial centers only in the western and northern parts of Northern Transylvania, and its sole heavy industrial region was Nagybánya.

Territorial Distribution of Hungary's Industry in 1940⁵⁷

Region	Industrial Plants		Per 1,000 inhabitants	Employees		Employees per 1,000 inhabitants
	No.	%		No.	%	
Trianon Hungary	192,315	73.6	21	718,633	81.6	77.2
Northern Transylvania	29,224	11.2	11	67,281	7.6	26.1
Felvidék (Upper Hungary)	15,532	5.9	15	36,258	4.1	34.3
Ruthenia	3,842	1.5	6	8,370	1.0	12.0
Délvidék (Southern Country: Bácska-Baranya)	20,528	7.9	20	50,213	5.7	48.9

The most important branch was the timber industry; however, although this had flourished in the 1920s, the centers that had evolved in the Marosmente and the Székely Land had still been ruined in part during the world economic crisis. The industry branch in 1938 had 421 sawmills employing 24,000 workers,⁵⁸ the greatest number of them in Csík County; however, in terms of capital strength and

production capacity these were smaller industrial enterprises. In addition to the timber industry, it was the food-processing industry, confined to the towns, that had the greatest importance. Its two most important branches, milling and distilling, likewise regressed: as a consequence of the world economic crisis most factories were ruined, the majority of corporations closed or reduced production to a minimum, and 70 percent of the distilleries ceased to operate.⁵⁹ The textile industry, which was largely in Hungarian hands, also achieved more notable results, and between the two world wars it showed an increase both numerically and qualitatively. Within textile manufacturing, cottage industry gained great momentum, especially in the Székely Land.⁶⁰ In terms of the manufacturing industry the Szekler counties stood the weakest: here it was exclusively the woodworking plants that represented heavy industry. Besides these only an iron-smelting works (in Udvarhely County), one sugar mill (near Marosvásárhely), a textile factory and a flax-processing factory operated on a heavy-industry scale.⁶¹ While in the other parts of Transylvania the production value per plant in 1941 was 7,290 pengős, this amounted to 2,150 pengős in the Székely Land.⁶² With the division of Transylvania in two the situation of the Székely Land further worsened: as a consequence of the new borders it was mostly timber work and sugarbeet production that were hit hard by the loss of the former markets. The markets of both were in Southern Transylvania, and although during the Romanian–Hungarian negotiations a part of the stocks were sold, a large amount of the inventory remained in the producers’ warehouses for lack of a westward connection.⁶³

The promotion of Northern Transylvania’s industry formed one of the central aims of the Hungarian government’s policy. Although the subsidies commenced directly following the Vienna Award, the government came forward with a comprehensive industrial program only after two years had elapsed. During his trip to the Székely Land in July 1942, Prime Minister Miklós Kállay announced a ten-year Transylvanian program, the essence of which was formed by construction projects to be realized through state investments,

mainly in the areas of industry, electrification and the transport infrastructure.⁶⁴ In order to put into effect the industrial development proposal before the government, the EGT carried out a widescale data collection, investigating the opportunities for industrial development and economic problems of numerous counties.

We have no knowledge of larger industrial establishments being set up; however, a number of smaller factories were established, including, for example, a starch factory and a stave factory in Csíkszentsimon (Csík County), and flax-processing factories in Gyergyószárhegy (Csík County) and in Réty/Reci (Háromszék County): the latter operated until the late 1980s. A distillery, likewise for Háromszék, was also planned, but it was not completed, on account of the wartime difficulties.⁶⁵ Support of small-scale industry occurred from several directions: first, supplying entrepreneurs with affordable capital; second, seeking to provide youth with the appropriate skills, and trying to support intellectuals wanting to embark upon a career in economics through state loans. In order to satisfy the credit demands of Transylvanian tradesmen the Ministry of Industry in 1941 provided a credit line of two million pengős, and to make distribution of the loans easier the National Alliance of Industrialists (*Iparosok Országos Szövetsége*) set up local offices in Kolozsvár and Marosvásárhely.⁶⁶ The support of tradesmen who lacked capital was carried out by the National Self-Sufficiency Fund (*Nemzeti Önállósítási Alap*), which had been established back before the Vienna Award with the aim of granting financial aid to unemployed intellectual youth for starting up enterprises. After the change in borders the line was expanded by 2.5 million pengős, and those who chose industrial or commercial careers were increasingly supported. The loans ranged between 2,000 and 12,000 pengős, at 2 percent interest, for a maximum term of ten years.⁶⁷

The electrification program launched in 1942 would have served to start up and stimulate the industrialization of the Székely Land. To this end, the Székelyföld Electrical Works Co. (*Székelyföldi Villamosművek Rt.*) was established, with a state-owned majority interest and equity capital in the amount of 16.5 million pengős.⁶⁸

According to the plans, certain parts of Csík, Háromszék, Udvarhely and Maros-Torda Counties would have been supplied with electricity from the power plant fired by natural gas to be built along the River Maros between Petele and Körtvélyfája. By the end of the war they had succeeded in purchasing the power plant's equipment, and then construction work began as well.⁶⁹ In addition to all this, the corporation purchased the network of one of the local electric cooperatives, and by expanding this by the spring of 1944 they had succeeded in supplying 1,800 households in 13 communes with electricity.⁷⁰ With the intensification of the wartime situation, however, the raw materials necessary to complete the work could be obtained only with difficulty or not at all, and thus they were forced to suspend construction. After the front had passed through, the corporation's assets were seized by the Romanian authorities and later nationalized.⁷¹

In the area of industry, too, particular attention was devoted to education, by organizing vocational schools and courses. During the four years the Ministry of Religion and Public Education spent 1,941,125 pengős on industrial secondary and vocational schools.⁷²

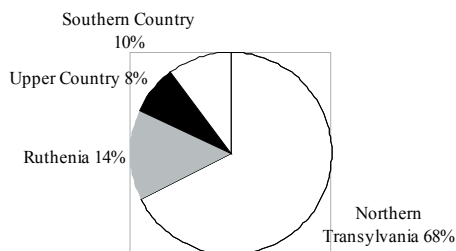
The Transylvanian region was no better off with regard to roads either: despite the fact that the Romanian government had spent large sums on road-building and repairs, after the Second Vienna Award Hungary was enlarged by a region that possessed a neglected infrastructure.⁷³ In addition, the newly drawn border cut the railway connection of the Székely Land with the country's territories. In the interests of ensuring public supply, the transport of goods was solved first by utilizing vehicular traffic, then by a narrow-gauge railway, which momentarily alleviated the difficulties making themselves felt in transport; however, it could not make up for the lack of a standard-gauge railway. The connection was ultimately established between Déda and Szeretfalva, and it was ceremoniously handed over in December 1942. Resources spent on the railway infrastructure during the four years were numerically the largest: the investments of the state railway company, MÁV, amounted to 47 percent of all Transylvanian investments.⁷⁴ The renovation

and maintenance of the 10,654-kilometer network of public roads returned to Hungary likewise swallowed up enormous funds. In addition to repairs, new sections of road were also built; it was at this time that, among other things, the Hargitafürdő motorway, important from the viewpoint of tourism and military strategy, was constructed.⁷⁵ From 1940 onwards the minister of transport spent 23,090,000 and 73,176,000 pengős on repairs to bridges and roads respectively, and an additional one million pengős on developing air traffic, as well as three million on tourism investments.⁷⁶

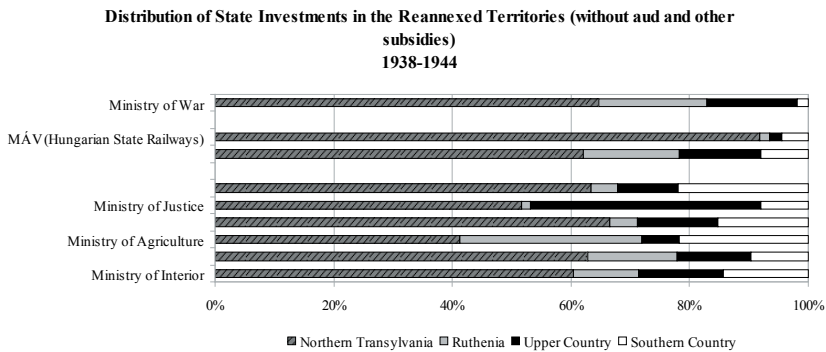
Epilogue

In the foregoing I tried to briefly present certain aspects of the wide-ranging process of reintegration, in which economic revitalization efforts were allotted a more or less prominent role. This is shown also by the fact that the largest share of investments was spent on this purpose. With regard to subsidization policy, one other factor also stands out. The investments procured by the specialized administration in the reannexed territories during the four years amounted to approximately 1.7 billion pengős, the largest portion of which was directed towards Transylvania.

Territorial Distribution of State Investments, 1938-1944



Source: MOL, PM, XIX-L-1-k, 28. d., 2. t.



Source: MOL, PM, XIX-L-1-k, 28. d., 2. t.

On the one hand this is justified by the size of the territory⁷⁷ and the economic situation, but on the other it is very likely that the ideological overestimation of the region's importance also contributed in large measure to the disproportionate distribution of resources. At the same time, it should not be ignored either that Transylvania possessed a political representation that may be called unitary, in which the economic and political elites in more than one case were intertwined, thus enabling it to act more efficiently when it came to distributing resources as well. As a third factor, the person of Pál Teleki may also be mentioned. Following the Second Vienna Award the prime minister treated Transylvanian problems as a personal affair. It was he who designated the main bearings, and attempts were made to respect these after his death as well.⁷⁸ Questions do arise, however, such as the distribution of subsidies within the region, for example. The Székely Land was undoubtedly in an exceptional position in the area of state subsidies, but we know little about the subsidization policy in the scattered (diaspora) Hungarian settlement areas or in the Eastern Hungarian (Partium) territories. In this regard the land policy activities or certain practices of the credit policy might provide some factual basis (see, for example, the measures to organize the "Transylvanian diaspora credit"⁷⁹). With

further research the contrast between the subsidization processes applied in the two regions would likely add further nuances to our understanding of the state subsidization policy, while also enriching it with new elements.

All this notwithstanding, we may state that the energy and resources invested in the economic reintegration and subsidies led the majority of recollections to judge the period in positive terms even despite the restrictions and wartime difficulties.

Notes

- 1 Henceforth the expression *Northern Transylvania* will be applied to those areas of the Partium, Northern Transylvania and the Székely Land affected by the German-Italian arbitration announced on August 30, 1940.
- 2 During the four years approximately 200,000 Hungarians crossed the border from Southern Transylvania, and about the same number of Romanians left the territory of Northern Transylvania.
- 3 Elemér Sebestyén and Péter Szabó, “Magyar katonai közigazgatás Észak-Erdélyben és a Székelyföldön 1940 őszén” [The Hungarian Military Administration in Northern Transylvania and the Szekler Land in the Autumn of 1940], *Századok* 6 (2008): 1383–1420.
- 4 For more on the “parachutist” question and the position of public officials, see Edit Csilléry, “Közalkalmazottak és köztisztviselők Észak-Erdélyben a második bécsi döntést követően” [Public Employees and Public Officials in Northern Transylvania following the Second Vienna Award], *Limes* 2 (2006): 73–92.
- 5 The border drawn by the Second Vienna Award served first and foremost the interests of Nazi Germany, and in addition neither the Hungarian nor the Romanian side accepted it as final. During the four years Romanian–Hungarian interstate relations were defined throughout by the other country’s treatment of its minorities. The basic principle of the reciprocity policy that had thus evolved was to answer reprisals with reprisals; Béni L. Balogh, *The Second Vienna Award and the Hungarian–Romanian Relations 1940–1944* (New York, 2011).
- 6 Gábor Egry, *Az erdélyiség “színeváltozása”. Kísérlet az Erdélyi Párt identitásának és identitáspolitikájának elemzésére 1940–1944* [The

“Transfiguration” of Transylvanianism. An Attempt to Analyze the Identity and Identity Policy of the Transylvanian Party 1940–1944] (Budapest, 2008), pp. 34–35.

- 7 Thus, for example, Béla Teleki, chairman of the EP, led Transylvania’s largest social and economic organization, the EMGE, but was also a member of the EGT, as well as the Transylvanian committee of the National Land Mortgage Institute (Országos Földhitelintézet).
- 8 Egry, *Az erdélyiség “színeváltozása”*, pp. 170–181.
- 9 Thus, for example, Transylvanian deputy Gábor Pál voiced his displeasure in December 1940 when, among other things, he criticized the process of unification and expressly asked for Transylvania’s autonomous administration, by setting up a Transylvanian-led organ; “Pál Gábor parlamenti felszólalása, 1940. december 2.” [Gábor Pál’s Comments in Parliament, December 2, 1940], in *Képviselőházi Napló (1939–1944)* [Parliamentary Diary (1939–1944)], vol. VIII. (Budapest, 1941), pp. 1096–1105.
- 10 For more on the conflicts between Transylvanian regional interests and the government, see Sándor Oláh, “Gyakorlati gondolkodásmód és megmerevedett etatizmus” [Practical Way of Thinking and Rigid Étatism], *Korall 18* (2004): 98–113.
- 11 Hungarian National Archives (Magyar Országos Levéltár; henceforth MOL), Z 193, 121. d. 266. t. Minutes of the Transylvanian Economic Council, September 14, 1940.
- 12 MOL, Z 193, 121. doboz 266. tétel. Minutes of the Transylvanian Economic Council, September 20, 1940, and November 4, 1940.
- 13 Péter Hámori, “A magyar kormány szociálpolitikája a visszacsatolt Felvidéken és Észak-Erdélyben” [The Social Policy of the Hungarian Government in the Reannexed Uppen Hungary and Northern Transylvania], in Nándor Bárdi and Attila Simon, eds., *Integrációs stratégiák a magyar kisebbség történetében* [Integration Strategies in the History of the Hungarian Minority] (Somorja, 2006), pp. 169–171.
- 14 For more on the modernization policy in the Székely Land, see Sándor Oláh, *Kivizsgálás* [Examination] (Csíkszereda, 2008).
- 15 Under the evacuation order the withdrawing administration was to have taken with it the confidential documents of the offices, the registrar’s and cash ledgers, the cashier’s office and a list of work completed in the district or county; Romanian National Archives, Office of Covasna County (Arhivele Naționale Române, Serviciul Județean Covasna) Fond 175, Dos. 1/1940.

- 16 The demand for modernization from above had appeared previously; one manifestation of this was the Székely Congress of 1902 and the subsequent Székely Action, which, however, did not fulfill its purpose, on account of the war. Discussing the problems of the Szeklers, József Venczel declared the following: “From century to century reports about the troubles of the Szeklers repeat the same thing, although every century was convinced that it had done something in the Szeklers’ interest. We know, for example, that most recently, in the period prior to the World War, a separate Szekler office functioned, hundreds of studies deal with the Szeklers’ affairs, and yet today we are in the position that despite all this it is we who must answer the question [...]”; József Venczel, “A székely kérdés lényege” [The Essence of the Szekler Question], in Gyula Zathureczky *et. al.*, eds., *Erdélyi kérdések – magyar kérdések* [Transylvanian Questions – Hungarian Questions] (Kolozsvár, 1943), p. 22.
- 17 “Pál Gábor parlamenti felszólalása, 1940. október 10-én” [Gábor Pál’s Comments in Parliament, October 10, 1940], in *Országgyűlési Napló (1939–1944)*, vol. VII, p. 69.
- 18 Balázs Ablonczy, *Teleki Pál* (Budapest, 2005), pp. 469–473.
- 19 MOL, K 28, 274. cs., 2. t., dossier “g”. Minutes of the Transylvanian Conference.
- 20 MOL, K 764, 8. cs. Minutes of the Marosvásárhely Conference.
- 21 “Teleki Béla országgyűlési beszéde (1941. június 17.)” [Béla Teleki’s Speech in Parliament (June 17, 1941)], in József Végh, ed., *Erdély a magyar képviselőházban* [Transylvania in the Chamber of Deputies], vol. I (Kolozsvár, 1942), pp. 5–9.
- 22 Speech of Deputy Arthur Balogh, November 25, 1941; Végh, ed., *Erdély a magyar képviselőházban*, vol. I, p. 40.
- 23 “Tusa Gábor, Bethlen László és Váró György felszólalásai a képviselőházban” [Comments of Gábor Tusa, László Bethlen and György Váró in the Chamber of Deputies], in Végh, ed., *Erdély a magyar képviselőházban*, vol. I, pp. 46–59.
- 24 *Keleti Újság*, September 25, 1940, p. 1.
- 25 MOL, K 269, 350. cs. 377. t., 250. Letter of the Transylvanian Economic Council to the Minister of Finance, July 21, 1941.
- 26 See Ministry of Agriculture (MA) Decree No. 3910/1941; cf. *Kárpátmedence* 8 (1943): 490–491.
- 27 Regarding this, see MA Decree 8.400/1940 and MA 171.100/1941.
- 28 *Az Erdélyi Magyar Gazdasági Egylet munkája 1941–1942-ben* [The

- Work of the Transylvanian Hungarian Economic Association in 1941–1942] (Kolozsvar, 1941), p. 27.
- 29 Oláh, *Kivizsgálás*, pp. 39–40.
- 30 MOL, Z 12, 26. cs., 130. t., Report No. 8 of the Transylvanian Group.
- 31 MOL, Z 12, 42. cs., 368. t., Report No. 39 of the Transylvanian Group.
- 32 Géza Jakab, “Az erdélyi magyar gazdasági élet átállítása” [The Readjustment of Transylvanian Hungarian Economic Life], *Erdélyi Szemle* 10 (1941): 8.
- 33 MOL, Z 896, 3. cs., 12. t., Register of Transylvanian Industrial Labor Organizing Institute Loans.
- 34 MOL, Z 193, 121. d. 266. t. Minutes of the Transylvanian Economic Council, November 4, 1940.
- 35 MOL, FM. K 201, 16. cs., 17. t., Report No. 1 of the Transylvanian Hungarian Economic Association, January 15, 1942.
- 36 Lajos Szász, “Adókérdések a visszacsatolt területeken” [Tax Issues in the Reannexed Territories], *Erdélyi Szemle* 2 (1942): 1–2.
- 37 Csaba Gidó and Márton László, “Észak-Erdély és Magyarország 1940. évi gazdasági fejlettségének összehasonlítása” [Comparison of the Economic Development of Northern Transylvania and Hungary in 1940], *Limes* 2 (2006): 34.
- 38 Gidó and László, “Észak-Erdély és Magyarország,” p. 35.
- 39 László Földváry, “Mezőgazdaság és állattenyésztés” [Agriculture and Animal Husbandry], *Magyar Statisztikai Szemle* 8–9 (1940): 702.
- 40 Árpád Farkas, *Erdélyi gazdaságok üzemi viszonyai és időszerű kérdései* [The Operating Conditions and Timely Questions of Transylvanian Farms] (Kolozsvar, 1941), pp. 3–5.
- 41 Sándor Oláh, “Földhasználat és nemzeti bűn” [Land Use and National Crime], *Limes* 2 (2006): 119–128.
- 42 Gidó and László, “Észak-Erdély és Magyarország,” p. 36.
- 43 *A Magyar Szent Korona országainak 1910. évi népszámlálása, IV. rész. A népesség ház- és földbirtokviszonyai* [Population Census of the Lands of the Hungarian Holy Crown for the Year 1910. Part Four: The Housing and Landed Property Conditions of the Population].
- 44 József Venczel, “Az erdélyi román földbirtokreform” [The Romanian Land Reform in Transylvania], in Lajos Tamás, ed., *Erdélyi Tudományos Intézet Évkönyve. 1940–1941* [Yearbook of the

- Transylvanian Scientific Institute. 1940–1941] (Kolozsvár, 1942), pp. 309–465.
- 45 MOL, FM, K201, 1. d., 2. t., pp. 116–118.
- 46 Sándor Oláh provides an exhaustive survey of the various campaigns; Oláh, *Kivizsgálás*, pp. 71–95.
- 47 The Unitarian and Roman Catholic winter agricultural schools, in Gyergyószentmiklós and Kézdivásárhely respectively, and the Agricultural Academy in Kolozsvár.
- 48 *Az Erdélyi Magyar Gazdasági Egylet munkája 1941–1942-ben*, pp. 63–64.
- 49 András Tóth-Bartos, “Háromszék vármegye gazdaságának fejlesztésére tett próbálkozások” [Attempts to Develop the Economy of Háromszék County], *Limes* 2 (2006): 111.
- 50 Oláh, *Kivizsgálás*, pp. 99–100.
- 51 Lóránd Tilkovszky, “A csehszlovák földreform magyar revíziója az első bécsi döntéssel átsatolt területen (1935–45)” [Hungarian Revision of the Czechoslovak Land Reform in the Territory Reattached by the First Vienna Award (1935–1945)], *Agrártörténeti Szemle* 1–2 (1964): 113–138.
- 52 Regarding this, see Articles 6 and 7 of PM Decree 1.440/1941.
- 53 Enikő A. Sajti, *Székely telepítés és nemzetiségi politika a Bácskában, 1941* [Szekler Colonization and Nationality Policy in the Bácska Region, 1941] (Budapest, 1984).
- 54 MOL, PM, XIX-L-1-k, 28. d., 3. t.
- 55 MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-a, 15. d., III-3. t.
- 56 József Oberding, “Erdély gazdasági élete” [The Economic Life of Transylvania], *Kárpátmedence* 9 (1943): 520.
- 57 *Magyar statisztikai Szemle* 5–6 (1943): 280.
- 58 Ernő Bányai, “Az erdélyi magyar ipar tizennyolc éves romániai útja” [Transylvanian Hungarian Industry’s 18-Year-Long Path in Romania], in Sándor Kacsó, ed., *Erdélyi Magyar Évkönyv 1938* [Transylvanian Hungarian Yearbook] (Brassó, 1937), p. 131.
- 59 *Magyar Statisztikai Szemle* 8–9 (1940): 731.
- 60 Bányai, “Az erdélyi magyar ipar,” p. 133.
- 61 Oberding, “Erdély gazdasági élete,” p. 520.
- 62 Oláh, *Kivizsgálás*, p. 91.
- 63 Lóránt Tilkovszky, *Revízió és nemzetiségpolitika Magyarországon 1938–1941* [Revision and Nationality Policy in Hungary 1938–1941] (Budapest, 1967), p. 290.

- 64 *Nagy idők sodrában. Kállay Miklós miniszterelnök beszédei* [In the Current of Great Times. The Speeches of Prime Minister Miklós Kállay] (Budapest, 1943), pp. 59–62.
- 65 Oláh, *Kivizsgálás*, p. 119; cf. Tóth-Bartos, “Háromszék vármegye,” p. 112.
- 66 *Az IPOK VIII. évi jelentése* [The Eighth Annual Report of the National Center of Trade Associations] (Budapest, 1942), p. 253.
- 67 Gusztáv Szakács, “A Nemzeti Önállósítási Alap Erdélyben” [The National Self-Sufficiency Fund in Transylvania], *Hitel* 4 (1943): 210.
- 68 Sándor Mihók, ed., *Nagy Magyar Compass 1942–1943* [Great Hungarian Compass 1942–1943], part II (Budapest, 1943), pp. 539–540.
- 69 MOL, Z 588, 5. cs., 27. t. Report of the Power Plant Committee, 1944.
- 70 MOL, Z 588, 2. cs., 4. t. Board of Directors Report, April 28, 1944.
- 71 MOL, Z 588, 1. cs., 3. t. Report for the Management, October 1947.
- 72 MOL, PM, XIX-L-1-k, 28. d., 2. t.
- 73 Gidó and László, “Észak-Erdély és Magyarország,” p. 25.
- 74 MOL, PM, XIX-L-1-k, 28. d., 2. t.
- 75 Oláh, *Kivizsgálás*, p. 125.
- 76 MOL, PM, XIX-L-1-k, 28. d., 2. t.
- 77 The distribution of Hungary’s territory in the year 1942: Trianon Hungary 53.98 percent, Northern Transylvania 25.26 percent, Felvidék (Upper Hungary) 7.03 percent, Ruthenia 7.07 percent and Délvidék (Southern Country) 6.66 percent.
- 78 Ablonczy, *Teleki Pál*, pp. 456–491.
- 79 MOL, PM, K 296, 433. cs., 505. t.



**TRANSYLVANIA
IN COMMUNIST ROMANIA,
1945–1989:
The Hungarian Popular Union
and the Communists**



Ágoston Olti

THE ROMANIAN COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE ROMANIAN ETHNIC/TERRITORIAL QUESTION BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

This study examines the attitude of the Romanian Communist Party (henceforth RCP) towards the nationality and territorial questions that played a great role between the two world wars. Treating the two problems in a single study is justified, because they were also linked in the thinking of Communist leaders and activists of the period between the two world wars, and they hoped that dealing with the disputed territorial questions would solve the minority question. The reverse of all this is also true: they linked the solution to the minority question with the solution of the territorial disputes.

The era has a significant literature; however, the various works must be approached with increased source criticism, since it is nearly impossible to reconstruct the circumstances over-mystified by the Communist Party. The illegal Communist movement served as a base of legitimization for the Communist Party that later attained power. The Party subordinated historiography to current political interests; accordingly, the past was frequently subject to reappraisal. One of the most easily grasped facets of this is the history of the illegal movement, for it is here that one can most easily trace the way in which the transformation within the international workers' movement had an impact on the appraisal of the past. Accordingly, from the overemphasis of the role of international coordinating organs (the first Dej era), through national communism emphasizing Romanian peculiarities (the second Dej era), we arrive at Ceaușescu's fanaticism for "national history."

One of the monographic accounts of the era is the work of Marin C. Stănescu.¹ Making use of pre-1989 research, he provides a lot of useful data; nevertheless, his assessment of the processes is not satisfactory. In addition, Stelian Tănase has attempted² to analyze

a few details. The lack of monographic accounts is alleviated somewhat by a number of important documentary anthologies.³ It is on the basis of these that the Party's position on the nationality question may be reconstructed.

Among the historiographical antecedents, the study by Ildikó Lipcsey, the only work available in Hungarian, is very important.⁴ However, Lipcsey highlighted only those details in the various RCP Congress resolutions that supported her own hypotheses (such as the idea that the RCP did not want to separate Transylvania from Romania).⁵ Taking to heart the words of her statement at the beginning of the study ("We take over slogans, theses, ideals and entire ideological systems from our predecessors, embracing them and incorporating them uncritically. Out of respect or out of laziness, because this is simpler than personally getting to the bottom of everything with arduous (donkey) work"⁶) has motivated me not to adopt her theses uncritically, but rather to reinterpret them as reflected in the available sources.

The position elaborated by the RCP on the territorial and nationality question was determined by the following factors:

1. The multinational reality of Greater Romania that came into being after the First World War.
2. The development of Soviet–Romanian interstate relations: on January 26, 1918, the Soviet leadership severed its diplomatic ties with Romania and confiscated the Romanian treasury deposited in Moscow, accusing the Romanian government of trying to save its own position as well as that of the landowners and bankers by stealing Bessarabia. The Soviet leadership never recognized the unification of Bessarabia with Romania.
3. The position that the RCP occupied within the international workers' movement.

After the conclusion of the First World War and the creation of Greater Romania the Romanian Left was divided. According to some opinions, the Transylvanian Romanian Socialists (and

later the Communists), when they were in a position to decide between the internationalist and national(ist) solutions, chose the latter, by having come out in favor of Transylvania's annexation to Romania.⁷ This choice was not so much an ideological one as it was the consequence of the mentality of the Transylvanian Romanians' decades-old irredentist movement and the Hungarian nationality policy. The post-war period found the movement without either central direction or a unitary leadership, and nor was there contact between the well-organized Social Democratic movement in Bukovina and Transylvania and the Social Democrats of the Regat either: these Social Democratic groups had lost contact with the Second International.⁸ By 1920 the atomized Social Democratic movement had succeeded in settling its ranks, but the movement by this time was sharply divided by the question of what strategy to follow after the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. The Social Democratic Party joined the Communist International (Comintern, or Third International) at the 1921 Congress. At the moment of accession the Social Democratic Party of Romania had 45,000 members, but it was the trade unions, with a membership of 200,000, that provided its mass base.

By accepting admission into the Comintern, the Socialist movement⁹ subordinated itself to the Moscow-centered hierarchical structure and decision-making mechanism of the international workers' movement.¹⁰ This decision-making mechanism took the movement's local peculiarities into account only to a minimal extent and was determined by Moscow's foreign-policy interests at the given moment. After the Bolshevik Revolution the alliance system of nation states established by the Paris/Versailles peace treaties, the so-called *cordon sanitaire*, isolated the Soviet Union and determined its room to maneuver in foreign policy. The internationalism of Leninist principles, in other words the ideal of world revolution, made possible the organization of control over the international workers' movement through the Comintern, which was the device of Soviet foreign policy until its liquidation in 1943. The international workers' movement operated in parallel with the diplomacy of the

Soviet Union, in terms of the means and methods used: it was not bound by either international law regulating inter-state relations or the customary law that had evolved in diplomacy. The Bolshevik regime represented a challenge to the capitalist world system in that the experiment offered an opportunity to reevaluate the established center-periphery relationship. By detaching itself “from the world system controlled by capital” and propagating the export of this system through the Comintern, the Communist movement became a security-policy factor for the targeted states. With this territorial and diplomatic isolation, only the Comintern could increase the Soviet Union’s room to maneuver in foreign policy.

The appraisal of the Comintern’s resolutions on the national and territorial question continues to divide analysts in Romania to the present day. Transylvanian Hungarian intellectuals are prone to overrate the Communist position on the question and to emphasize the points that the Communist movement “did not recognize the peace settlement at Versailles because it considered it to be an imperialist, robber peace,”¹¹ and that “Greater Romania was established by the imperialist war, through the annexation of foreign territories.”¹² However, these analyses do not place the Communist nationality policy in a broader context,¹³ and thus the results of the analyses in most cases are distorted. Moreover, neither the Hungarian nor the Romanian analysts discuss what the slogan “the right of every nationality to self-determination, including secession” meant in the cases of the various nationalities and regions. In the Romanian specialist literature a consensus has more or less been formed regarding the analysis of the subject: emphasis is placed on the role played by the minorities (Hungarians, Bulgarians and Jews) in shaping the Party’s nationality policy.¹⁴

The national minorities’ influence within the RCP had a minimal effect on the Party’s territorial policy, since this was determined by the Comintern and the Balkan Communist Federation (henceforth BCF). Those who belonged to the national minorities in Romania did not take part in elaborating the resolutions on the nationality question, even though these greatly increased receptivity towards

the Party's ideals among the minorities. Ion Flueraş also confirms all this in his recollections, published by István Lakatos: "The Hungarian comrades, fully understandably, were satisfied that the Communist Party proclaimed 'the right of the peoples to self-determination' up to secession, since neither the National Hungarian Party of Romania [*Országos Magyar Párt*, henceforth OMP]¹⁵ nor any other party led by responsible persons would have dared to include it in its program, because according to the laws of that time it meant treason [in Romania]."¹⁶ The Party and its transnational ideology offered an opportunity for the groups and national minorities shunted to the periphery by Romanian society to break out,¹⁷ but at the same time those intellectuals who sympathized with this were themselves marginalized or forced to emigrate.¹⁸

In researching the interwar minority policy of the Comintern and the Communist Parties, in very few cases do we encounter the expression "national minority." The concept of nationality was used as a synonym for national minority, which was distinguished from the term "(state) nation." Despite all this, we must seek the positions relating to the minority question in the resolutions passed on the *national* question, since there is no single Comintern resolution specifically on the *nationality* question.

Concerning the nationality policy of the Communist movement and the Comintern in the 1920s, László Kővágó emphasizes four main features:¹⁹ 1) for the Comintern, oppressed nation and minority meant the same thing; 2) the latter's fight was interpreted as part of the battle on a global scale between imperialism and socialism and of the socialist world revolution; 3) the essence of its nationality policy method is that it did not allow the Communist Party of the mother nation to act in the interests of the oppressed national minority (the Communist Parties of the majority, state-organizing, peoples had to wage the battle for the rights of the minorities); 4) it raised concrete questions only in relation to Central Europe and the Balkans.

The 1920s

The Comintern took positions relating to specifically arising nationality problems above all according to how much the latter promoted or hindered the fight against imperialism.

Within the Bolshevik Party, too, there was an awareness of the importance of the nationality question from the viewpoint of socialist world revolution and the consolidation of Soviet power in Russia. For this reason, between 1918 and 1921 a sharp debate ensued within the Party with the participation of the Party's leading politicians (Lenin, Bukharin, Stalin, Chicherin, Piatakov and Rakovsky), and the question was placed on the agenda of the Party's Eighth (1919) and Tenth (1921) Congresses as well. The fundamental points of the debates among the Bolsheviks were the relationship between the national and proletarian right of self-determination, centralist aspirations and the foreign-policy dimension of the nationality question.

Lenin's views differed from those of Bukharin and Piatakov, polemicizing prior to the Eighth Congress, in that he emphasized the importance of transitions, arguing that as far as the Communist Party was concerned the question of national secession could not be raised identically before and after the socialist revolution: after the socialist revolution, national disunity was opposed to the long-term perspective and goals of the multinational state.²⁰ It points to theoretical consistency that the slogan about the right of nations to self-determination, which allowed for multiple interpretations, did not even make it into the program, but instead "the right of nations to secede" was recognized.

Not only was the question of centralism the subject of theoretical debates, but in 1918–1919 a solution had to be found to the situation that had evolved in the Ukraine and the outlying areas of the Tsarist Empire. Lenin was aware that the Soviet regime would not be capable of coping with the renewed nationality conflicts, and therefore he emphasized with particular vigor the consideration of and respect for national particularities and sensitivities, as well as

the destructive effect of administrative-bureaucratic centralism.²¹ However, within the Bolshevik Party, this view had gradually come to prevail by 1919, and it came to be understood that senseless centralism not only could reduce the natural basis of Soviet power, but also might encourage the Ukrainian, Belorussian, Estonian, Lithuanian and Latvian nationalists. The practical realization of this principle was the creation of the “independent Soviet” republics. The adherents of centralism (such as Rykov, chairman of the Supreme Council of National Economy) argued not on the basis of abstract theoretical arguments, but rather first and foremost on the basis of economic rationalization.

Embedding the question in the system of international relations would later on become a/the dominant element of the Bolshevik nationality policy. Lenin considered it to be applicable not only, and not even primarily, within Soviet confines; rather, he devoted an important role to recognition of this right in the foreign-policy maneuvering of the USSR, while emphasizing the point that the right of self-determination was relative and conditional.

In his theses published prior to the 1921 Congress, Stalin, as people’s commissar for nationality affairs, expanded upon the Leninist position, declaring that national oppression had changed from an “intra-state” question into an inter-state question, into the battle of the large imperialist states to subjugate the weak, not fully fledged, nations.²² Later, between the two world wars it would be these theses that determined the attitude of Stalinist nationality policy; only the means used would change in the various periods.

After the revolutionary wave that had flared up in Europe following the Bolshevik Revolution subsided, the Comintern continuously sought the weakest links within imperialism. In Central Europe, but mainly in the Balkans, the bitterness of inter-ethnic conflicts threatened to explode at any time. Moreover, the Soviet Union inherited from Tsarist Russia its attitude to the Balkans as a prominent sphere of interest, which represented one of the cornerstones of official Soviet foreign policy as well.²³

The most important device of the active Soviet presence in the Balkans in the 1920s was the Balkan Communist Federation.²⁴ The BCF came into being in 1920, on the foundations of the Balkan Socialist Federation (itself founded in 1907), in the interests of coordinating the work of the Yugoslav, Bulgarian, Greek and Romanian Communist Parties.

By joining the Comintern, the RCP accepted the relationship to the Comintern and the BCF as well. Of the 21 conditions for admission to the Comintern, which at the Accession Congress Gheorghe Cristescu did not dare to read aloud, fearing the reaction of those seated in the hall, the eighth point stated the following: “A particularly explicit and clear attitude on the question of the colonies and the oppressed peoples is necessary for the parties in those countries where the bourgeoisie possesses colonies and suppresses other nations. Every party that wishes to join the Communist International is obliged to expose the tricks and dodges of its [nation’s] imperialists in the colonies, to support every colonial liberation movement not merely in words but in deeds, to demand the expulsion of their own imperialists from these colonies, to inculcate among the workers of their country a genuinely fraternal attitude towards the working people of the colonies and the oppressed nations, and to carry on systematic agitation among the troops of their country against any oppression of the colonial peoples.”²⁵ The “Resolution on the National and Colonial Question” adopted at the Comintern’s Second Congress confirms the same, emphasizing the point that “the reunification of nations artificially torn apart is also in accordance with the interests of the proletariat, but the proletariat can attain genuine national freedom and unity only by means of revolutionary struggle and after the downfall of the bourgeoisie.”²⁶ When interpreting the documents it must be taken into account that the collective designation of “nationality” was used to differentiate the cases when non-nations were discussed. This could apply to nationalities living in minority status or nations alike. When oppressed nationalities were discussed, in general we must infer that the peoples living in minority status were meant as well. The

designation “colony” often denoted not only an actual colony but also territories inhabited by other nationalities and annexed to the territory of certain countries (such as Macedonia, annexed to Yugoslavia).²⁷

The RCP adopted its first resolution on the nationality question at the Second Congress, which took place on October 3–4, 1922, in Ploiești. Clarifying and excusing Marcel Pauker’s theses in the General Report, in a political sense bizarre, and in the interpretation of the Ceaușescu regime anti-national, later presented the Party’s official historians with a difficult task in the 1970s and 1980s. According to Pauker, Romania was “a county of the Balkans”: it was to this region that it was tied economically, politically and socially, and as a consequence of this the Romanian question could not be solved only on a Balkan level.²⁸ Based on this and the directives of the Comintern, the *Resolution on the Nationality Question*, presented by Eugen Rozvan, also declared that the nationality problem would be solved only in the event of the victory of Communism and emphasized the importance of establishing the Balkan Socialist Federal Soviet Republic.²⁹ All this was not novel within the Communist movement, for at the Balkan Communist Federation’s 1921 Conference in Vienna Vasil Kolarov³⁰ had already declared that it must be accepted as a basic stance that the Balkan states should form an economic unit and the nationality questions could find a solution only in this framework.³¹ The resolution “On the National Question in Romania,” adopted at the Balkan Communist Federation’s Sixth Conference in 1923,³² championed the protection of the minorities’ (nationalities’) rights, branding Romania a capitalist multi-ethnic state and issuing for Romanian Communists the slogan “recognition of the right to self-determination of all nations, right up to secession from the state.”³³

The slogan caught the Romanian Communists quite by surprise, since the Greater Romania that came into existence after the First World War had increased their national pride and mass support for the unification was also great among the population. Already at the conference Gheorghe Cristescu and Dobrogeanu-Gherea indicated that issuing the slogan would cause the Party great difficulties.

According to Sándor Kőrösi Krizsán (also known as Alexandru Crişan, and later Sándor Gedeon) the Party split into three factions. The group led by Gheorghe Cristescu and Constantin Pârvulescu stubbornly opposed even issuing the slogan, arguing that the authorities might deem the propaganda of the right to secede from the state to be treason and might outlaw the Party. The group led by Elek Köblös with a number of Transylvanian members of the leadership came out in favor of following the “Leninist direction,” pointing out that regard should be shown primarily for Transylvania as the country’s industrial area, where the proletariat was the most developed and consequently formed the social base as well. The representatives of the intermediary stance (such as Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea) came forward with the mediating proposal that to decide the matter they should request the advice of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. This duly took place during the trip by Cristescu, Gherea and Krizsán to Moscow. The Moscow directives were incorporated into the Party program at the Party’s Third Congress, but this did not solve the problem either.³⁴

Putting the slogan into practice henceforth also was a source of tension between the Romanian Communists and the Comintern. As a consequence of this, since it was not applied consistently, the Party was later subjected to continuous criticism at the Congresses (Third, 1924 in Vienna; Fourth, 1928 in Kharkov; Fifth, 1931 in Moscow). Those who did not agree with the slogan were marginalized or expelled from the Party. This is also what happened in the case of Gheorghe Cristescu, who in 1925 stated that he could accept at most self-determination, but secession under no circumstances. Jenő Rozvány (Eugen Rozvan) was expelled from the Party because he did not want to incorporate into the program of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Bloc the slogan of self-determination, including secession, in relation to Transylvania. Likewise expelled from the Party for refusing to apply the principle of self-determination was Dorianu Popescu in 1929, and he was taken back only in 1934 after he had exercised self-criticism.³⁵

Making secession the Party's official slogan stimulated tensions within the Party: a number of Communist leaders (Romanians and members of the minorities) were aware of the fact that thereby the Party would be incapable of moving out of the periphery, since such profound emotions bound Romanian society to Transylvania, and the territory was such an important element of Romanian nation-building, that whatever political movement called this into question could count not only on being banned, but also on the result that it would never have substantial mass support. In reality, between the two world wars Communist ideals did not have mass support in Romania, and the Party's stance on the national question played a large role in this, although it did garner popularity among the minorities during elections. For this reason, the Party succeeded in a number of cases in placing deputies in Parliament from counties that were agrarian in nature but majority-Hungarian.

Throughout 1924 both the Comintern and the RCP tried to clarify its position on the issue. Accordingly, the Fifth Congress of the Comintern adopted the "Resolution on the National Question in Central Europe and the Balkans."³⁶ According to the resolution, the Communist Parties were to attempt to enter into an alliance with the anti-imperialist radical parties of the national-nationality movements and support them. The bearers of the right of national self-determination and secession were the national and nationality masses, but the latter could also be represented by the nationality parties. This goal was realizable within bourgeois limits, but this fight, it was emphasized, had to be waged in harmony with the class war of the workers and peasants for the overthrow of capitalism. It was made clear that in the cases of the Byelorussians and Ukrainians of Poland, the Ukrainians of Czechoslovakia and Romania, and the Moldavians of Romania, annexation to the Soviet Union must be urged. In disputes between bourgeois states the Comintern generally did not support the irredentist movements, and sought a solution by avoiding them. Thus the notions of an independent Transylvania, Macedonia, Thrace and/or Dobrudja appeared as slogans, instead of the attachment of the territories in question to Hungary and

Bulgaria or the realization of their territorial autonomy.³⁷ The Comintern regarded the establishment of worker-peasant republics as the ultimate solution to the nationality question. It did all this knowing that in the event that the Versailles system were to dissolve then the independent republics with identical social structure would not be capable of solving the nationality conflicts and therefore the latter would have to be gathered into a federation. The Congress rejected a solution to the nationality question within the state formations created by the Paris/Versailles peace treaties through autonomy and minority rights, since this was not in accord with the goal designated in the Comintern resolutions, the overturning of the Versailles system. It condemned the phenomenon (termed a “deviation”) whereby “certain comrades and groups [...] formulate their relations to the national revolutionary movement in their countries on the basis of the sovereignty of states formed as a result of the Saint Germain and other treaties.”³⁸ Later, however, influenced by the attacks on the Czechoslovak Communist Party, the Comintern’s Executive Committee was forced to refine its position in the case of Czechoslovakia.

At the Congress the RCP Central Committee (henceforth CC) was harshly criticized for not having applied the directives issued by the Comintern on the national question and because its conduct had not been decisive and proper during the Romanian–Russian negotiations. The inter-state negotiations in Vienna between March 27 and April 2, 1924, did not lead to a result, because the Russian side called for a referendum to be held in the matter of Bessarabia’s assignment.³⁹ According to the Russian position the territory was inhabited by Moldavians, who were a nationality separate from the Romanians. Certain Romanian Communists were unable to accept the label “Moldavian” later on either.⁴⁰

The Fifth Plenum of the Comintern’s Executive Committee pointed out that it was necessary “to feel out the specific ally for the given specific task”⁴¹ and believed that from a historical perspective national liberation movements were on the rise and called on the communist parties to participate, but at the same time cautioned

against participating in “adventures” that did not enjoy the support of the masses.

The Third Congress of the RCP held in Vienna in August 1924 adopted the slogan of “the right of every nationality to self-determination, including secession” and declared that Romania was a capitalist state that had come into being in the wake of the imperialist war, one whose leaders had relinquished national independence for the sake of the ideal of a Greater Romania. The formation of a common front with the nationalities was defined as the Party’s task in the interests of putting the worker-peasant government into power and the establishment of the Balkan Worker-Peasant Republics. In the autumn of 1924 the Communist movement made the last attempts to establish this by revolutionary means. Part of this plan was to ignite the revolution in Bulgaria and Romania. Also on the agenda was the BCF’s opening of relations with the nationality organizations, so that by mobilizing the latter the country in question would be prevented from intervening in the revolution.⁴² However, the plan failed: in Bulgaria the authorities arrested a number of Communist leaders, and successful assassinations were carried out against a number of Macedonian leaders. In Romania an attempt was made to ignite the “revolution”⁴³ and proclaim the Soviet Republic, starting from the settlement of Tatarbunar in Bessarabia. However, the resolute action of the police, gendarmerie and army, during which a number of abuses occurred, restored order.⁴⁴ More than 500 inhabitants were transported to Chişinău for questioning, and among them 200 persons were actually sentenced.

However, the Soviet Union did not relinquish its claims to Bessarabia even after the inter-state negotiations in the spring and the failure of the revolutionary attempt in September. On October 12, 1924, the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, with an area of 8,100 square kilometers and a population of 545,500, was established as part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. This state formation lurked as a threat facing Romanian foreign policy between the two world wars right up until the question was decided by the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact.

In the Forefront of Soviet Foreign Policy

With the year 1924 an era in the history of the international workers' movement had closed; Stalin no longer thought in terms of revolutionary but rather in terms of state power categories. A change ensued concerning the Romanian territorial-nationality question as well: although the ideal of revolution was upheld, no separatist attempt similar to that of Tatarbunár later took place. The fact that in December 1924 the Mârzescu Law⁴⁵ outlawed the RCP because it had supported Russian territorial claims against the country, which "was not a patriotic act," also had a role in this. The Romanian government, which saw in Greater Romania the fulfillment of Romanian nation-building, did not tolerate any alternative contradicting this nation-building whatsoever. This nation-building project, adopted as a mission by the Romanian elite, contributed greatly to the outlawing of the Communist movement, which by contrast set as a goal the unification of the Balkan Communist countries. After the law's appearance the Communist Party was smashed, and more than 600 activists were arrested. For a long time afterwards, therefore, the Comintern lacked an action-ready group in Romania.

The resolution of the Executive Committee of the Comintern issued in February 1926 on the Romanian question⁴⁶ condemned the Party for the extreme weakness that it had displayed in the nationality question, while also criticizing the view, very widespread among the Party members, that refining the position on the nationality question (abandoning the principle of secession) would assist the Party's legalization and alleviate police pressure. The resolution continued to regard Romania as an enemy bridgehead against the Soviet Union and considered the use of national discontent for the sake of revolutionary aims to be a duty of the Party and issued the slogan "the federation of autonomous regions of Romania until the establishment of a federation of Balkan worker-peasant states." As can be seen, although the Comintern condemned the Social Democratic compromise in

the nationality question, in Comintern resolutions, too, the slogan “the self-determination of every nationality, including secession” increasingly lost its edge and became concentrated on smaller and smaller territories. An article appearing in the paper *Lupta de clasă* (Class Struggle) in 1928,⁴⁷ signed by S. Petrulescu (Vitali Holostenko) and presenting the results of the Fourth Congress (1928 Kharkov),⁴⁸ revealed that keeping the slogan on the agenda was still needed, and the Balkan Federation also remained a goal, although in the cases of the various territories new slogans were needed, namely the following: 1) Bessarabia – union with the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic; 2) Bukovina – union with Soviet Ukraine; 3) Dobrudja – support of the national-revolutionary organizations⁴⁹ slogan of an independent Dobrudja; 4) Transylvania and the Banat – secession and complete independence from the Romanian state.

As the above article also shows, the claim of Romanian historians⁵⁰ that, due to its goal of Greater Romania’s dismantling, the Communist Party served Hungarian or Bulgarian irredentism is unfounded, since the Party’s goal was not to attach the territories to Hungary or Bulgaria. The most important aim was to change the country’s social structure (the accession to power of a worker-peasant government) and to incorporate the country into a larger territorial unit. In the 1920s the idea of a larger territorial unit was popular in Western Europe as well. It was at this time that the so-called Pan-European Debate unfolded, which drifted even onto the pages of the Marxist journal *Korunk*, although during the period when the journal was run by László Dienes (1926–1930) the rejection of every kind of Western pan-national movement was unequivocal, since this was seen as the device of Western imperialism.⁵¹ Thus a federation of states with similar social structures unified into a larger unit as a response to global problems was not a peculiarity of the Comintern or the Balkans: the Pan-Europe Movement and the Soviet Union served as examples of this.

The Soviet Union was a federal state formed by nations organized into “sovereign states” through federal republics. Those smaller nations that were judged not to have the requisite conditions

for sovereignty were organized into autonomous republics, thereby recognizing their unique cultures. The nationality question was solved through a mixture of cultural and territorial autonomy; the Soviet patterns, however, appeared mainly in constitutional law. It was the impossibility of establishing a unitary socialist state that led Soviet leaders to the federalist solution, in which the elements of democratic centralism were interwoven with the principle of ideological equality.⁵² In the case of the Balkans, where the mixing of nations made the establishment of pure nation states impossible, according to the Communist Parties the amalgamation of this nationality policy and Communist internationalism could have provided a solution to ethnic conflicts.

In the late 1920s the nationality policy of the Romanian Communists and their party (a section of the Comintern) – also adapting to the Soviet Union’s power interests – underwent a certain transformation. The resolutions of the Fifth Congress (1931)⁵³ no longer regarded Romania unequivocally as a multi-ethnic or even “imperialist” state, and the once loudly proclaimed right of self-determination up to secession was also dropped. On the other hand, they proclaimed a battle against every kind of nationalism, and mobilized to oppose fascism. They condemned discrimination against the minorities and stood up for complete equality before the law. They urged the free use of the mother tongue both at every level of education and in the public administration and the judiciary.⁵⁴ The Congress theses urged the nationalities living in the country and the Romanian people to join forces, and they considered the establishment of so-called “national–revolutionary” organizations to be necessary.

The implementation of the Congress’s resolutions – establishing opposition groupings within the minority organizations, which would later take over leadership of the organization – in the case of the Hungarian minority took place in 1933, with the creation of the grouping called the National Hungarian Party Opposition (*Országos Magyar Párti Ellenzék*, henceforth OMPE). The OMPE was a legal entity registered in the court in Kolozsvár under the

chairmanship of László Balogh, a law student.⁵⁵ The resulting group wished to expose the OMP's policy of supporting the government and ignoring the interests of the lower strata, and with the help of planted agents prepared a split within the OMP.⁵⁶ The authorities, however, did not see the true goal of the OMPE as being one of counterbalancing the activity of the OMP led by György Bethlen; rather, according to them – since most members emerged from the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc, which had acted as a front organization for the Communist Party in the elections – it (the OMPE) served as a legal cover for the Communist activity.⁵⁷ The OMPE Conference held in Marosvásárhely in the summer of 1934 announced its formation into a separate, national organization under the name the National Union of Hungarian Workers in Romania (*Romániai Magyar Dolgozók Szövetsége*, henceforth MADOSZ). László Bányai, one of the “founding fathers” of MADOSZ, appraised the change thus: “This was the first Hungarian organization of an ethnic character, that consistently conducted a democratic policy, and despite the influence of the exploited Hungarian and Romanian strata and their parties it regarded the vanguard of the working class and the entire working people, the Communist Party, as its leader.”⁵⁸ In a January 1935 document of the Comintern's Balkan Secretariat⁵⁹ the Party was credited with establishing MADOSZ. However, the material also points out that although the RCP and the national-revolutionary organizations (such as MADOSZ and the Internal Dobrudjan Revolutionary Organization, or IDRO) had intensified their activities, they had still not succeeded in assuming leadership of the nationalities in the fight against imperialism, and the national-bourgeois parties continued to have great influence. The slogan of secession was now completely missing from this material. MADOSZ, too, listed among its most important tasks in 1934 the fight against revisionist and anti-revisionist warmongering and racial hatred: “Should Hungarian imperialism attempt to reconquer Transylvania by force of arms as the prey of Hungarian feudalism, fascism and white terror, against this we will organize the armed resistance of the working Hungarians of Romania, and the armed defense of the right of self-determination.”⁶⁰

The attention of Transylvanian Hungarian Marxists and Communists in the early 1930s was now occupied more by the Danubian Basin debate.⁶¹ In connection with this, bitter debates took place between the left and the extreme left (Edgár Balogh and László Sándor), as well as between the left and the Liberals (Edgár Balogh and Sándor Halász). Likewise taking part in the *Korunk* debate, István Simkó – who saw behind the Danubian idea primarily the zeal of the petit-bourgeois – stated why a large number of the Hungarians left in Romania were so receptive even to daydreaming: “This idea for them [the petit-bourgeois] has the advantage that they do not need to be unfaithful to the homeland that gave them their language and culture, nor to the homeland in which they live.”⁶²

After the Rise to Power of Nazism

After the rise to power of Nazism,⁶³ the Comintern and the Communist Parties abandoned criticism of the Versailles system, as by this time the latter had become increasingly empty and more and more persons sensed the announcement of a new line. The Nazi attainment of power created a new situation for the Communist movement, because Germany was now headed by a movement that itself set as a goal the transformation of the Versailles system and international power relations. However, numerous signs indicate that the line announced at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern did not rest upon any settled program, one precisely planned in advance and debated in the world movement, passed or forced through, and thus it caught numerous participants at the Congress by surprise.⁶⁴ The change in Stalinist foreign policy, and with it the Comintern’s line, was promoted by, in addition to the fascist danger, the normalization of relations between the Soviet Union and the Western powers in the early 1930s as well: the Soviet–American diplomatic agreement on the establishment of diplomatic relations (1933), the invitation of 30 countries to the Soviet Union to join the League of Nations (1934), the Franco-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact (1932) and the Treaty of Mutual Assistance (1935).

In addition to the cause of democracy, the German and Japanese policy also lent the national question a further dimension. Previously, when the Comintern had championed the right of self-determination or at least cultural autonomy, it had been guided in this by two criteria: it believed that this would clear the field for the workers' struggle to be fought for social liberation, and moreover it raised the possibility that at the crucial moment the proletarian revolution could turn masses outside its usual base into allies, which might even decide the struggle.⁶⁵ With the coming of the Nazis to power and the announcement of the popular front policy,⁶⁶ however, the question of armed support for wars of national self-defense in countries imperiled by the Nazis was organically tied to the national question. This at the same time also meant a reevaluation of the attitude to the territorial integrity of the countries in question.

In the spirit of the popular front policy, according to which the Communist Party's opportunity to break out of its isolation was its rejection of the slogans calling into question the territorial integrity of Romania, between 1936 and 1939 the RCP came out in favor of Romania's territorial integrity, not counting Bessarabia. The letter⁶⁷ ordering the debate⁶⁸ of the resolutions of the Comintern's Seventh Congress within the RCP, in the name of the slogan "every nationality has the right of self-determination, including secession from the Romanian state," called upon the oppressed minorities to fight shoulder to shoulder with the Romanians against fascism and fascist agents. Parallel to this it requested the formation of the Transylvanian Communist Party and the Bulgarian National Party, for the purpose of more closely controlling the left-wing movements of the territories inhabited by the minorities and ensuring the loyalty of the minority Communist activists, as well as taking action against revisionist movements. The RCP CC incorporated these principles in its resolution on the territorial question issued in July 1936; however, current research has not yet provided data on the practical application of this.

At the meeting of MADOSZ with the representatives of the county organizations, held in Brassó on January 3, 1937,

a resolution⁶⁹ was passed declaring that MADOSZ was anti-revisionist.⁷⁰ At the meeting László Bányai declared the following: “Anti-revisionism is not a technique employed against the Romanian authorities. MADOSZ is anti-revisionist because it can see that this means war. [...] Both the Budapest regime and the Bucharest regime are reactionary, and therefore it is unacceptable that one injustice (the oppression of the Transylvanian Hungarians) be replaced with another (the oppression of the Transylvanian Romanians in the event of a possible revision). Revisionism is not a solution; the solution can be nothing else but the ultimate goal of MADOSZ: the Transylvanian Hungarians would have the opportunity to express their intention, just as the Romanians have done at Gyulafehérvár.”⁷¹ At the meeting, the most important topic this time was not the territorial question but rather the struggle against fascism, anti-war feeling and the popular front policy.⁷²

The popular front policy did not bring the RCP success, since neither the Social Democrats nor the National Peasant Party began negotiations with the Communists against the king’s authoritarian and later dictatorial regime. Nor could a unitary stance be worked out concerning the king’s policy within the Communist Party either. According to the CC report drafted on the 1939 RCP deliberations, the fight against the king and the government was rejected, since this would diminish the country’s defense capacity against Hitler, and therefore war was declared merely “against the traitors and capitulators within the government.”⁷³

The Party’s lack of a resolute stance on the nationality question – it rejected the principle of self-determination including secession, and set as a goal the defense of Romania’s borders – lost it the support of the nationalities, who became supporters of revisionism. In Dobrudja the Bulgarian Communists, instead of following the principle of self-determination, became supporters of union with Bulgaria.⁷⁴ It is most likely that a similar phenomenon could be observed among the Transylvanian Hungarian Communists as well, since in a number of cases it was precisely the principle of self-determination that represented the greatest attraction for many

minorities of the Communist Party's program. The decisive majority of the Transylvanian Hungarian community did not know the true content of the Communists' views on self-determination including secession; therefore in this, too, they felt that they detected one of the principles asserted by Hungarian revisionist propaganda.⁷⁵ Nothing proves the popularity of the revisionist idea among the Hungarian minority better than the reception of the Second Vienna Award.

On the Eve of the Second World War

After the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact the Communist movement adapted to the new geopolitical situation and reverted to the slogan of self-determination; however, through the paper *Lupta de clasă* the Communists were now asked to enlighten the masses as to the fact that the right of secession also included the right of voluntary association.⁷⁶ In the paper's propaganda article⁷⁷ in December 1939 there was as yet no talk of either the Transylvanian or the Dobrudjan question. The right of association also most probably alluded to Bessarabia, since only that region is named as one where the revolutionary flame could flare up. After the Soviet annexation of Bukovina and Bessarabia in June 1940, the Party's tone became radicalized regarding the other regions as well. For a long time it was believed that the RCP had advocated a patriotic position before the Second Vienna Award,⁷⁸ and in the case of Northern Transylvania had acted in defense of Romanian interests. In the weeks prior to the Vienna Award the RCP Territorial Committee deviated from the Central Committee's line and issued the slogan "independent Transylvania."⁷⁹ Those who emphasized the RCP's stance against the Vienna Award based their opinion on a manifesto entitled "Our Point of View" (*Punctul nostru de vedere*) issued following the Vienna Award on September 3, 1940.⁸⁰ The Central Committee itself categorized the stance against the Vienna Award as erroneous. The documents printed in the most recently published document collections, originating from Russian archives, allow us to trace more finely the nuances of the RCP's attitude to the

Romanian territorial losses that occurred in the summer of 1940. Two important documents have also come to light in connection with the question: the RCP's circular letter of August 8, 1940, to the territorial organizations, in which it recommended conducting active propaganda activity over the secession of Transylvania,⁸¹ and the RCP CC August 31, 1940, letter to the local organizations on the RCP position concerning the Second Vienna Award.⁸²

The analyses thus far have been narrowly focused and merely sought an answer to whether the RCP condemned the Second Vienna Award. The answer to this is simple: yes. However, the problem is much more complicated. In the first part of the study I tried to cast some light on the fact that an examination of the nationality question is possible only in consideration with an examination of Soviet foreign policy. This foreign-policy determinism was decisive on the eve of the Second World War, too, when, although Soviet diplomacy branded both the Hungarian regime and the Romanian regime as fascist, it was Hungary that was offered the opportunity of a settlement, since it did not violate either the territorial or the economic interests of the Soviet empire. Thus the removal of one of the potential participants in the emerging coalition against the Soviet Union was the goal. To Hungarian Ambassador József Kristóffy Molotov explained matters as follows: "The Soviet government, as it has already declared on several occasions, has no demands or aggressive intent against Hungary, it has not had any objection to the fact that the Hungarian demands were realized at Romania's expense, and it will not have an objection in this regard in the future either."⁸³

Romania, after the renunciation of the Anglo-French guarantees and the signing of the German commercial agreement, became the German war machine's main shipper of crude oil and grain. From a strategic standpoint, the falling of the Romanian oilfields under German influence was not acceptable to the Soviet leadership. Precisely for this reason by August 1940 the RCP had once more dusted off the slogan of self-determination including secession, and asked its organizations to propagate this. The Party assured

the nationalities' fight against Romanian imperialism of its unconditional support, and it was to this that it subordinated the principle of self-determination as well. The Communist movement never disputed the idea that the battle of the national-revolutionary organizations was only a means of putting worker-peasant governments into power and establishing the Communist system. It did not contradict this principle prior to the Second Vienna Award either, since in its circular of August 1940 it expressed the view that the planned mass manifestations and demonstrations "must be dominated by the spirit of international proletarian internationalism – that is, this revolutionary fight must be national in form and internationalist in content." Although the August circular and the manifesto dusted off the principle of self-determination and designated the common fight against Romanian imperialism as a task, they really did not return to their concrete action plans of the 1920s. What was meant by the principle of self-determination including secession was not explained. Any attempt at assessing the true meaning of the slogan encounters difficulties, all the more so because the slogan of an "Independent Transylvania" that was demanded in the circular of the Communist Party's Transylvanian Territorial Secretariat was also rejected, and those promoting it received reprimands, even though in the 1920s this was the meaning of the principle of self-determination. The Communist Party's sole aim was the weakening of the Romanian government at any cost by utilizing nationality discontent. The ultimate goal for the Soviet Union and the international Communist movement was the establishment of Communist regimes and their unification:

*"Having earned the right to decide their fate for themselves, up to secession from the state, will the peoples of Transylvania and Dobrudja have the right to DECIDE WITH WHOM THEY WOULD LIKE TO UNITE FREELY? [emphasis in the original – Á.O.] Can anyone doubt that the peoples of Transylvania and Dobrudja do not want Romanian imperialist oppression? The peoples of Transylvania do not want the exploitation of the Hungarian counts either."*⁸⁴

Confirming the above is the fact that the stance of the RCP after the Second Vienna Award – having condemned the Vienna Award

as an “attempt of the Romanian imperialists to keep a part of the oppressed peoples under its own rule, surrendering the other half to the exploitation of the counts of Hungary – continued to uphold the August 8 circular and manifesto and asked the Party, MADOSZ, the youth organization and the Plowmen’s Front to fight for the right of Transylvania’s peoples to decide their fate, up to secession from the state, and to be able to express freely with whom they would like to unite.

Free association in Communist circles in the period meant not the possible announcement of a referendum in the territory in question, but rather that after the presumed change in the social structure and the establishment of popular governments the peoples would take it as natural that they should join states with similar social structures (the Soviet Union, or the Balkan Socialist Federal Soviet Republic, the idea of which was raised earlier). Also indicative of this is the fact that before Bessarabia’s annexation to the Soviet Union the RCP proclaimed this same slogan of free union there, too.

For the Communist movement the nationality question was only a means of changing the political system: the ultimate goal was to put Communism into power. The nationality question was always treated jointly with the worker and peasant question, as a potential source of tension, one that the international Communist movement must exploit. The Comintern and the RCP did not support revisionism, since this would not have been a solution to the problem of inter-ethnic conflicts, and nor was it in the interests of the Soviet Union’s Communist leadership to strengthen one or the other enemy (imperialist) state. The aim of the Moscow Center was the weakening of imperialism in the neighboring countries. The Soviet Union placed the slogan “including even secession from the state” in the foreground or background depending on the current foreign-policy situation. However, although in Romania the RCP possessed a very dedicated membership, these frequent shifts in strategy made the support base among the nationalities uncertain, while the position in favor of secession prevented Communist ideals from spreading within agrarian Romanian society.

Notes

- 1 Marin C. Stănescu, *Moscova, Cominternul, filiera comunistă balcanică și România (1919–1943)* [Moscow, the Comintern, the Balkan Communist Way and Romania (1919–1943)] (Bucharest, 1994).
- 2 Stelian Tănase, *Clienții lu' tanti Varvara. Istorii clandestine* [Auntie Varvara's Clients. Clandestine Stories] (Bucharest, 2005).
- 3 Dan Cătănus, *Cadrilaterul. Ideologie cominternistă și iredentism bulgar 1919–1940* [Southern Dobruđa. Comintern Ideology and Bulgarian Irredentism 1919–1940] (Bucharest, 2001); Dan Cătănus, *Copilăria comunismului românesc în arhiva Kremlinului* [The Childhood of Romanian Communism in the Archives of the Kremlin] (Bucharest, 2001); Dan Cătănus, *Partidul Comunist din România în anii celui de al doilea război mondial. 1939–1944* [The Communist Party of Romania in the Years of the Second World War. 1939–1944] (Bucharest, 2003).
- 4 Ildikó Lipsey, “A román kommunista párt a nemzetiségi kérdésről (1921–1945)” [The Romanian Communist Party on the Nationality Question (1921–1945)], *Tiszatáj* 9 (1987): 79–99.
- 5 Another conscious omission is mention of Sándor Kőrösi Krizsán, secretary of the Romanian Communist Party and a journalist for the paper *Brassói Lapok* under the name Sándor Gedeon; István Barabás, “Vidékiek a világorradalomban” [Provincials in the World Revolution], *Orient Expressz*, April 16, 1993.
- 6 Lipsey, “A román kommunista párt a nemzetiségi kérdésről,” p. 79.
- 7 Florin Constantiniu, *P.C.R., Pătrășcanu și Transilvania (1945–1956)* [The RCP, Pătrășcanu and Transylvania (1945–1956)] (Bucharest, 2001), p. 22.
- 8 István Lakatos, *Emlékeim I. Szemben az árral* [My Memoirs, Part I. Against the Tide] (Marosvásárhely, 2005), p. 59.
- 9 The wing of the Socialist movement that joined the Comintern would adopt the name “the Communist Party of Romania, Section of the Communist International” only at the Congress taking place in Ploiești on October 3–4, 1922.
- 10 The claim that the Comintern was merely the representative of Soviet interests is unacceptable and an over-simplification; although it never turned against Soviet state interests, the multitude of parties, groups and editorial offices forming the Comintern constituted a quite multicolored mosaic.

- 11 Ernő Gáll, “Az erdélyi magyar baloldal mérlegen” [The Transylvanian Hungarian Left-Wing on the Scales], *Eszmélet* 36 (Winter 1997), <http://eszmelet.tripod.com/36/gall36.html>, retrieved December 2006.
- 12 Ernő Fábián, “A Kommunisták Romániai Pártja és a nemzetiségi kérdés” [The Communist Party of Romania and the Nationality Question], *Korunk* (February 2001): 245.
- 13 The best analysis remains László Kövágó, *A magyar kommunisták és a nemzetiségi kérdés* [The Hungarian Communists and the Nationality Question] (Budapest, 1985).
- 14 Certain Romanian authors periodize the history of the RCP based on the degree of ethnic influence as follows: 1921–1924: relative ethnic balance (Gheorghe Cristescu as general secretary); 1924–1928: “Magyarization” (Elek Köblös as Party secretary); 1928–1930: increase in Jewish influence (Vitali Holostenko); 1931–1934: improvement of the previous situation in the Romanians’ favor (Alexandru Danieluk Stefanski-Gorn); 1935–1940: “Bulgarianization” (Boris Stefanov). See Stănescu, *Moscova, Cominternul filiera comunistă balcanică și România (1919–1943)*, p. 54.
- 15 After the First World War in Transylvania the Hungarian Alliance, and later the National Party and the People’s Party, were formed. In the 1922 elections the Hungarian Alliance sent three Hungarian deputies and three Hungarian senators to the Romanian legislature. After the banning of the Hungarian Union in October 1922 the two parties, in the hope of effective representation of the National Party and the People’s Party and seeing the necessity of united action, united on December 28, 1922, under the name National Hungarian Party of Romania; see Béla György, “A romániai Országos Magyar Párt a román parlamentben” [The National Hungarian Party of Romania in the Romanian Parliament], in Nándor Bárdi, ed., *Integrációs stratégiák a magyar kisebbségek történetében* [Integration Strategies in the History of the Hungarian Minorities] (Somorja, 2006), pp. 313–321.
- 16 Lakatos, *Emlékeim*, p. 139.
- 17 Constantiniu, *P.C.R., Pătrășcanu și Transilvania*, p. 27.
- 18 A case study about a Romanian Communist intellectual is Stelian Tănase, “The Renegade Istrati,” at <http://www.archipelago.org/voll10-12/tanase.htm>, retrieved December 2006.
- 19 László Kövágó, “A Komintern és a nemzetiségi kérdés a húszas években” [The Comintern and the Nationality Question in the 1920s], *Századok* 4 (1981): 769.

- 20 Tamás Krausz, *Bolsevizmus és nemzeti kérdés. Adalékok a nemzeti kérdés bolsevik felfogásának történetéhez 1917–1922* [Bolshevism and the National Question. Contributions to the History of the Bolshevik Conception of the National Question] (Budapest, 1989), p. 95.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 92.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 101.
- 23 A.[lekszandr] Sztikalin, “A Komintern és a Balkán (1919–1938)” [The Comintern and the Balkans (1919–1938)], *Klio* 2 (2002), at www.c3.hu/~klio/klio22, retrieved December 2006.
- 24 In Hungarian documents of the period the label alliance can also be found, as can the name “Socialist Federation of the Soviet Republics of Balkan and Danubian States.”
- 25 *Lenin Összes Művei* (henceforth LÖM), 2nd ed., vol. 41 (Budapest, 1972), p. 198.
- 26 Kővágó, “A Komintern és a nemzetiségi kérdés a húszas években,” p. 757.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 756.
- 28 Adrian Cioroianu, *Pe umerii lui Marx. O introducere în istoria comunismului românesc* [On the Shoulders of Marx. An Introduction to the History of Romanian Communism] (Bucharest, 2005), p. 32.
- 29 Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism pentru eternitate. O istorie politică a comunismului românesc* [Stalinism for All Seasons. A Political History of Romanian Communism] (Iași, 2005), p. 75.
- 30 Vasil Kolarov (1877–1950): Bulgarian jurist and Communist. In 1895 he founded the local Social Democratic Party organization in Nikopol; in 1905 he was a member of the CC of the Tesniak (Narrow) Socialists, between 1913 and 1923 a deputy, in 1919–1923 secretary of the Communist Party’s Central Committee, in 1921 a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, in 1922 a member of the presidium, and between 1922 and 1924 the general secretary of the ECCI. In 1923 he returned home, one of the leaders of the September uprising. In 1923 in Vienna he organized the foreign bureau of the BCP. In 1928–1929 he ran the Balkan Secretariat of the ECCI. From 1930 to 1939 he was director of the International Agrarian Institute in Moscow. Between 1928 and 1939 he served as president of the Executive Committee of the Peasant International. In 1945–1946 he was president of the National Assembly, in 1946–1947

- provisional president of the republic, and in 1949–1950 prime minister of Bulgaria. See *Munkásmozgalomtörténeti Lexikon* [Historical Encyclopedia of the Workers' Movement] (Budapest, 1972), p. 265.
- 31 Cătănuș, *Cadrilaterul*, p. 76.
- 32 The resolution on the nationality question appeared in the February 24, 1924, issue of *Socialismul*.
- 33 Cătănuș, *Cadrilaterul*, p. 85.
- 34 *Új Látóhatár* 4 (1966), quoted in Gyula Borbándi, “Egy közép-európai pályakép (Kőrösi Krizsán Sándor élete)” [A Central European Career (The Life of Sándor Kőrösi Krizsán)], *Tiszatáj* 12 (1991): 73.
- 35 Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (Central Historical National Archives, henceforth ANIC). Fond. 95. 6234. 1385 (Goldberger Nicolae) fasc/vol. 26. Nicolae Goldberger's Commemorative Speech at the RCP CC Meeting of May 28, 1964.
- 36 Kővágó, “A Komintern és a nemzetiségi kérdés a húszas években,” pp. 763–765. The Resolution of the Comintern's Fifth Congress on the Nationality Question in Central Europe and the Balkans was published in the stenographic report about the Fifth Congress. In the volume *Selected Comintern Documents* edited by Béla Kun and published in 1931 the resolution was no longer published. Probably nine years after the Congress the resolution – at least in many of its details – was not considered to be appropriate.
- 37 Kővágó, “A Komintern és a nemzetiségi kérdés a húszas években,” p. 767.
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 Constantiniu, *P.C.R., Pătrășcanu și Transilvania*, p. 33.
- 40 At the Fourth Congress of the RCP Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu stated that “the Moldavians do not form a separate nation and from a geographical and historical viewpoint the Moldavians are the same Romanians as the Moldavian Romanians.” See Constantiniu, *P.C.R., Pătrășcanu și Transilvania*, p. 37.
- 41 A. I. Szobolev *et al.*, *A Kommunista Internacionálé története* [History of the Communist International] (Budapest, 1977), p. 172.
- 42 Cătănuș, *Cadrilaterul*, p. 36.
- 43 For analysis of the events and the subsequent European-scale Comintern campaign, see Tănase, *Clienții lu' tanti Varvara. Istoria clandestină*, pp. 79–90.
- 44 *Documente străine despre Basarabia și Bucovina, 1918–1944*

- [Foreign Documents on Bessarabia and Bukovina, 1918–1944] (Bucharest, 2003), pp. 50–70.
- 45 George G. Mârzescu, minister of justice during this period.
- 46 Cătănuş, *Cadrilaterul*, p. 129.
- 47 *Lupta de clasă*, September–December 1928, pp. 8–9.
- 48 The RCP held its Fourth Congress between July 17 and September 1, 1928, near Kharkov.
- 49 In Dobrudja there was a well-organized Bulgarian irredentist movement under the name IDRO (Internal Dobrudjan Revolutionary Organization), which nurtured close contacts with the Communist Party.
- 50 Alexandru Sencovici (1902–1995): illegal Communist, and a Party member from 1924. After the Communist takeover he became deputy minister for labor affairs, minister for light industry and later minister for the consumer goods industry.
- 51 Sándor Balázs, *Meddő próbálkozások* [Barren Efforts] (Kolozsvár, 2002), pp. 169–172.
- 52 The question is discussed more fully in Hélène Carrère d’Encausse, *Le grand défi: bolcheviks et nations, 1917–1930* (Paris, 1987).
- 53 The minutes of the RCP Fifth Congress and documents published from the *Colecția 50* came to light during archival research conducted under the Presidential Commission for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania. At this time I thank Vladimir Tismăneanu and Levente Salat, whose invitation made it possible for me to gain access to hitherto unresearchable archival documents.
- 54 Gáll, “Az erdélyi magyar baloldal mérlegen.”
- 55 Arhivele Naționale Române. Fond: Colecția 50. vol. 4298. f. 13985 Memorandum of the Romanian Intelligence Services Third Bureau on the formation of MADOSZ. November 14, 1934.
- 56 Arhivele Naționale Române. Fond: Colecția 50. vol. 4298. f. 13985 Report of the Siguranța on the meeting of János Demeter, János Vincze and Hillel Kohn. October 25, 1933.
- 57 Arhivele Naționale Române. Fond: Colecția 50. vol. 4298. ff. 13985–13985 Memorandum of the Romanian Intelligence Services Third Bureau on the formation of MADOSZ. November 14, 1934.
- 58 László Bányai, *Harminc év. Jegyzetek a romániai magyarság útjáról* [Thirty Years. Notes on the Journey of the Hungarians of Romania] (Bucharest, 1949), p. 46.
- 59 Cătănuş, *Cadrilaterul*, pp. 213–214.

- 60 ANIC. Fond. 27. MADOSZ–UPM. 55. d. f. 19 *A MADOSZ legsürgősebb tennivalói* [The Most Urgent Tasks of MADOSZ].
- 61 The debate is presented in Balázs, *Meddő próbálkozások*, pp. 169–201.
- 62 Balázs, *Meddő próbálkozások*, p. 201.
- 63 On the relationship between fascism and Communism in the 1920s and the Communist Party’s interpretation of fascism, see Gábor Székely, *A Komintern és a fasizmus 1921–1929* [The Comintern and Fascism 1921–1929] (Budapest, 1980).
- 64 Iván Harsányi, “A népfront – hetven év távlatából” [The Popular Front – from the Perspective of Seventy Years], *Eszmélet* 70 (Summer 2006): 7.
- 65 *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- 66 On the Comintern’s popular front-unity front idea, see the works of Oszkár Bethlen: *Az egységfront-mozgalom és a harc a munkásosztály egységes forradalmi pártjáért 1933–1937* [The Unity Front Movement and the Fight for the Working Class’s Unitary Revolutionary Party, 1933–1937] (Budapest, 1967), and *Párizs, Madrid, Bécs. A Komintern egységpolitikája 1933–1937* [Paris, Madrid, Vienna. The Comintern’s Unity Policy, 1933–1937] (Budapest, 1968).
- 67 Cătănuș, *Cadrilaterul*, pp. 222–223.
- 68 The documents of the Comintern and the popular front movements are printed in *A Kommunista Internacionálé és a Népfrontmozgalmak dokumentumaiból (1932–1937)* [From the Documents of the Communist International and the Popular Front Movements] (Budapest, 1985).
- 69 The resolutions of the grand assembly appeared in print as well: *Mit kíván másfélmillió magyar? A romániai magyar földművesek, kiséparosok, székely alkalmazottak brassói nagy-gyűlésének határozata* [What Do A Million and a Half Hungarians Desire? The Resolutions of the Grand Assembly of Romanian Hungarian Farmers, Tradesmen and Székely Employees in Brassó] (Kolozsvár, 1937); also see ANIC. Fund 27. d. 121. ff. 1–7.
- 70 Arhivele Naționale Române. Fund: Colecția 50. vol. 4298. f. 293 Report of the Romanian Intelligence Services Third Bureau on the Meeting of MADOSZ. January 7, 1937.
- 71 *Ibid.*, p. 295.
- 72 Arhivele Naționale Române. Fond: Colecția 50. vol. 4304. ff. 1–2 Report of the Siguranța on the meeting, May 17, 1937.

- 73 Alina Tudor Pavelescu, ed., *Report of the RCP CC on the 1939 deliberations (1939)* (Bucharest, 2003), p. 68.
- 74 *Ibid.*, p. 94.
- 75 For more on this, see Miklós Zeidler, *A revíziós gondolat* [The Idea of Treaty Revision] (Budapest, 2001), and Miklós Zeidler, *A magyar irredenta kultusz a két világháború között* [The Hungarian Irredentist Cult between the Two World Wars] (Budapest, 2002).
- 76 Cătănuș, *Cadrilaterul*, p. 243.
- 77 *Lupta de clasă*, December 7, 1939, pp. 34–38.
- 78 On the preparation for the Second Vienna Award and its international reverberations, see Béni L. Balogh, *A magyar-román kapcsolatok 1939–1940-ben és a második bécsi döntés* [Hungarian–Romanian Relations in 1939–1940 and the Second Vienna Award] (Csíkszereda, 2001).
- 79 Constantiniu, *P.C.R., Pătrășcanu și Transilvania*, p. 64.
- 80 Ghiță Ionescu, *Comunismul în România* [Communism in Romania] (Bucharest, 1994), pp. 88–89.
- 81 Pavelescu, ed., *Report of the RCP CC*, pp. 120–125; the manifesto is in Cătănuș, *Cadrilaterul*, pp. 281–283.
- 82 Pavelescu, ed., *Report of the RCP CC*, pp. 125–127.
- 83 Ignác Romsics, *Az 1947-es párizsi békeszerződés* [The Paris Peace Treaty of 1947] (Budapest, 2006), p. 64.
- 84 Cătănuș, *Cadrilaterul*, pp. 281–283.

Tamás Lönhárt

**THE HUNGARIAN PEOPLE'S UNION
INSIDE THE ROMANIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM:
REPRESENTATION OF MINORITY INTERESTS
AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMUNIST
REGIME IN ROMANIA (1944–1947)**

The societies of Central and Southeastern Europe, as a result of the Soviet military occupation that occurred at the end of the Second World War, as also of the Soviet Great Power interests that shaped the structuring of the new post-war political regimes, underwent radical changes and were subject to dramatic turns. The main triggers of this post-war situation were as follows: the sharpening of antagonisms among the victorious Allied Great Powers, the evolution of international relations as regards the Cold War, and the new course of political regime changes in Central and Southeastern Europe – envisaged and implemented as direct results of Soviet security interests in the states under the Soviet Union's yoke within its security belt, a zone of direct influence, structured mainly on the reality of post-war Soviet military occupation. In this part of Europe, having attained control over political power, the local Communist parties, in order to institutionalize the transformation of the societies in question, carried out a complete restructuring of political, economic, social and cultural realities, based on the model of the *people's democracy*.¹ All this, occasionally together with numerous collateral phenomena, finally resulted in the construction of a Communist totalitarian regime in all the countries of the region. A special feature of this process is the fact that the overwhelming majority of members of society were treated as *passive objects* of the political, economic, social and cultural changes occurring in this period, rather than *active subjects and shapers* of these, never been asked or allowed to participate in real debates on the necessity or the possible outcomes of the transformations put into effect by the Communists in power, according solely to their own will.²

The emerging political regime of Romania that underwent these transformations, reflecting the post-war realities in Central and Southeastern Europe, fundamentally demarcated the possibilities and limits of representing the interests of the Hungarian minority, a minority mainly located in Transylvania. That region, part of Hungary until 1918, was gained by and integrated into Romania, as recognized by the Paris Peace Conference ending the First World War; then on August 30, 1940, it was partitioned between Romania and Hungary as a result of the Second Vienna Award; it was claimed and finally regained entirely by Romania as part of the post-war international settlements, after it had been the object of several stages of different provisional administrative authorities in 1944/1945, before the signing of the Peace Treaty of Paris on February 11, 1947. However, even under such dramatic circumstances, the members of this national minority's elite continued to seek and debate realistic possibilities for effective representation of minority interests, as well as the ways of practically achieving legal guarantees for it.

Compared to the previous decades, a substantial change was the new role obtained and held by the political left-wing representatives, who had to be active also in the field of representing a national minority's interests in the cadres of the central governing bodies of a nation state in full process of transformation: this also involved representatives whose assessment of the situation and attitude towards the existential problems of the Transylvanian Hungarians deviated in many respects from that of the traditional elites. Within the limits of the present study, we have analyzed the electoral strategy of the Hungarian People's Union (*Magyar Népi Szövetség*, henceforth MNSZ), an organization that was formed amidst the radical transformations of the Romanian political system, that aimed to be the sole representative organization of the Hungarian minority, and whose rights were to be guaranteed through its political integration and institutionalized legal integration into the new Romanian state – an aim that was thought could be achieved as a result of the strategic alliance of the Hungarian People's Union with the

coalition of the Romanian radical left, led by the Communist Party of Romania. We also analyze the possibilities of the alternative conceptions that were formulated by representative personalities of this national minority to counter the MNSZ's strategy, which was projected as a hegemonic narrative, against which contacts were made with the Romanian political opposition, built mainly by the traditional political elites of Romania who had governed in the interwar period. Also, we should state here that the elections of November 19, 1946, form a period boundary in the history of the Transylvanian Hungarians as well: after these elections, the means of political enforcement of minority interests, or of active political opposition to the government, as well as the traditional ways of public engagement of political elites, became impossible when pitted against the Communist-led government of Romania, which aimed at becoming "legitimized" through the results of these elections as the exclusive possessor of all political power. For its part, beginning in 1947/1948, formal representation of the Hungarian minority could be asserted only within the organizational framework permitted and controlled by the Communist Party: the MNSZ was reshaped as a transmission belt of the ruling party. But this framework, too, in a brief couple of years, became completely untenable, and then ceased to exist, a new view being put into action in order to realize the integration and control of all of society, as also of the Hungarian minority, through the state's new local administrative bodies: in 1952 the Stalinist model of administrative structuring of the Soviet Union at the level of a republic of the union was institutionalized also in the People's Republic of Romania, implemented through an administrative reform that gave birth to the Hungarian Autonomous Region. The MNSZ ceased to exist in early 1953.

As a result of the historical research carried out in the past two decades, it can be established that in Romania the results of the political events in the first couple of years after August 23, 1944 – the formation of the "coalition" government led by Dr. Petru Groza on March 6, 1945, as well as the official results of the national elections of November 19, 1946 – were the consequences not of the

people's will (that is, not as expressions of any real political options of the people), but rather of the putting into practice of Great Power interests, in this case of the Soviet Union's direct goals.³

In the same period, the passing of the war front through Transylvania in the autumn of 1944 and the currently existing state of war between Romania and Hungary, as well as the activity of the "Maniu Guards," all created a situation in which the Hungarians from Transylvania became physically threatened and were rendered defenseless in their native land.⁴ However, a possible consequence of this situation, an "exodus" of the Hungarians from Transylvania, was thwarted. Following the determined action of the Soviet military authorities, the prevention of any reestablishment of the Romanian administrative organs⁵ created a new situation in Northern Transylvania: the political coalition established by the Communist Party of Romania, which adopted the name *National Democratic Front* (henceforth NDF), collaborated with local representatives of the Hungarians in Northern Transylvania in organizing the autonomous bodies of local administration.⁶ At the same time, the Soviet Union's official representatives resolutely insisted that the Romanian administration "could return to Northern Transylvania only after the formation of an NDF government that guaranteed the rights of the minorities as well." Here the goal of the Soviet Union was to put the NDF into government in Romania, while the reference to the situation of the minorities served as a pretext. However, the fact (one that the Hungarian-language press, controlled by the political left, also hastened to emphasize) that the representatives of the NDF, on the level of political discourse, also openly espoused the safety of the minorities and the guarantee of their emancipation, while the political right, led by the National Peasant Party, became identified with news about the activity of the "Maniu Guards," may have made a significant impression on some Transylvanian Hungarians in this period.⁷

The government of Dr. Petru Groza possessed neither genuine legitimacy nor significant social support: it had come into being as a result of direct Soviet pressure. But it strove to legitimize itself by

making reference to “national interests.” An essential element of this was the fact that, following the symbolic exchange of telegrams on March 9, 1945, between Stalin and the Groza government, which was established on March 6, 1945, the administrative organs of the Romanian state were permitted to return to Northern Transylvania, and special celebrations of this were held, with the participation of the Great Powers’ diplomatic representatives, in Kolozsvár/Cluj on March 12, 1945. As an essential result asserting the Romanian national interest, this was intended to legitimize the Communist-led coalition government.

The Communist Party of Romania, which enjoyed the support of only a negligible segment of the population,⁸ articulated the transformation of its “image” as a priority. Part of this change involved publicly portraying the coalition led by the Communists through the press as the sole entity to truly assume the “genuine national interest,” restore the country’s integrity and guarantee the recovery of Northern Transylvania, and the only one to ensure the functioning of security and the legal system. It was this image that it had to associate with the Communist-led NDF in the general consciousness, and in contrast to this it attempted to publicly identify the atrocities and the threat of a new war and misery with its political opponents. This “image” remained in use even after the Communist-led coalition government, which had in the meantime been helped to power, had abolished the institutions of the autonomous administration in Northern Transylvania.

The position of the Groza government was seriously imperiled by the “royal strike” waged by the highest Romanian constitutional dignitary, King Michael, between July 1945 and February 1946.⁹ The Romanian king was unwilling to countersign any decision taken by the government, thereby hindering its functioning and once again calling its legitimacy into question. He had taken his decision upon becoming aware of the position announced by the Western Great Powers at the Potsdam Conference that they would not recognize the Groza government, formed as a result of Soviet political interference and violent pressure. At the same time, the

Anglo-Saxon Great Powers opened a new surface for exerting pressure on the government of Dr. Petru Groza, by signaling at the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers held in London in September 1946 that they still did not regard the “Transylvania Question” as permanently settled.¹⁰ This stance also tried to disturb the legitimacy of the Groza government and discredit it. At the same time, it cleared the way for diplomatic activity by the Hungarian government that aimed for a partial adjustment of the border, or at least it aroused such hopes. And it rendered the government of Dr. Petru Groza even more dependent on seeking Soviet support. Finally, after the solution formulated at the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers held in Moscow in December 1945 (which Churchill aptly called “political cosmetics”) went into effect, the government conditionally earned official American and British recognition in early 1946, prior to the organization of national elections.¹¹

The explanation for this is the strategic shift that took place in the outlook of the Western Powers: under this, the peace treaties with the states of the Central and Southeastern European region were to be concluded as soon as possible – the precondition for this was the establishment of legitimate, recognized governments that could sign the peace treaties – because after that, lacking any further legal basis, the Soviet military occupation would thus have had to cease. In accordance with this new outlook, recognizing the Polish, Romanian and Bulgarian governments, holding the peace conference as soon as possible and concluding the peace treaties with the defeated Axis allied states as soon as possible became the priorities for the year 1946. As a consequence, both calling the legitimacy of these states' governments into question and supporting a lengthy debate about territorial adjustments were dropped from the agenda. After the signing of the peace treaties, moreover, the Anglo-Saxon Great Powers considered it to be likely that the Soviet military presence would cease, and following this, a fundamentally new political situation would evolve in the states of Central and Southeastern Europe. However, speeches by Winston Churchill (the one held in

Fulton (USA) and in Zürich were to become referential), who had been forced out of government, and George F. Kennan's warnings – the “Long Telegram” and the letter signed as X, published also in the “Foreign Affairs,” in which he argued for the views of the “Riga School” – were clear warnings against these optimistic views even during the year 1946.¹² In early 1947 President Harry S. Truman also had to concede that ultimately the Soviet Union was unwilling to respect the provisions of the “Declaration on Liberated Europe” adopted at the Yalta Conference. After the peace conference Soviet influence in Central and Southeastern Europe did not lessen. Faced with ever-multiplying examples of violent Soviet intervention and power policy aspirations, and amidst the by-now avowedly “cold war” conditions, the government of the United States of America had to construct a new strategy, the key concept of which became “containment.”¹³

The new stance demonstrated by the Western Great Powers in early 1946 put the opposition parties in Romania, which had consistently called the government's legitimacy into question, in a particularly difficult situation. The administrative apparatus, the gendarmerie and the military gradually came under the control of the Communists. In connection with these, trials were held by *People's Tribunals*, launched against those accused of having committed war crimes; the regime attempted to compromise and remove politicians of the National Peasant Party and the National Liberal Party from public life by including them in legal categories defined unclearly by the government's decrees, in order to make possible the incrimination of its political opponents as being suspected of war crimes. The printing and public appearance of the political opposition's press was severely restricted, and their rallies were prevented, in some places through the use of physical violence as well. The Romanian political right, which formed the target of the smear campaign, was labeled by the Communist-controlled press as “reactionary,” “intolerant,” “fascist” and other adjectives, linking them with the charge of inciting a new war as well as endangering the country's integrity. The branding of the traditional Romanian right-wing

political parties, who for decades had advocated an intransigent position *vis-à-vis* the minorities, served propaganda purposes by stating that whoever acted against the minorities in the name of nationalism and chauvinism likewise imperiled the Romanian national interest, since it was through inciting ethnic conflicts that the “warmongers” wanted to arouse general uncertainty and once more provoke a war.¹⁴ It was emphasized several times that ethnic atrocities and the chauvinistic tone of “a certain part of the press” could put Romania’s territorial unity and integrity in question, and could result in the loss of the Soviet Union’s support for these strategic aims in front of the peace conference to be held soon, and so these could entail unforeseeable consequences. The condemnation of Romanian nationalism coming from this direction therefore was a part of that left-wing discourse that had the goal simultaneously of discrediting the opposition parties, as well as tying the image of the Communist Party of Romania – which changed its name at the National Conference, held in October 1945, to the Romanian Communist Party – to the regaining and reintegration of Northern Transylvania under Romanian sovereignty, to “genuine national interests” tantamount to the preservation of territorial integrity. At the same time, towards the Great Powers it was intended to confirm the fundamental change in treatment of the minorities, and at the same time create an obligation and an image of being the only credible ally of the national minorities, against the nationalistic political right.

The processes transpiring in Soviet-occupied Romania arrived at a turning point in the year 1946. The press campaign following the trial and execution of the former *Conducător*, Marshal Ion Antonescu, and of the ministers in the government led by him, the political purges within the Romanian Army, and simultaneously making the work of the right-wing political press impossible (see the temporary suspension of *Patria*, *Dreptatea* and *Liberalul*, and the “spontaneous printers’ strikes”) were all phenomena accompanying the intensification of political pressure.¹⁵ Under such circumstances, it is clear that the goal of the elections organized in 1946 was not a

genuine test of societal support for the genuine political options, and not to establish, as a result of the election, the legitimate possessor of political power, but rather merely a way to legitimize the Communist-led government coalition that came to power on March 6, 1945, as a result of Soviet pressure, through the results of the elections that were decided not by the voters, but by those who wished to dictate the official results published even before the centralized counting. In this way it was an “election without options,”¹⁶ as the results were not determined by the electorate’s will: rather, it was staged only for formal legitimizing goals.

Early in the year, at the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (henceforth RCP) on January 28, 1946, the scheduling of the elections was the main topic.¹⁷ This had at least three essential aspects. First, the RCP had an absolute need for the “electoral success” of the coalition led by it, since the Anglo-Saxon powers had named the holding of the elections as a condition for granting recognition to the Groza government. Moreover, in the event of a “resounding success,” the elections could legitimize the Communist-led government before the public as well. And finally, it could substantially strengthen the Communists’ positions of state power: from this time onwards, in addition to executive power, it could act as the unequivocal possessor of legislative power too.

And the “favorable outcome” of the elections could not be in doubt, since, as A. J. Vishinskii, Soviet people’s commissar for foreign affairs, pointed out, “It is not important who votes how, but rather who counts the votes.”¹⁸ He then added the following: “Two plus two could thus equal even sixteen.” For his part, Emil Bodnăraş was convinced of the unlimited possibilities inherent in those Stalinist “electoral techniques” that – as he declared well in advance of the elections – ensured a majority of 90 percent.¹⁹ All this was institutionalized by two legal decrees drafted by Communist Minister of Justice Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu: *Decree on the National Representation*,²⁰ and *Decree on the Organization and Conduct of Elections*.²¹ Under this new legal framework, overruling Royal Decree No. 1626 of September 2, 1944, which had restored the

1923 Constitution,²² a unicameral parliamentary representation was created. However, in the short term, the *Decree on the Organizing of the Elections* brought even more important modifications: the government was allowed to appoint the chairmen of the electoral committees, which compiled the electoral lists and conducted the elections. Every Romanian citizen who had attained the age of 21 was permitted to exercise the right to vote. A direct, secret and equal electoral system was prescribed. However, many citizens were deprived of the right to vote as a consequence of various pretexts and the excessively broad possibility allowed for interpreting the law. The *citizenship* status of many people, including a significant number of persons also of Hungarian nationality, was called into question by virtue of border changes and state of war. These were excluded from exercising the right to vote during the elections. The fact that the voting booths were set up in factories, barracks and mayor's offices – in places therefore that the left-wing coalition in power held under its control – also had important consequences.²³ The legal decree that allowed for these abuses was countersigned by King Michael, despite the repeated protests of the political opposition – and thus became law.²⁴

With regard to fixing the date of the elections, the Paris Peace Conference also had an impact on the decision: the possible reverberations abroad of the internal conflicts could under no circumstances be allowed to make difficulties for the representation of Romania's interests. Therefore holding elections before the autumn was out of the question. However, as a result of repeated Western protests over the failure to set the precise date, on September 23, 1946, the Politburo of the RCP decided that the elections must take place between November 5 and 15.²⁵ Finally Prime Minister Petru Groza informed the Soviet chairman of the Allied Control Commission that the elections would be held on November 19, 1946.²⁶

With regard to its strategy of participation in the elections, the RCP remained an adherent of "front politics." It formed an electoral coalition under the name of the Bloc of Democratic Parties (*Blocul*

Partidelor Democratice), which it kept completely under its control. Within electoral mobilization, besides the “fellow traveler” parties formed from dissident groups separated from the opposition parties – the National Peasant Party led by Anton Alexandrescu, the Democratic Peasant Party led by Nicolae Lupu, and the National Liberal Party led by Gheorghe Tătărescu – they also devoted considerable attention to the mass organizations.²⁷ These various social groups represented their particular interests by integrating them into a system of goals suited to the criteria of the Communists. They were controlled and directed from within by Communist infiltrators in the leadership of these organizations, and from without by pressure and terrorization paired with the insistence on unity of interest as well as various obliging gestures. The Communists regarded the Hungarian People’s Union, which portrayed itself as the only representative organization of the Hungarians of Romania, as also being such a mass organization.

Within the Social Democratic Party of Romania (*Partidul Social-Democrat din România*, henceforth PSDR) operating within the Communist-controlled coalition – from which a new Romanian Social Democratic Party (*Partidul Social-Democrat Independent din România*), led by Titel Petrescu, seceded and politically was forced into opposition – a *National Hungarian Committee* was also established: this, however, served to realize the joint platform of the RCP-PSDR alliance, and it was in connection with this that it conceived of representing the Hungarians’ interests as institutionalized also at party level.²⁸

At the same time, other political plans have also come to the surface during the archival research of recent years: an independent *Hungarian electoral bloc*, proposed by the Transylvanian Hungarian Social Democrats, which sought to unite the Hungarian People’s Union, the National Hungarian Committee of the Social Democratic Party of Romania (*RSZDP Országos Magyar Bizottsága*) and certain Hungarian members of the RCP. Also some of the archival sources had put on the table information about negotiations with the Romanian National Peasant Party and the National Liberal

Party, on certain forms of cooperation, which in the end were not effectively realized. These efforts concluded without results, but they do caution us: the undivided and unquestioned alignment of the Transylvanian Hungarians behind the leadership of the Hungarian People's Union was by no means an indisputable reality. Behind this picture one can often detect differing opinions and convictions over essential questions, and sometimes even steps to initiate open debate and establish alternative organizational frameworks. None of these realities may be overlooked by the researcher whose goal is to realistically map the situation and viewpoints of the Transylvanian Hungarians in the period of the establishment of the Communist system.

It was under these complicated political circumstances that a successful solution had to be found for institutionalizing the representation of minority interests in Romania after the Second World War.

The Romanian constitutional system in the period under discussion, just as in the period between the two world wars, allowed for the realization of integration through an autonomous *political organization* as well as *political representation* within *the existing Romanian political parties*. Thus the representation of minority interests was possible within the framework of an organization that appeared as one of the actors in political life. Other options, such as the incorporation of an *institution representing a community enjoying collective rights* into the constitutional structure of the state (and thus the *constitutional integration of the Hungarian minority as a collective legal entity*), as well as the *communal autonomy* of the Hungarian national minority, were not recognized by the Romanian constitutional order either between 1920 and 1938 or between 1944 and 1989. At the same time, it cannot escape the attention of researchers that the Transylvanian Hungarians, both between the two world wars and after 1944, repeatedly formulated the demand for institutional representation of this minority as a collective legal entity embedded in the constitutional order: such content was present in the Hungarian Alliance, operating between

1920 and 1922, and the platform drafted at the Marosvásárhely Summit in 1937, as well as the Hungarian Community (*Magyar Népközösség*), active between 1938 and 1940, the research and analysis of which could be interesting and worthwhile from this point of view as well. At the same time, the most recent research indicates that the Hungarian Autonomous Region, which existed between 1952 and 1968, by no means exemplified the abovementioned integration of the Transylvanian Hungarian minority as an autonomous community and a collective legal entity, but rather an attempt to adopt and implement the Soviet administrative model with external assistance.²⁹ It is a fact that within this framework it was not communal interest advocacy but democratic centralism that represented the basic principle of operation.

Within a democratic system, when it comes to representing the interests of a minority one may choose cooperation with the regime or its alternative, opposition. The latter is successful if the cooperation is with a political party/organization with realistic chances of replacing the prevailing regime. As a consequence of the establishment of the Communist dictatorship, however, facing a new political organization in exclusive possession of power, which was developing totalitarian aims, political opposition was gradually annihilated, first left without representation in the public media, then eliminated from all institutions of the state, thus being left with no means of influencing the decision-making process. Making and implementing political decisions that determined the fate of the minorities became the exclusive right of the political organization exercising total power. A group or individual could try to influence this only from within the framework of political power, by following its logic and becoming integrated into it or by turning openly against it, through open resistance. It was questions such as these that the leadership of the Hungarian People's Union, as well as the individuals and groups occupying a position opposite it, faced (while at the same time formulating differing responses) in the years of the emergent Communist totalitarianism after 1946.

The following questions may bring us closer to judging the correctness of these viewpoints and the sense of reality behind them. How conscious was the Transylvanian Hungarian elite of the time that the process determining its room to maneuver was actually leading to the development of a totalitarian dictatorship? To what extent did they perceive that this process had separated itself from the realistic political options advocated by the population, and that it was the result of power factors overwriting the latter? What alternative existed that had realistic chances against the political regime formed on March 6, 1945, gaining control over all political central institutions of the state after November 19, 1946? What could the Transylvanian Hungarians hope for from the traditional Romanian elite, forced into opposition and then gradually eliminated from the political stage as well?

In connection with the evaluation of the events of 1944–1945, the leadership of the Hungarian People's Union felt that its own conviction – that the coalition government led by the Communists could represent a guarantee for achieving institutionalized equality of rights for minorities – was reaffirmed. The Communist-led coalition, as an organic part of its political discourse, repeatedly committed itself to this, through public declarations promising to guarantee the equality of rights of the nationalities by new laws, and the local representatives of the Transylvanian Hungarians had cooperated with the representatives of this coalition during the existence of the provisional (“autonomous”) administrative bodies in Northern Transylvania.³⁰ The press organs controlled by the MNSZ linked the Romanian political opposition – the political opponents of the Communist-led coalition that came to power after March 6, 1945 – to the atrocities committed in the autumn of 1944 and identified them with ethnic intolerance and majority nationalism.³¹ This peculiar standpoint sprang from not only the gestures made by the Communist-led coalition government, as well as the experience of administrative autonomy in Northern Transylvania operating in 1944–1945, but also the political creed of the MNSZ leaders, the roots of which lead back to the People's Front, left-

wing internationalist organization of the 1930s, MADOSZ.³² At the same time, the assumption of office by Dr. Petru Groza, head of the Ploughmen's Front and the embodiment of Romanian leftist People's Front aspirations, as well as the discourse on the cooperation of the Danubian states, the opening of the borders and the equality of the coexisting nationalities, acted as further convincing arguments.³³ As a result of all this, the enactment of the Hungarian minority's equality of rights within the Romanian state in alliance with the Groza government formed the fundamental axiom of the MNSZ leadership's strategy, and it was in relation to this that it defined the other elements in the assessment of the political situation.

The basic principle of the carefully considered strategy of the MNSZ leadership was that it represented the interests of the *entire Hungarian community living within the bounds of the existing Romanian state*. It was from this point of view that everything that might influence the fate and opportunities of the Hungarian community left in Romania, as well as the weight of its representatives in public life, was to be assessed. It was the basic conviction of the leaders of the MNSZ that for objective reasons partial border revision could not mean a solution for the entire Hungarian community of Romania, because of its geographical position, but merely for the fragment along the border. At the same time, should a border rectification in this direction occur, it would have made the situation of the Hungarians forced to remain in Romania afterwards, those living in the central, eastern and southern parts of Transylvania as well as in the Csángó areas of Moldavia and on the territory of the Old Regat, significantly harder.³⁴ As a consequence of Romanian–Hungarian national antagonisms that would be revived once again because of the border change and the thematization of Romanian national grievances, it would be on the Hungarians left within the Romanian state that the majority nation would exact vengeance for the loss. At the same time, due to their decline in numbers, the Hungarians left in Romania would lose weight in Romanian political life, which would dramatically affect the chances of advocating their interests. The government of Dr. Petru Groza, which meant political support

for the activity of the MNSZ, would be put in a difficult position: its commitment to the restoration of territorial integrity, which served its legitimacy, confronted it with a difficult test. It was a central idea of the argument for the MNSZ leaders' strategic options of allying with the Communist-led coalition that if the Groza government failed then that would lead to the possibility of a return to positions of power for the representatives of its opposition, the traditional parties of Romania, the political center-right, identified with "nationalism" by the MNSZ and its partners, and it would produce an utterly isolated position or worse, endanger the Hungarians remaining within the borders of Romania – reminiscent of the actions of the "Maniu Guards" in late 1944 and early 1945. It built its strategy on cooperation with the Romanian government that shaped the new political regime after March 6, 1945. It expected success by strengthening the latter and not by making its position difficult. They did all this in order to institutionalize through law as soon as possible the system of economic, educational, cultural and legal institutions for the representation of the Hungarian minority within the Romanian state. The interests of the Hungarians of Romania they hoped to ensure through the strengthening of democracy, as well as through a representation of the Hungarian people's interests by a unitary organization – thereby with increased weight and chance(s).³⁵ The activity of the MNSZ local organizations, documenting the Hungarian minority's economic and legal grievances and seeking to present them through the leadership of this organization to the Groza government, and to achieve the legal framework for legal remedy, became effective as a practice as early as 1945–1946.³⁶

Organically built into this perspective was the decision taken by the MNSZ leadership in the autumn of 1945, when the Groza government wound up in a difficult situation as a result of the "royal strike" and the reopening of the Transylvanian question, to assume a stance in accordance with the expectations of the regime. The declaration expected by the Romanian government and later instrumentalized at the Paris Peace Conference was the *Resolution in Connection with the Transylvanian Question Adopted*

by the “Hundred-Member” Executive Committee of the Hungarian People’s Union in Marosvásárhely on November 17, 1945.³⁷ The MNSZ declared in the name of the Transylvanian Hungarians that the solution to the Transylvania question was “not a border question” but rather that “true democracy” was possible as a consequence of the legal guaranteeing of the minorities’ rights and the opening of the borders. The MNSZ distanced itself from the possibility of a population exchange, as well as “solutions evoking the Second Vienna Award,” which would make Transylvania a new “powder keg” “in the interests of international reaction.”³⁸

However, this stance elicited a broad wave of protest among the Transylvanian Hungarians. The archival documents speak of a wave of ever-growing discontent, a partial border revision, and a “whispering campaign” about the probability of a clash between the Great Powers.³⁹ In connection with the situation within the MNSZ, news spread about antagonisms between the old and new members, the increasing antipathy towards the members of the Communist leadership, and in some cases even the secession of the local organizations from the MNSZ.⁴⁰ At the same time, after the results of the 1945 elections in Hungary, which also worried the Communists in Romania, the documents also speak of efforts and a declaration of intent to establish branch organizations of the Hungarian Independent Smallholders’ Party by certain local groups in the Székelyföld (the Szekler Land).⁴¹

At the MNSZ assembly held on January 28, 1946, in Kolozsvár, the subject of the leadership’s representative capacity was broached within the framework of a public debate, emphasizing the conviction that it had committed itself too much to the alliance with the Groza government.⁴² Among those present, several demanded the resignation of the leadership and openly declared themselves against allying with the Communists.

The National Hungarian Committee of the Social Democratic Party of Romania protested in a statement against the MNSZ leadership’s “declaration endangering the interests of the Hungarian community,” calling into question the representative capacity of

this organization's leadership and its authority to make decisions on behalf of the entire Hungarian community of Romania.⁴³ Regarding the representative capacity of the MNSZ leadership Lajos Jordáky also expressed concerns, requesting the removal of László Bányai and Edgár Balogh from the organization's leadership, as well as its broadening as soon as possible by including Transylvanian Hungarian leaders of Social Democratic, Communist and other convictions.⁴⁴ István Lakatos once again raised the idea of realizing Transylvanian autonomy at the meeting of the National Hungarian Committee of the Social Democratic Party of Romania on February 17, 1946.⁴⁵

The leadership of the MNSZ had to assume a defensive position. Those speaking out at the general meeting in Kolozsvár on January 28, 1946, were brought before a disciplinary committee – this was the fate that befell István Décsi and Sándor Asztalos as well.⁴⁶ Gyárfás Kurkó confirmed the position laid down in the Marosvásárhely declaration,⁴⁷ but simultaneously it launched the action aimed at reviving the popularity (as a demotic institution) of the MNSZ, during which numerous intellectuals, leaders of various economic and cultural institutions and priests were admitted to the ranks of the MNSZ.⁴⁸ The Transylvanian Hungarian press, controlled by the MNSZ leadership, launched a campaign⁴⁹ mentioning the “reactionary attacks against Hungarian unity” and branding all those who turned against the position of the MNSZ as betrayers of the Hungarian minority's interests and democracy, all of which served only to increase the tension.

“These poor fools have assessed the historical situation incorrectly and have not thought it through that the Moscow Conference⁵⁰ ended with the defeat of reaction. If they continue to conduct their negotiations, they will obtain general ridicule for themselves, but fatal damage for the Hungarian people,”⁵¹ wrote the lead article of *Világosság*, the official paper of the MNSZ, on January 9, 1946. The same paper quoted the speech of the organization's president at the MNSZ congress in Székelyudvarhely, Gyárfás Kurkó: “We have reports that certain Hungarians had themselves

nominated on the list of the ‘historical’ parties. If we find such Hungarians, our people shall know how to deal with them.”⁵² What negotiations are being referred to here? During our archival research we came across a number of sources that testify to meetings and discussions by groups opposing the leadership of the MNSZ with the National Peasant Party, as well as with certain representatives of the National Liberal Party.

The group formed by Ádám Teleki, Pál Szász, Alajos Boga, Bishop Miklós Józán and Miklós Bethlen established contact with the National Peasant Party, the goal of which was the establishment of a Hungarian organization of a national democratic orientation.⁵³ They also sought to make contact with the Hungarian Independent Smallholders’ Party for the support necessary for establishing such an organization. The possibility of support in this sense was discussed with the participation of Béla Teleki, Pál Auer, Béla Demeter, Dezső Sulyok and Áron Tamási.⁵⁴ These negotiations, however, did not end in actual agreement. The group that formed around Béla Teleki, Pál Szász and Ede Korparich turned to the Roman Catholic archbishop of Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia), Áron Márton: they asked him, based on his acknowledged moral authority among the Hungarians, to “assume direction of the fate of the Transylvanian Hungarians,” a request that they justified by claiming that the leaders of the MNSZ had made such concessions as to severely impact the communal interests of the Transylvanian Hungarians.⁵⁵ At the same time as this, the Transylvanian Roman Catholic bishop, Áron Márton, together with Ede Korparich, János Vásárhelyi (bishop of the Hungarian Reformed Church of Transylvania), Pál Szász and István Lakatos (representing the EMGE: the Hungarian Economic Association from Transylvania), drafted and delivered a joint memorandum to the Council of Foreign Ministers, which at this time was already working in Paris on the immediate preparations for the peace conference. In this, they requested an opportunity to advocate the position of the Transylvanian Hungarians at the peace conference. At the same time, by gathering the Transylvanian documentary material and managing to get it out of the country – the result of the

activity organized by Béla Demeter – they directly assisted the work of the Division for the Preparation of the Peace Treaty, operating within the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁵⁶ All this was carried out with the inclusion of certain members of the MNSZ, which came to the leadership's attention but was not prevented.⁵⁷

Iuliu Maniu, as the leader of the National Peasant Party, through two journalists commissioned by the American president Harry S. Truman and sent to Romania – Ethridge and Markham – also sought contacts with the representatives of the Transylvanian Hungarians.⁵⁸ Dr. Albert Maksay, who had studied in the United States of America at New Hill University, had made the acquaintance of the two journalists, who later, after the war, sought him out with Iuliu Maniu's message. Maksay translated the memorandum drafted by Ádám Teleki into English and passed it on to these two journalists. They established contact also with Lajos Jordáky, István Lakatos and Ferenc Bruder, in order to become informed about the Hungarian community's groups of various political orientations as well.⁵⁹ The leadership of the National Peasant Party, during the election year of 1946, had brought to the forefront the political use of Romanian national discourse. Some of their declarations and some articles in the press of the National Peasant Party offended Hungarian national sentiment, which proved to be a significant obstacle to an effective agreement.⁶⁰

Certain Hungarian groups opposing the leadership of the MNSZ sought contacts with the National Liberal Party as well.⁶¹ The archival documents testify to negotiations concerning the establishment of a right-wing Hungarian organization and the possibility of entering into an electoral coalition. In addition to attempts to establish contact with the National Liberal Party led by C. I. C. Brătianu, negotiations with the National Liberal Party led by Gheorghe Tătărescu also took place.⁶² At the same time as this, the Transylvanian Hungarian Social Democrats established contact, through István Lakatos, with the Hungarian Independent Smallholders' Party.⁶³ We may state, however, that the groups making various alternative attempts at organization opposing the

MNSZ leadership initiated exploratory negotiations independently of one another and conducted their political activity without the means to shape public opinion. Thus the genuine chances of organizing an alternative organization or electoral alliance were greatly narrowed.

In the leadership of the RCP doubts arose regarding the sincerity of the cooperation proclaimed on the part of the MNSZ.⁶⁴ Because of the growing demonstrations of protest by the Transylvanian Hungarians, the MNSZ leadership fell under the suspicion of fostering concealed aims.

Between January 25 and 28, 1946, the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party took place: this was intended to deal with preparations for the elections. Regarding the Hungarian People's Union – which in some places consistently continued to be called MADOSZ – Miklós Goldberger emphasized the significance of increasing the control by Communists working in these mass organizations, and providing the correct political line for them through these cadres.⁶⁵ Decisions were also made on the compilation and wide-scale distribution of Hungarian-language propaganda materials. Finally Goldberger emphasized the following point: Transylvanian Hungarian “reaction” was planning the dismissal of the leadership of MADOSZ (that is to say the MNSZ) and “the boycotting of the elections,” since “they could not get along with Maniu, but they won't vote for Groza either.”⁶⁶ In order to prevent this, a purge had to be conducted within the ranks of the MNSZ as well, aligning it closely behind the RCP. Already at this time the “section” controlling and directing the activities of the mass organizations was functioning inside the Kolozs County RCP; in this the MNSZ was entrusted to Margit Bányai and Miklós Farkas, who proposed dismissing certain local leaders and establishing a “working group” consisting of infiltrating Communist comrades operating as a means of internal influence “to form a healthier organizational life.”⁶⁷

Concerning the significance of the elections, the aim of the Hungarian People's Union leadership was an undivided Hungarian

population in Romania, united in support of the Hungarian People's Union. At the same time, the victory of the Bloc of Democratic Parties, the Romanian left wing, became the basic condition of the strategy of the MNSZ. After the elections the legal remedying of the Hungarian minority grievances and the institutionalization of equality of rights were expected from the cooperation with the coalition government led by the Communists. All this agreed with the avowed political views and left-wing internationalist conviction of the MNSZ leadership. It is important to note the stance of the MNSZ leadership, and therefore we record here the position, articulated by Gyárfás Kurkó, this time announcing the following to the MNSZ's Romanian left-wing comrades and allies: "Democracy and its vanguard organizations are aware, however, of the fact that the fundamental point of people's democracy, healthy, unadulterated democracy, is the nationality question. With unsolved nationality questions it is not possible to conceive of democracy."⁶⁸ Thus he defined the solution to the nationality question as a *condition* testing the correctness of the chosen path, not starting from the establishment of the system of "true democracy" – people's democracy – and thereafter, but rather *prior to it*. He did not regard the building of people's democracy, and later socialism, as the solution for national minority rights, but rather regarded *the solution of national minority rights as a sort of "stress test" rating the correctness of the people's democracy*. A significant movement away from this position occurred after the elections and the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty, which involved personal consequences: Gyárfás Kurkó was forced to resign in 1947 and was replaced by Sándor Kacsó, who now could comment only on *the nationality question being solved as a result of the building of socialism "without regard to nationality."* Then, as a result of further steps, by 1948 *the nationality question had been classified as solved*, a large number of the leaders of the MNSZ had wound up in prison following show trials, and the organization had become devoid of content and existed on paper only by the end of the decade. It is in comparison with these harsh elements of reality defining the era that the position proclaimed by Gyárfás Kurkó may

be realistically evaluated, and not merely in comparison with the notions that proved illusory within a very brief time, but also when compared to those that realistically recorded the expectations of the better part of the Transylvanian Hungarian community.

The RCP leadership did not desire the entry of the MNSZ into the Communist-led Bloc of Democratic Parties. For at this time the RCP were taking great pains precisely to ward off the charge of “national foreignness” articulated by the Romanian majority, and indeed present their candidates as those assuming the Romanian national interest. For this reason they were not averse to the MNSZ running on a separate list. They did expect, however, this to be merely formal; indeed, the archival sources prove that they counted on Hungarian votes also to be cast for the Bloc of Democratic Parties list as well.⁶⁹

Worrisome news came on the part of the Social Democratic Party too:

We acknowledge with regret, however, that the headquarters of the Social Democratic Party in Bucharest to this very day has not lifted the ban on its Hungarian members from also being able to join the MNSZ; indeed, most recently the Hungarian Committee of the Social Democratic Party of Romania adopted a resolution that forbids its members from assuming nomination in the elections on the MNSZ list.⁷⁰

Gyárfás Kurkó spoke out several times against this, emphasizing the point that the Hungarian People’s Union intended to represent the interests of every Romanian Hungarian, regardless of political views. He declared that votes to be cast for the MNSZ had fundamental importance from the viewpoint of proportionately representing the weight of the Hungarian community within the future legislative body. As a result of this view, the “immediate alignment” of the entire Hungarian population of Romania behind the MNSZ was categorized as the basic interest of the Hungarians’ communal existence:

We had difficulties outside our own organizational framework, in our relations with the allied democratic organizations as well. In many places *people were unable to distinguish what was the trade union, and what was the Communist or Social Democratic Party*. From this likewise a great many difficulties arose, mainly in such areas – as in the Székelyföld – where 90–95 percent of the inhabitants are Hungarian. They did not always know how to deal with the masses of our people in the villages [...] Every Hungarian democrat must see clearly that in the achievement of equality of rights, in the development of our culture, in the service of our people, *only one single organization can represent us, and this is our own national minority mother organization, the Hungarian People's Union*. Our brothers in class struggle, be they workers, cultivators or members of any social stratum, can live their life of class struggle in their own organization for class struggle, while from the economic viewpoint all tradesmen, shopkeepers, intellectuals and workers alike may belong and must belong, for the protection of their general economic interests, to the trade unions. But this is not identical to the struggle waged for our own ethnic minority culture and development. There, in those organizations where they meet with our brothers of other tongues, they do service to our people by gaining mutual trust and thereby win allies for solving our own nationality problems. But in order to resolve our national minority questions jointly, our place is here in the Hungarian People's Union.⁷¹

And more of the same: “We declare that the doors of the MNSZ continue to stand open to every Hungarian of good intent, but *we shall wage a merciless fight against every attempt to disrupt unity, no matter what mask it assumes.*”⁷²

This resolute stance of Kurkó in favor of a unit organized on the basis of nationality, as well as his approaches towards the government of Dr. Petru Groza for the sake of remedying the Hungarian minority's grievances and protecting the Hungarians' own economic and educational institutions, aroused the concern

and displeasure of certain leaders of the RCP: in the first half of 1946 the removal of Kurkó and his replacement with László Bányai was also planned, should they not succeed in bringing the president of the MNSZ once more under control.⁷³

At the Kolozsvár Conference of the National Hungarian Committee of the Social Democratic Party of Romania held on February 17 and 18, 1946, the plan for a Hungarian electoral bloc was announced: this was an attempt at a solution that would represent the MNSZ and the opposing Transylvanian Hungarian groups, based on a common platform, broadening the basis for the institutionalization of the Hungarian minority's political representation.⁷⁴ This the authors articulated as the alternative to the exclusive position of the MNSZ leadership, and citing the assertion of "internal democracy," as an aspiration to represent "every political option" of the Transylvanian Hungarians. The unconcealed aim was to guarantee "unitary conduct" in the elections.

The leadership of the Hungarian People's Union immediately resolved to take countermeasures: the MNSZ "Hundred-Member" Executive Committee, during its assembly in Brassó, held between March 18 and 20, 1946, announced the launching of *the MNSZ's independent lists* in the elections.⁷⁵ The president of the MNSZ unequivocally condemned the proposal for a comprehensive Hungarian electoral bloc, and declared the following: *the sole organizational framework for the advocacy of the Transylvanian Hungarians' interests is the Hungarian People's Union; the sole acceptable strategic ally is the coalition government led by the Communists.*⁷⁶ At the same time, committing itself to the Soviet Union and opposing Anglo-Saxon "reaction," the body's leadership emphasized the significance of mobilization to build "people's democracy" as well.⁷⁷

Simultaneously, the leadership of the MNSZ commenced a determined campaign in the interests of legally remedying the grievances of the community. It was regarding this that the program entitled "What Do the Hungarians of Romania Desire?" was made public on March 20, 1946, which was unequivocally articulated to

counterbalance the program announced by the National Hungarian Committee of the Social Democratic Party of Romania, as the minutes of the MNSZ “Hundred-Member” Executive Committee attest.⁷⁸ The fundamental points of this program were as follows: the extension of the official use of the national minority language, the strengthening of the system of economic and educational institutions, the industrialization of the Székelyföld), technical training in the Hungarian language, and the question of a Statute Law for Nationalities.

It is a fact that in the election year of 1946 the MNSZ leadership displayed a much more intensive activity than previously, with regard to the issues of economic demands and networks, and the central coordination of the institutional system. Before the elections Gyárfás Kurkó, interestingly, attempted to secure as much as was possible both in the economic sphere and in the realm of creating the legal framework for equality of rights. In the light of all these things the following questions arise. What was the reason for this previously unknown intensity of the activity of the MNSZ in this area? Was it merely a reinforcement of activity to show the Hungarians during the electoral campaign? Or could the uncertainty regarding the post-election situation also be an important motivation? The fact is that after the elections the openness of the coalition to receiving the interventions of the MNSZ – proclaimed as a political ally and permitted “insider” access – aimed at moving towards national minority demands and the guaranteeing of equality of rights diminished dramatically within a very short time. Possibly the president of the MNSZ (may have) feared the realistic chance of the proclaimed political ally not proving to be a winning solution as a result of the elections? And just how aware was the president of the MNSZ of the reality of employing “electoral techniques” that decided the outcome of the elections, or the fact that this was not the testing of the real options of the electorate but a political ceremony serving a demonstrative purpose, which concluded with a preordained result? These questions may help to reconstruct the genuine motivation of the MNSZ activity in 1946, made up of many

elements, which at the same time could also form an important part of Gyárfás Kurkó's as yet unwritten political biography.

It is a fact, however, that while up until the last quarter of the year 1945 the number of those possessing verified membership in the MNSZ continuously grew – from 387,753⁷⁹ to approximately 450,000⁸⁰ – then by early 1946 the sources speak of a continuous decline in the number of members, and finally, by the date of the elections, in essence of the success of the set goal, winning the votes of the majority of Transylvanian Hungarians.⁸¹ How was this achieved?

The Second Congress of the Hungarian People's Union took place in Székelyudvarhely (Odorheiu Secuiesc) between June 27 and 30, 1946. The public climate in this time period was determined by the events in Kolozsvár (Cluj),⁸² the declarations of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu,⁸³ the news of the atrocities in Yugoslavia and the collective trauma caused by the Czechoslovak–Hungarian “population exchanges,” the Romanian possibility of which Vasile Luca (László Luka, born in the Székelyföld, who came back from the Soviet Union with the Soviet Army in 1944) had raised,⁸⁴ as well as articles in the press mentioning a new wave of violence.⁸⁵ At this time, however, a response to the Pătrășcanu declarations came on the part of the RCP leadership, which reaffirmed the trustworthiness of the alliance for the leadership of the MNSZ: at the enlarged Plenary Session of the Central Committee, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej condemned the Kolozsvár speech, and declared that whoever condemned the Hungarians for nationalism without distinction himself displayed proof of nationalism. At the same time, the RCP's general secretary spoke of the intensified attacks by “reaction” and asserted the need for a purge within the RCP and all allied left-wing organizations.

With this the slogan “the fight against chauvinism” was inaugurated. This campaign was put into practice within the MNSZ as well, which provided an opportunity for much irregularity.⁸⁶ Gyárfás Kurkó laid down the position of the MNSZ leadership as follows: “At the same time, for our own part we pledge to carry

out such great house-cleaning within the ranks of the Transylvanian Hungarians that there will no longer be any worms among us [...] I ask Romanian democracy *to carry out this same work in its own ranks.*"⁸⁷

The leadership of the MNSZ received news that groupings were organizing against it and preparations were being made for possible demonstrations and agitations. At the congress everyone was subjected to strict scrutiny, and at this time an organized "applause brigade" was already functioning.⁸⁸ Under these circumstances, the leadership was reelected in a closed-door session. Only the vice-presidents were relieved of their positions, although they continued as members of the Executive Committee.⁸⁹

Gyárfás Kurkó issued a call to arms against reaction, announcing the wave of purges within the organization, and accusing the adherents of a possible Hungarian electoral bloc of disrupting unity:

From different quarters attempts have taken place to submit *yet another Hungarian list* and speak of some Hungarian bloc [...] Whoever concedes that every single vote that is not cast for the nationality list weakens our rights and bolsters the strength of the reactionary parties does not hesitate today about whether to vote for the list of the MNSZ or the bloc's list. *The bloc that they speak of will not and cannot come into being.*⁹⁰

It was during the congress that the MNSZ officially announced that it would run *its own independent lists* in the elections. The election symbol of the MNSZ became the equals sign (=). At the time when the MNSZ lists were being assembled, great emphasis was placed on having widely respected personalities head the lists, and thus in a number of cases the unpopular extreme left-wing activists were pushed into the background.⁹¹ The local organizations of the MNSZ therefore founded the success of the campaign on the support raised by candidates enjoying true popularity.⁹² In Moldavia and Bucharest no MNSZ electoral list was available to the Hungarians: in these places during the campaign the delegates

of the MNSZ encouraged voting for the Bloc of Democratic Parties led by the Communists.⁹³

Adopted at the congress was a comprehensive program aiming to solve economic, legal and educational questions, which announced a now open campaign of rectifying grievances, together with the plan to enact a new Nationality Statute, to which they received a definite promise from the Groza government.⁹⁴ This, however, did not take place before the elections and was later discarded, along with the promise to legally remedy so many other minority grievances. The assets seized by CASBI⁹⁵ (*Casa de Asiguraire si Supraveghere a Bunurilor Inamice* or *Ellenséges Javakat Ellenőrző és Felügyelő Pénztár*, “Institution for the Supervision of Enemy Belongings,” henceforth CASBI) created formally on February 10, 1945, by the Decree of Law Nr. 10 of the Romanian Government, according to which – among other things – the goods, especially real estate, banks and enterprises, belonging to Germans and Hungarians from Romania were taken into state administration, on the basis of declaring all members of these ethnic communities to be “inamici rezunați”: “declared enemies”), the grievances caused by the land reform, and the delay in completely abolishing the internment camps were acknowledged as “open wounds” on the body of the Hungarian community during the congress – these issues actually preoccupying the people.

On the final day of the congress, at the planned demonstrative rally in the town stadium of Székelyudvarhely, an open demonstration against the leadership of the MNSZ took place, and this continued in the streets. With the slogans such as “Down with Kurkó!” and “You betrayed Transylvania,” a group consisting of local tradesmen and farmers forced their way into the stadium, carrying traditional religious and Hungarian flags. Skirmishes took place between the worker brigades, called for maintaining order, and the demonstrators.⁹⁶ Kurkó at this time vehemently distanced himself from the events, mainly because a ceremonial delegation from the Romanian Government had also been present and witnessed the counter-demonstration: “With the banners of the Holy

Mary and sacred flag of the Hungarian nation in their hands fascist provocateurs came here [...] *there is no more mercy for them.*"⁹⁷ He then added the following: "They do not take into account the fact that of the two million Hungarians living here only 600,000 live here in a unitary Hungarian bloc and 1,400,000 Hungarians live in diaspora [...] They do not consider the fact that for the behavior that they displayed here the windows of unfortunate farmers' and workers' families are to be smashed at night."⁹⁸ And finally he declared this: "*We will have as many rights and as much freedom as we can achieve in the healthy democracy built by ourselves.*"⁹⁹

To counter the MNSZ lists, the National Hungarian Committee of the Social Democratic Party of Romania made one last effort, modeled on the plan for a projected Hungarian electoral bloc: an attempt was made to form a Hungarian Democratic People's Front in August 1946.¹⁰⁰ István Lakatos, Ferenc Bruder and Géza Nagy worked out the work plan. The censor stopped the press notice announcing the creation of the organization planned for August 16, 1946, from appearing on the pages of *Erdély*, and in the initial period the police, through preventive arrests, stopped the organizers from carrying out their activities.¹⁰¹ The local organs of the government at first prevented the formation of the new organization, which openly criticized the exclusive position of the MNSZ. Géza Pásztai, István Lakatos and Ferenc Bruder at this time turned to the Chairing Soviet Representative of the Allied Control Commission, but did not receive support; the Allied Control Commission declined to intervene at all in the matter. After Pásztai, too, was arrested, eventually at the intercession of József Neumann and Ferenc Bruder those arrested were released. The RCP at first distanced itself from the initiative, and maintained silence, and then on August 26 László Luka openly threatened the initiators.¹⁰²

In the end, at the intercession of the PSDR, with the consent of the RCP, negotiations did open between the National Hungarian Committee of the Social Democratic Party of Romania and the MNSZ leadership on the project of the Hungarian Democratic People's Front.¹⁰³ Headed by Sándor Kacsó on behalf of the MNSZ,

the negotiations with the representatives of the National Hungarian Committee (authorized by the PSDR) such as Ferenc Bruder, István Lakatos, Géza Nagy and Gheorghe Urzica, concerned the assembling of common lists with the Social Democrats. Kurkó did not approve of this, and the negotiations ultimately broke off. In parallel to the negotiations, it should be noted that in numerous utterances at this time Gyárfás Kurkó objected to the fact that the Communist and Social Democratic members of the MNSZ in many places campaigned not for the MNSZ but for these parties.¹⁰⁴ The president of the MNSZ consistently came out in favor of *independent lists*.

In late September 1946 a final series of negotiations took place between the MNSZ, represented by Sándor Kacsó, Károly Kós and Lajos Juhász, and the delegates of the National Hungarian Committee of the Social Democratic Party of Romania, represented by Ferenc Bruder, Géza Pásztai and Géza Nagy.¹⁰⁵ The representatives of the National Hungarian Committee requested a minimum of three and at most eight places on a joint list. The MNSZ asked the Hungarian delegates of the PSDR to accept its political position and, instead of criticizing its stance on the Transylvanian question, to form a similar position. The negotiations were followed by correspondence between Kacsó and Bruder, in which the Social Democrats asked for only 33 percent of the places on the future joint list, as well as acceptance of the Bloc of Democratic Parties program and a common list of minority demands, in exchange for which they promised to annul the resolution forbidding the members of this organization from assuming MNSZ membership. As an alternative solution the PSDR finally indicated the winning four seats in the Székelyföld and acceptance of its other candidates running on the Bloc of Democratic Parties lists.¹⁰⁶ Yet an agreement could still not be reached. In the end the members of the National Hungarian Committee of the Social Democratic Party of Romania ran on the lists of the Communist-led coalition, the Bloc of Democratic Parties.

In a report on the political options of the Hungarian minority prepared in the spring of 1946,¹⁰⁷ the MNSZ appears with only 20 percent support, with 5 percent holding RCP membership as well. According to the report, the majority of the Transylvanian Hungarian community lacked a mature political standpoint. But Gyárfás Kurkó's open approach to the Groza government in the interests of remedying the grievances of the Hungarian minority once again garnered the MNSZ popularity.¹⁰⁸ The marginalization of the extreme leftist members of the leadership, along with the display of public figures mostly liked by the public at the head of the list, reinforced the opinion that, on the eve of the elections, the centrist line keeping national interests in view had once again succeeded in suppressing the extreme left faction in the MNSZ leadership, and the entire Hungarian community could feel this organization to be its own. By the eve of the elections the MNSZ had succeeded in lining up behind itself the Transylvanian Hungarian minority.

In the light of the official results, the coalition led by the Communists could register a resounding success in the elections of November 19, 1946.¹⁰⁹ Reality, however, shows something else. As a result of research into the recent past, the falsification of the election results can be reconstructed. The documentation was made possible by the fact that the interests of those in power in 1946 demanded knowledge of the public's genuine sentiments, and for this reason in a number of places the Communists made a record of the genuine results as well.¹¹⁰

The falsification of the results of the elections seriously affected the MNSZ, too. Despite the fact that the inhabitants of the Hungarian settlements were prevented from participating in the elections in many places, the Hungarian population understood the importance of this political event and gave the MNSZ great weight with its bloc vote. In several cases the local community organized the transport of the sick and elderly to the voting locations as well.¹¹¹ In Bihar and Szatmár Counties, upon seeing the results, the members of Hungary's diplomatic representation also reached the conclusion, in the autumn of 1946, that a good number of members of the Jewish community had also probably voted for the MNSZ.¹¹²

In accordance with its preliminary calculations, the MNSZ counted on approximately 40 parliamentary mandates.¹¹³ In a number of places, however, the results obtained were altered to the benefit of the Communist-led Bloc of Democratic Parties, and thus it attained only 29 mandates.¹¹⁴ On the other hand, this result could be maintained also thanks to the fact that in many cases, the MNSZ cadres were informed by Hungarians operating in the local branches of the RCP of the “modifying of results” in time, and began direct negotiations even before the results were publicly disclosed.¹¹⁵ We also know of an archival source that provides data on the possible distribution of a larger number of MNSZ mandates as well.¹¹⁶ However, it is a fact that, as a consequence of the official result, it could reckon on 29 mandates.

This result, if we compare it with the electoral results of the National Hungarian Party that was active between the two world wars,¹¹⁷ meant unequivocally the largest parliamentary representation up until that historical moment. From the viewpoint of *quantity*, representation of the political interests of the Hungarian minority in Romania showed an undeniable increase.

However, *the true value of these mandates* can be evaluated realistically only in the light of certain circumstances: the fundamental character of the political system was qualitatively different from previous ones, the advocacy of communal interests became impossible, the freedom of speech and the exercise of political rights were ever more clearly restricted, and the political influence of the representative body had become inconsequential. From this point of view we must emphasize a few fundamentally new circumstances: although the interwar elections had not been devoid of official violence, or of fraud and falsifications either (indeed, it became a proven tenet that the government that organized the elections could assure itself of electoral victory as well), nevertheless the character of the political system ensured an entirely different space to opposition and minority alike in their relations with the government forces that exercised state power. That all this had essentially changed could soon be experienced by the leaders

of the Hungarian People's Union as well, those who placed so much hope on the new Parliament. After November 19, 1946, apart from the 29 MNSZ deputies in Parliament, a mere 36 members of the opposition sat, facing the 347 pro-government deputies of the Communist-controlled coalition. In addition, political practice was fundamentally determined by the rapid changes in the direction of dictatorship. Under such circumstances, it became a matter of life or death for the organization representing the interests of the Hungarian community, the MNSZ, to accurately assess the situation and display a determined stance in the political arena. However, as early as December 12, 1946, the representatives of the MNSZ, acting on the basis of the promises made during the election period, could see that a new era was beginning: one in which there was no longer any political will to continue the gestures made towards the nationalities either. Gyárfás Kurkó raised the question of the Statute Law for Nationalities, but the issue was dropped from the agenda.¹¹⁸

Entering the final phase of the establishment of the Communist system, the Hungarians living within the borders of Romania similarly became the objects of events beyond their influence. The power relations fundamentally determining decisions – which reflected not the true political options but rather Soviet power interests – made it impossible to represent any communal interest independent of the regime, which by now possessed both governmental and legislative power. Moreover, in place of the values and aims representing its own identity and the realistic interests of its community there stepped the now exclusive Communist political discourse. The basic question of the success and efficacy of the prevailing interest advocacy was the formation of a realistic assessment of the situation and the taking of the corresponding deliberate measures. And the basic condition for advocacy of minority interests was to provide institutions serving to represent communal rights and particular interests within the framework of the state's legal system. For this reason the primary means of institutionalizing communal rights was the political representation

of the minorities' real interests. All this became impossible in a brief period after the elections of November 19, 1946. The subsequent period, between 1947 and 1953, forms the next stage of a different era, the analysis of which exceeds the limits of the present study.

Notes

- 1 *People's democracy*, as the peculiar model for the new political systems in Central and Southeastern Europe, is linked to the names of Georgi Dimitrov, Mátyás Rákosi and Jenő Varga, and originally meant the “timetable” differing from the Russian Revolutions of 1917, the formation of a model path for establishing a Communist regime, deviating from that of the Soviet Union, in which maintaining of the appearances, graduality and provisionally maintaining forms of political pluralism were essential elements. However, it is an important circumstance that after the years 1947–1949, the Stalinist model was adopted in all the countries of the Central and Southeastern “Soviet zone”; see Hugh Seton-Watson, *The East European Revolution* (London, 1961), p. 167.
- 2 Jean François Soulet, *Istoria comparată a statelor comuniste 1945 pînă în zilele noastre* [Comparative History of Communist States 1945 to the Present Day] (Iași, 1999), pp. 41–58.
- 3 Ghiță Ionescu, *Comunismul în România* [Communism in Romania] (Bucharest, 1994), pp. 117–131; Dinu C. Giurescu, *Guvernarea Nicolae Rădescu* [The Government of Nicolae Rădescu] (Bucharest, 1996), pp. 226–241 and 304–310; Radu Ciuceanu, Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu and Vitalie Văratec, eds., *Misiunile lui A. I. Vișinski în România. Din istoria relațiilor româno-sovietice, 1944–1946. Documente secrete* [The Mission of A. J. Vishinskii to Romania. From the History of Romanian–Soviet Relations, 1944–1946. Secret Documents] (Bucharest, 1997), pp. 69–74, 122–128 and 131–137; Tamás Lönhárt, “Etaplele instaurării regimului comunist în România (1944–1948)” [Stages in the Installation of the Communist Regime in Romania (1944–1948)], in Tamás Lönhárt, *Uniunea Populară Maghiară în perioada instaurării regimului comunist în România (1944–1948)* [The Hungarian Popular Union in the Period of the Installation of the Communist Regime in Romania (1944–1948)] (Cluj, 2008), pp. 54–72.

- 4 Regarding the activity of the Maniu Guards, our research in the Central Military Archive of Romania has yielded new results. See especially Arhivele Militare Române, Centrul de Studii și Păstrare a Arhivelor Militare Istorice, Pitești, fond Comandamentul General al Etapelor, dosar 680 / 1944–1945, ff. 20–22, f. 25, f. 35, 35 v., f. 37, ff. 47–48 and f. 448; For a partial analysis of this, see Lönhárt, “Etapele instaurării regimului comunist în România,” pp. 174–177. See also Mária Gál, Attila Gajdos Balogh and Ferenc Imreh, eds., *Fehér könyv az 1944. őszi magyarellenes atrocitásokról* [White Book of Anti-Hungarian Atrocities in the Autumn of 1944] (Kolozsvár, 1995), *passim*.
- 5 The reasons for this manifestation of Soviet political influence in such a direction were its own geopolitical interests. Its true aim was to exert pressure on the Romanian government, formed by the traditional political elite, to cede power to the coalition organized by the Communists. See Tofik Iszlámov, “Erdély a szovjet külpolitikában a második világháború alatt” [Transylvania in Soviet Foreign Policy during the Second World War], *Múltunk* 4 (1994): 38–50; Virgiliu Țărău, “Problema Transilvaniei în ecuația comunizării României” [The Problem of Transylvania in the Equation of Communizing Romania], in Viorel Ciubotă, ed., *Sovietizarea Nord-Vestului României, 1944–1950* [The Sovietization of the Northwest of Romania, 1944–1950] (Satu Mare, 1996), pp. 87–93.
- 6 Mihály Zoltán Nagy and Gábor Vincze, eds., *Autonómisták és centralisták. Észak-Erdély a két román bevonulás között (1944. szeptember – 1945. március)* [Autonomists and Centralists. Northern Transylvania between the Two Romanian Entries (September 1944–March 1945)] (Kolozsvár and Csíkszereda, 2004), *passim*; Lönhárt, “Etapele instaurării regimului comunist în România,” pp. 174–178 and 201–217.
- 7 Vasile Luca, that is, László Luka, publicly declared the following: “The question is raised: why wasn’t Northern Transylvania handed over to Romania? The reasons can be nothing other than non-observance of the cease-fire agreement by the Romanian government, and the chauvinistic, racist attitude towards the peaceful Hungarian population. Let us not forget that Northern Transylvania cannot be joined with anything but a democratic Romania that guarantees free development to all the co-existing nationalities” (my translation – T. L.), in Victor Frunză, *Istoria stalinismului în România* [The History of Stalinism in Romania] (Bucharest, 1990), p. 165.

- 8 The most recent historical analyses register between 5,000 and 6,000 party members by October 1944, around 15,000 by February 1945, and 42,653 by April 1945; see Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism pentru eternitate. O istorie politică a comunismului românesc* [Stalinism for All Seasons. A Political History of Romanian Communism] (Iași, 2005), p. 109.
- 9 Dinu C. Giurescu, *Uzurpatorii. România, 6 martie 1945 – 7 ianuarie 1946* [The Usurpers. Romania, March 6, 1945–January 7, 1946] (Bucharest, 2004), pp. 394–405.
- 10 Mihály Fülöp, “A Sebestyén misszió (Petru Groza és a magyar-román határkérdés)” [The Sebestyén Mission (Petru Groza and the Issue of the Hungarian-Romanian Border)], in István Rácz, ed., *Tanulmányok Erdély történetéről* [Studies on the History of Transylvania] (Debrecen, 1988), pp. 195–211; Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu, *România și organizarea postbelică a lumii (1945–1947)* [Romania and the Post-War Organization of the World (1945–1947)] (Bucharest, 1988), p. 115; Vladimir O. Pechatnov, “‘The Allies Are Pressing On You To Break Your Will...’ Foreign Policy Correspondence between Stalin and Molotov and Other Politburo Members, September 1945–December 1946,” in: *Cold War International History Project*, Washington DC, 1999, pp. 2–8.
- 11 Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu and Adrian Pop, eds., *Sovietizarea României. Percepții anglo-americane* [The Sovietization of Romania. Anglo-American Perceptions] (Bucharest, 1993), pp. 163–178; Dobrinescu, *România și organizarea postbelică a lumii*, p. 115.
- 12 Géza Mezei, ed., *Európa és a hidegháború a dokumentumok tükrében. Európa kettészakítása és a kétpólusú nemzetközi rend születése (1945–1949)* [Europe and the Cold War as Reflected in Documents. The Division of Europe in Two and the Birth of the Bipolar International Order (1945–1949)] (Budapest, 2001), pp. 117–123 and 214–224.
- 13 “Truman elnök beszéde az amerikai Kongresszus előtt, 1947. március 12.” [President Truman’s Speech before the American Congress, March 12, 1947], in Mezei, ed., *Európa és a hidegháború*, pp. 233–235.
- 14 *Scânteia*, October 12, 1944; *Scânteia*, October 14, 1944; *România Liberă*, November 13, 1944.
- 15 Keith Hitchins, *România 1866–1947* [Romania, 1866–1947] (Bucharest, 1995), pp. 558–559; See also Romulus Rusan, ed., *Analele*

- Sighet. Anul 1946: Începutul sfârșitului* [The Annals of Sighet. The Year 1946: The Beginning of the End] (Bucharest, 1997), *passim*.
- 16 Virgiliu Țărău, *Alegeri fără opțiune. Primele scrutinuri parlamentare din Centrul și Estul Europei după cel de-al Doilea Război Mondial* [Elections without Options. The First Parliamentary Elections in Central and Eastern Europe after the Second World War] (Cluj, 2005), *passim*.
- 17 Virgiliu Țărău and Ioan Marius Bucur, eds., *Strategii și politici electorale în alegerile parlamentare din 19 noiembrie 1946* [Electoral Strategies and Politics in the Parliamentary Elections of November 19, 1946] (Cluj-Napoca, 1998), pp. 1–65.
- 18 Florin Constantiniu, *O istorie sinceră a poporului român* [A Sincere History of the Romanian People] (Bucharest, 1997), p. 467; see also Florin Constantiniu, *Doi ori doi fac șaisprezece* [Two Times Two Makes Sixteen] (Bucharest, 1997), *passim*.
- 19 Constantiniu, *O istorie sinceră*, p. 467.
- 20 “Decretul nr. 2 218 din 13 iulie 1946 pentru organizarea Reprezentanței Naționale” [Decree Nr. 2,218 of July 13, 1946, for the Organization of the National Representation], *Monitorul Oficial*, vol. CXIV, Part I, Nr. 161, July 14, 1946.
- 21 “Legea nr. 560 privitoare la organizarea și desfășurarea alegerilor pentru Adunarea Deputaților” [Law Nr. 560 Concerning the Organization and Conduct of Elections for the Assembly of Deputies], *Monitorul Oficial*, vol. CXIV, Part I, Nr. 161, July 15, 1946.
- 22 “Înaltul Decret Regal nr. 1626 din 2 septembrie 1944” [Supreme Royal Decree Nr. 1626 of September 2, 1944], *Monitorul Oficial*, vol. CXII, Part I: Laws and Decrees, September 2, 1944.
- 23 Țărău and Bucur, eds., *Strategii și politici electorale*, p. xv; Ionescu, *Comunismul în România*, p. 154.
- 24 Hitchins, *România 1866–1947*, p. 564.
- 25 “Extras cu hotărârile ședinței Biroului Politic al CC al PCR din 23 septembrie 1946 cu privire la stabilirea datei alegerilor între 5 și 15 noiembrie 1946” [Extract with the Resolution of the Session of the RCP CC Politburo of September 23, 1946, with Regard to Fixing the Date of the Elections between November 5 and 15, 1946], in Țărău and Bucur, eds., *Strategii și politici electorale*, pp. 188–189.
- 26 Țărău and Bucur, eds., *Strategii și politici electorale*, p. xvii. General Sănătescu, the former prime minister, was convinced that this date had been chosen at the suggestion of the Soviets, since it was precisely

- four years from the date of the Romanian troops' catastrophe on the Don. See Constantin Sănătescu, *Jurnal* [Journal] (Bucharest, 1993), p. 239.
- 27 Gheorghe Onișoru, *Alianțe și confruntări între partidele politice din România (1944–1947)* [Alliances and Confrontations among the Political Parties of Romania (1944–1947)] (Bucharest, 1996), pp. 146–188; Lönhárt, “Etapete instaurării regimului comunist în România,” pp. 85–88.
- 28 Lönhárt, “Etapete instaurării regimului comunist în România,” pp. 313–320 and 326–329; “A demokrácia őszinte alkalmazása” [The Sincere Application of Democracy], *Erdély*, January 8, 1946, p. 1; Ferenc Bruder, “Választások előtt” [Before Elections], *Erdély*, February 17, 1946, p. 1. This National Hungarian Committee of the Social Democratic Party of Romania condemned the turn of the Social Democrats led by Titel Petrescu against the Communist-led coalition: “Eltávolították a Szociáldemokrata Párt kebeléből a szakadórokat” [The Schismatics Have Been Removed from the Bosom of the Social Democratic Party], *Erdély*, March 20, 1946, p. 1; Ferenc Bruder, “A kizárások után” [After the Expulsions], *Erdély*, March 24, 1946, p. 1.
- 29 Stefano Bottoni, *Sztálin a székelyeknél* [Stalin among the Székelys] (Csíkszereda, 2008), *passim*.
- 30 Nagy and Vincze, eds., *Autonomisták és centralisták, passim*. Virgiliu Țărău, “Problema națională în politica Partidului Comunist Român în anii 1944–1946. Considerații preliminare” [The National Problem in the Policy of the Romanian Communist Party in the Years 1944–1946. Preliminary Considerations], in *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Cluj-Napoca XXXVI* (1997): 223–241; Tamás Lönhárt, “Premisele politicii Partidului Comunist din România / Partidului Comunist Român privind problema minorității maghiare” [The Political Premises of the Communist Party of Romania/Romanian Communist Party Relating to the Problem of the Hungarian Minority], in Lönhárt, *Uniunea Populară Maghiară în perioada instaurării regimului comunist*, pp. 117–122; *Világosság*, December 10, 1944, p. 1; *Világosság*, January 23, 1945, p. 2.
- 31 *Világosság*, November 14, 1944, p. 1; *Világosság*, November 17, 1944, p. 1; László Bányai, “A tisztánlátás életkérdés számunkra” [Seeing Clearly Is a Matter of Life and Death for Us], *Világosság*, November 28, 1944, p. 1.

- 32 On the evaluation of MADOSZ and the mentality of the left-wing Popular Front, see Lönhárt, *Uniunea Populară Maghiară în perioada instaurării regimului comunist*, pp. 141–144 and 146–147. On the connection between the role of MADOSZ and the formation of the MNSZ, see *ibid.*, pp. 157–166.
- 33 “A Fekete-tengertől a Lajtáig” [From the Black Sea to the Leitha], *Világosság*, April 6, 1945, p. 1; “A dunavölgyi népek közös szabadsága” [The Mutual Freedom of the Peoples of the Danubian Valley], *Világosság*, April 15, 1945, p. 1.
- 34 See the valuable published document about this: Mihály Fülöp and Gábor Vincze, eds., *Revízió vagy autonómia? Iratok a magyar-román kapcsolatok történetéről, 1944–1947* [Revision or Autonomy? Documents on the History of Hungarian–Romanian Relations, 1944–1947] (Budapest, 1996), pp. 83–85.
- 35 Sándor Kacsó, “Jogaink maradéktalan kiharcolását csak a népi egységünk biztosíthatja” [Only Our Ethnic Unity Can Ensure the Complete Attainment of Our Rights], *Világosság*, January 23, 1946, p. 2.
- 36 Direcția Județeană al Arhivelor Naționale Cluj (Cluj County Directorate of the National Archives of Romania, henceforth DJANC), fond nr. 26 Partidul Comunist Român, Comitetul Județean – Organizația Județeană UPM Cluj, dosar nr. 1/ 1945, pp. 140–142 (Report of Lajos Mezei on the activity of the MNSZ in Kolozs County); Tamás Lönhárt, “Activitatea Uniunii Populare Maghiare în primul an al guvernării Dr. Petru Groza: reprezentarea intereselor economice și juridice a maghiarilor din România” [The Activity of the Hungarian Popular Union in the First Year of the Government of Dr. Petru Groza: the Representation of the Economic and Legal Interests of the Hungarians of Romania], in Lönhárt, *Uniunea Populară Maghiară în perioada instaurării regimului comunist*, pp. 227–248.
- 37 *Világosság*, November 21, 1945, pp. 1–2; István Katona Szabó, “Az MNSZ marosvásárhelyi kiáltványa (1945 november 17)” [The Marosvásárhely Manifesto of the MNSZ (November 17, 1945)], *Múltunk* 4 (1997): 95; Ildikó Lipcsey, *A Romániai Magyar Népi Szövetség az önfeladás útján (1944–1953)* [The Hungarian Popular Union on the Path to Self-Surrender (1944–1953)] (Budapest, 1995), p. 78.
- 38 *Világosság*, November 21, 1945, pp. 1–2.

- 39 DJANC, fond Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj, dosar 627/1945–1946 (Iredentismul maghiar), nota nr. 22.181, dated January 31, 1946: “Among Hungarians there is insistent talk of a new revision of the present borders of Transylvania. It is said that the Hungarians have [received] promises that they will be given the towns of Carei-Mari (Nagykároly), Satu-Mare (Szatmárnémeti), Sighetul Marmației (Máramarossziget) and Oradea (Nagyvárad)”;
- see also the following: *ibid.*, dosar 164/1945–1946 (Rapoarte și dări de seamă privind starea de spirit a populației maghiare), nota nr. 89/9 dated April 1945, nota nr. 2948 dated August 28, 1945, dare de seamă nr. 2013 dated October 1, 1945, and dare de seamă nr. 2241 dated October 15, 1945; *ibid.*, dosar 168/1945–1946 (Starea de spirit a populației, abuzuri repatrieri), nota nr. 2659, dated November 27, 1945; *ibid.*, dosar 170/1946 (Organizații și acțiuni reacționare), nota nr. 9875, dated May 22, 1946, and nota nr. 3335, dated June 5, 1946; *ibid.*, dosar 397/1944–1945, nota nr. 22365, dated March 20, 1945.
- 40 DJANC, fond Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj, dosar 164, nota nr. 3245, January 28, 1946; Arhivele Naționale, Filiala Cluj, fond Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj, dosar 178, nota nr. 152 S, dated May 15, 1946; nota nr. 915S, dated August 3, 1946; Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (Centre of National Historical Archives of Romania, henceforth ANIC), fond IGJ, dosar 146/1945: Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, Direcția Siguranței și Ordinii Publice, Serviciul Siguranței, Biroul A: Referat nr. F.N., dated January 5, 1946, ff. 32 and 52, Inspectoratul Jand. Tg. Mureș, Legiunea Jand. Mureș, nota informativă nr. 511, dated January 12, 1946.
- 41 ANIC, fond IGJ, dosar 146/1945, f. 211, Inspectoratul de Jandarmerie Mureș, Legiunea Jandarmeriei din Odorheiu, nota informativă nr. 379, dated February 9, 1946.
- 42 Magyar Országos Levéltár (Hungarian National Archives, henceforth: MOL) XIX-J-1-a, Külügyminisztérium – Békeelőkészítő Osztály (Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Peace Preparatory Division, henceforth: KÜM-BéO), 61. d., IV. 136 (*Erdélyi Magyar Népi Szövetség 1945–1946*), f. 97; Lipcsey, *A Romániai Magyar Népi Szövetség az önfeladás*, p. 121.
- 43 *Erdély*, January 8, 1946, p. 1; “A demokrácia őszinte alkalmazása” [The Sincere Application of Democracy], *Erdély*, January 8, 1946, p. 1: “We do not ask much of the Popular Union, only what we did last time: not to speak on behalf of those who did entrust them to do so.”

- 44 “A Békeelőkészítő Osztály december havi összefoglaló jelentése a román belpolitikai helyzetről és a magyar kisebbség helyzetéről, Budapest, 1946. január 12” [Summary Report of the Peace Preparatory Division for the Month of December on the Romanian Domestic Political Situation and the Situation of the Hungarian Minority], in Fülöp and Vincze, eds., *Revizió vagy autonómia?*, pp. 118–123.
- 45 DANJC, Fond Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj, Dossier nr. 605/1945, Report from February 18, 1945.
- 46 MOL XIX-J-1-a, KÜM- BéO, 61. d., IV. 136 (Erdélyi Magyar Népi Szövetség 1945–1946), f. 97.
- 47 *Világosság*, February 9, 1946, p. 2.
- 48 ANIC, fond IGJ, dosar 146/1945, ff. 274–275.
- 49 *Világosság*, November 23, 1945, p. 1; *Világosság*, January 5, 1946, p. 1; *Világosság*, January 6, 1946, p. 1: “Our people will chase from its ranks those defeatist Hungarians in league with our enemies, who now crop up here and there and with demagogic slogans want to plunge all Hungarians once again into catastrophe.”
- 50 This is a reference to the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers in Moscow, December 16–26, 1945; see Dobrinescu, *România și organizarea postbelică a lumii*, p. 116.
- 51 *Világosság*, January 9, 1946, p. 1.
- 52 *Világosság*, July 1, 1946, p. 2.
- 53 DJANC, fond Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj, dosar 635/1945–1947, nota nr. 181/K April 9, 1946.
- 54 *Ibid.*
- 55 Fülöp and Vincze, eds., *Revizió vagy autonómia?*, p. 60.
- 56 *Ibid.*, pp. 50–53, 55–59 and 66–68.
- 57 The detailed account found in the following archival document, which records the information on this matter that reached the Ministry of the Interior of the Kingdom of Romania, taking umbrage at the tacit attitude on the part of the MNSZ, sheds light on this: ANIC, fond IGJ, dosar 146/1945, ff. 219–220 .
- 58 DJANC, fond Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj, dosar 635/1945–1947, report dated January 18, 1946; also see Fülöp and Vincze, eds., *Revizió vagy autonómia?*, pp. 123–125.
- 59 Fülöp and Vincze, eds., *Revizió vagy autonómia?*, p. 124.
- 60 DJANC, fond Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj, dosar 635/1945–1947, nota nr. 181/K, dated April 9, 1946.
- 61 ANIC, fond IGJ, dosar 146 / 1945, f. 18.

- 62 ANIC, fond IGJ, dosar 147 / 1946, f. 54, Legiunea Jandarmi Trei Scaune, Bir. Poliției și Siguranței, nota informativă nr. 1198/1199/S, dated February 23, 1946. Signed by the commander of the Trei Scaune Legion, Major Gh. Diaconescu.
- 63 DJANC, fond Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj, dosar 625/1945, Report of February 18, 1946.
- 64 MOL XIX-J-1-a, KÜM-BéO, 61. d., IV-136, f. 142.
- 65 “Intervenția lui Nicolae Goldberger pe probleme organizatorice, de propagandă și cu privire la maghiarii din partid avută la ședința din 29 ianuarie 1946 a Plenarei CC al PCR” [Interpolation of Nicolae Goldberger on Problems of Organization and Propaganda, with Regard to the Hungarians of the Party, Held at the Session of the RCP CC Plenary Session of January 29, 1946], in Țărău and Bucur, eds., *Strategii și politici electorale*, pp. 74–77.
- 66 *Ibid.*, p. 76.
- 67 DJANC, fond Comitetul Regional PCR Cluj nr. 2 (Secția Organizații de masă), dosar 1946 / 4, f. 1, ff. 5–6, 9, 11, 12 and 17.
- 68 Gyárfás Kurkó, “Jogegyenlőségünk kivívásában, kultúránk fejlesztésében, népünk szolgálatában csak egyetlen szervezet képviselhet, a Magyar Népi Szövetség” [In the Achievement of Equality of Rights, in the Development of Our Culture, in the Service of Our People, Only One Single Organization Can Represent Us, the Hungarian Popular Union], *Világosság*, July 1, 1946, p. 1.
- 69 MOL XIX-J-1-a, KÜM-BéO, 61. d., IV-136, ff. 142 and 154–155; DJANC, fond Comitetul Regional PCR Cluj nr. 2 (Secția Organizații de masă), dosar 1946 / 4, ff. 26 and 31; see also Lönhárt, *Uniunea Populară Maghiară în perioada instaurării regimului comunist*, p. 329.
- 70 *Világosság*, July 15, 1946, p. 1.
- 71 Ildikó Lipcsey, ed., *Kurkó Gyárfás emlékére [In Memoriam Gyárfás Kurkó]* (Budapest, 1987), p. 102.
- 72 *Világosság*, July 15, 1946, p. 1.
- 73 MOL XIX-J-1-a, KÜM-BéO, 61. d., IV-136, ff. 112 and 155.
- 74 *Világosság*, March 10, 1946, p. 1; Fülöp and Vincze, eds., *Revizió vagy autonómia?*, p. 136.
- 75 MOL XIX-J-1-a, KÜM-BéO, 61. d., IV. 136, f. 105.
- 76 *Népi Egység*, March 22, 1946, p. 1; Lipcsey, *A Romániai Magyar Népi Szövetség az önfeladás*, pp. 99 and 122; Sándor Balogh, “A magyar koalíció és Erdély a fegyverszünetről a békeszerződésig”

- [The Hungarian Coalition and Transylvania from the Cease-Fire to the Peace Treaty], *Múltunk* 4 (1997): 131–138.
- 77 MOL XIX-J-1-a, KÜM-BéO, 61. d., IV. 136, f. 105.
- 78 *Ibid.*
- 79 Edgár Balogh, *Férfimunka. Emlékirat 1944–1955* [Men's Work. Memoirs 1944–1955] (Budapest, 1986), p. 83.
- 80 *Ibid.*, p. 119.
- 81 MOL, XIX-J-33-b, KÜM - a bukaresti követség TÜK-iratai, 3. d., 5/c, 218/pol.-1946, ff. 1–4. 538,862 votes (8.21 percent of all votes cast). The archival sources also testify that compared to the official results more votes were cast for the MNSZ (e.g. in Kolozs County), but the falsification of the election results impacted the MNSZ as well; see MOL XIX-J-1-k, KÜM-Admin., Rom-5.c, 9. d., 218. pol.-1946, f. 8.
- 82 *Erdély*, May 30, 1946, p. 1; *Erdély*, June 7, 1946, p. 3; see also the viewpoint of Romanian historiography: Virgiliu Țărău, “Noi documente referitoare la atacul căminului studențesc ‘Avram Iancu’ din Cluj în seara zilei de 28 mai 1946” [New Documents Referring to the Attack on the “Avram Iancu” Student Dormitory in Cluj on the Evening of May 28, 1946], in Romulus Rusan, ed., *Anul 1946: Scrisori și alte texte* [The Year 1946: Letters and Other Texts] (Bucharest, 1997), pp. 265–278.
- 83 Virgiliu Țărău, “Problema națională în politica Partidului Comunist Român în anii 1944–1946. Considerații preliminare,” in *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Cluj-Napoca*, XXXVI (Cluj, 1997), pp. 235 and 237–238.
- 84 *Scânteia*, March 23, 1946, p. 3; *Scânteia*, June 27, 1946, pp. 1–3.
- 85 *Világosság*, April 19, 1946, p. 2; *Világosság*, May 6, 1946, p. 2; *Világosság*, June 13, 1946, p. 1.
- 86 Țărău, “Problema națională,” pp. 238–240.
- 87 “Kurkó Gyárfás nagy beszéde a székelyudvarhelyi népgyűlésen – A Magyar Népi Szövetség az egység megszilárdítására és az építő munka fokozására hív fel minden becsületes magyart, de véglegesen leszámol a provokáló reakcióval” [Gyárfás Kurkó's Important Speech at the Popular Rally in Székelyudvarhely – The Hungarian Popular Union Calls upon Every Honorable Hungarian to Consolidate Unity and Increase Construction Work, but Deals with Provocative Reaction Once and for All], *Világosság*, July 4, 1946, p. 1.
- 88 Fülöp and Vincze, eds., *Revizió vagy autonómia?*, pp. 247–250.

- 89 Lipcsey, *A Romániai Magyar Népi Szövetség az önfeladás*, pp. 103–104.
- 90 *Világosság*, July 1, 1946, p. 2; see also Fülöp and Vincze, eds., *Revizió vagy autonómia?*, p. 102.
- 91 MOL XIX-J-1-a, KÜM-BéO, 61. doboz, IV. 137. csomó, f. 58.
- 92 DJANC, fond Comitetul Județean PCR Cluj, nr. 1 (Blocul Partidelor Democrate, Secția Regională Cluj, Campania electorală, 1946), dosar nr. 14/1946, ff. 14–15, ff. 42–43.
- 93 *Világosság*, November 27, 1946, p. 2.
- 94 Gábor Vincze, *Illúziók és csalódások. Fejezetek a romániai magyarság második világháború utáni történetéből* [Illusions and Disappointments. Chapters from the History of the Hungarians of Romania after the Second World War] (Csíkszereda, 1999), pp. 17–19.
- 95 On the entire question of CASBI and its effect on the Hungarian community from Romania, see Gábor Vincze, *Magyar vagyon roman kézen* [Hungarian Wealth in Romanian Hands] (Csíkszereda, 2000), *passim*.
- 96 Fülöp and Vincze, eds., *Revizió vagy autonómia?*, pp. 250–251.
- 97 *Világosság*, July 4, 1946, p. 1.
- 98 *Ibid.*
- 99 *Ibid.*
- 100 MOL XIX-J-1-a, KÜM-BéO, 61. d., IV. 137. cs., f. 58.
- 101 *Ibid.*
- 102 *Ibid.*, f. 59.
- 103 *Ibid.*, ff. 59–60.
- 104 Lipcsey, ed., *Kurkó Gyárfás*, p. 102.
- 105 MOL XIX-J-1-a, KÜM-BéO, 61. d., IV. 137. cs., f. 60.
- 106 MOL XIX-J-1-a, KÜM-BéO, 61. d., IV. 137. cs., f. 61.
- 107 MOL XIX-J-1-a, KÜM-BéO, 61. d., IV. 136. cs., f. 43.
- 108 *Ibid.*, 142.
- 109 Hitchins, *România 1866–1947*, pp. 566–567.
- 110 Virgiliu Țărău, “Rezultatele reale ale alegerilor parlamentare din 19 noiembrie 1946 în județele Cluj, Turda și Someș,” in Sorin Mitu and Florin Gogâltan, eds., *Studii de istoria Transilvaniei. Tinerii Istorici*, vol. 1 (Cluj-Napoca, 1994), pp. 204–212; Dinu C. Giurescu, “Documente privind ‘alegerile’ din 1946” [Documents about the “Elections” of 1946], in Dinu C. Giurescu, ed., *Centenar Constantin C. Giurescu* [Centenary of Constantin C. Giurescu] (Craiova, 2001);

Dinu C. Giurescu, *Cade Cortina de Fier. România – 1947* [The Iron Curtain Falls. Romania – 1947] (Bucharest, 2002), pp. 9–13; Țărău and Bucur, eds., *Strategii și politici electorale*, pp. 312–324; Cornel Grad and Doru E. Goron, “Alegerile parlamentare din noiembrie 1946 în Sălaj. Pregătire, desfășurare, rezultate” [The Parliamentary Elections of November 1946 in Sălaj. Preparations, Conduct, Results], in Ciubotă, ed., *Sovietizarea Nord-Vestului României*, pp. 143–146; Claudiu Porumbăceanu, “Alegerile parlamentare din 19 noiembrie 1946 și perioada preelectorală în nord-vestul Transilvaniei” [The Parliamentary Elections of November 19, 1946 and the Pre-Electoral Period in the Northwest of Transylvania], in Ciubotă, ed., *Sovietizarea Nord-Vestului*, pp. 123–141; Silvia Popovici, “Alegerile din 1946 prezentate în documentele depuse la Ministerul Justiției-Biroul Electoral” [The Elections of 1946 Presented in the Documents Deposited at the Ministry of Justice Election Bureau], in Ciubotă, ed., *Sovietizarea Nord-Vestului*, pp. 117–121. See also MOL XIX-J-1-k, KÜM. Adminisztratív: Románia, 9. doboz, 5/c, 218 / 1946. pol., ff. 4–5 (Strictly confidential report on the elections in Romania for Minister of Foreign Affairs János Gyöngyösi, Bucharest, November 25, 1946).

- 111 MOL XIX-J-1-k, KÜM - Adminisztratív: Románia, 9. doboz, 5/c, 218/1946. pol., f. 6.
- 112 *Ibid.*, f. 7.
- 113 MOL XIX-J-33-b, KÜM – TÜK, 3. doboz, 5/c csomó, 218/pol.-1946, ff. 1–3.
- 114 Such, for example, is the case of Kolozs County, too, as the documents researched and analyzed by myself and Virgiliu Țărău in the county archives prove. Here an agreement was finally reached between the electoral campaign committees of the MNSZ and the Bloc of Democratic Parties, which “resulted in a compromise solution”; see DJANC, fond Comitetul Județean PCR Cluj, nr. 1 (Blocul Partidelor Democrate, Secția Regională Cluj, Campania electorală, 1946), dosar nr. 14/ 1946, ff. 31–35; The data on the Romanian parties have been analyzed by Țărău, “Campania electorală și rezultatul real,” pp. 204–212; see also Țărău and Bucur, eds., *Strategii și politici electorale*, pp. 316–320, and on the Hungarian aspects and the negotiations between the MNSZ and the Bloc of Democratic Parties, MOL XIX-J-1-k, KÜM - Adminisztratív: Románia, 9. d., 218/1946. pol. Bucharest, November 25, 1946, f. 8.

- 115 MOL XIX-J-33-b, KÜM – TÜK (bukaresti követség TÜK-iratai), 3. doboz, 5/c, 218/pol.-1946. (Report of Embassy Councilor István Gyöngyössi to Minister of Foreign Affairs János Gyöngyösi about the parliamentary elections in Romania. Bucharest, November 25, 1946).
- 116 MOL XIX-J-1-k, KÜM-Admin., Rom-5.c.-9. doboz, 218.pol.1946, f. 8.
The mandates obtained as a result of the actual number of votes cast and the mandates obtained through the official results are as follows:
- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Bihar: | 5 instead of 8, |
| Hunyad: | 0 instead of 1, |
| Kolozs: | 2 instead of 3, |
| Kis Küküllő: | 0 instead of 1, |
| Maros: | 3 instead of 5, |
| Nagy Küküllő: | 0 instead of 1. |
- 117 1922: 3 deputies and 3 senators.
1926: 14 deputies and 12 senators.
1927 (Minority Bloc): 15 deputies and 1 senator.
1928: 16 deputies and 8 senators.
1931: 10 deputies and 2 senators.
1932: 14 deputies and 3 senators.
1933: 9 deputies and 3 senators.
1937: 19 deputies – but Parliament was not convoked.
See the following: Imre Mikó, *Huszonkét év* [Twenty-Two Years] (Budapest, 1990), pp. 47–49, 59–72, 85–87, 101–106 and 274–284; *Magyar Kisebbség*, April 19, 1926, p. 311; *Magyar Kisebbség*, January 1, 1929, p. 21; “Választottunk” [We Have Chosen], *Magyar Kisebbség*, June 16, 1931, pp. 438–477; *Magyar Kisebbség*, August 1, 1932, pp. 435–455; *Magyar Kisebbség*, January 1, 1934, p. 4.
- 118 *Világosság*, December 15, 1946, p. 1; *Világosság*, March 27, 1947, p. 1.

Mihály Zoltán Nagy

**REPRESENTING NATIONAL MINORITY INTERESTS
IN THE SHADOW OF THE RED FLAG.
THE HUNGARIAN POPULAR UNION OF ROMANIA
AS AN AGENCY OF INTEREST ADVOCACY,
1944–1953**

The elite that assumed political leadership of the Hungarians of Romania, who came under new state suzerainty as a result of the peace treaties concluding the First World War – adapting to the prevailing political conditions – established independent *parties organized on a national/ethnic basis*.¹ These parties set as a goal first and foremost the protection of ethnic interests. From this it followed unequivocally that the ethnically organized political formations worked out a *political strategy of building and protecting institutions*: in other words, they undertook to function as the *protectors and representatives of minority interests* in the relationship between the Hungarian community and the Romanian state.

In my study I examine whether this function is present in the case of the Hungarian Popular Union of Romania (*Romániai Magyar Népi Szövetség*, or *Uniunea Populară Maghiară din România*, henceforth MNSZ), which was established in the autumn of 1944. If so, then what were the ideological and legal basic elements of this policy of safeguarding/representing interests, and what institutional and interest-representational structure did it establish for itself in the interests of enforcing and protecting minority rights? I would also like to uncover why establishing priority between the ideologies of a mass organization and those of an interest-advocacy group caused conflicts within the organization, as well as to see how much this influenced both the place occupied by the MNSZ within the Romanian political system and its relationship to the Romanian Communist Party (RCP). All this may contribute to deciding the debate about the extent to which the organization may be regarded

as a *mass organization*, a *satellite* (of the RCP), or how much it bore the stamp of an *ethnic, ethno-regional party*. Before exploring these questions, we must first also make it clear that because of its origins and political alliance the MNSZ formulated (or could formulate) its minority-policy conceptions “within the Hungarian policy of the given country/the majority party leadership [which is to say the Romanian Communist Party – M. Z. N.]”²

Due to limitations of space I will not present the Hungarian/minority policy of the Romanian governments and parties,³ and nor will I present the basic features of Romanian minority law.⁴ However, I must acknowledge that in the case of Romania, too, the Soviet leadership employed the same script as in the entire East Central European region: it utilized the border and minority issues in the interests of putting the Communist Parties in power.

The Hungarian Popular Union of Romania was officially established on October 16, 1944, in Brassó (Braşov) by the activists of the National Union of Hungarian Workers (*Magyar Dolgozók Országos Szövetsége* or MADOSZ: the legal Hungarian mass organization of the RCP between the two world wars) and the RCP.⁵ According to its self-definition, the MNSZ, which came into being as the “democratic political organization”⁶ of the entire Hungarian community of Romania, possessed a dual “identity.” On the one hand, a subordinate relationship evolved between the Romanian Communist Party, which aspired to seize power, and the MNSZ. In this system of relations the MNSZ oversaw the function of a *mass organization*, ensuring votes and carrying out political “reeducation.” On the other hand, to the Hungarian minority of Romania it appeared by contrast as an *interest-protection organization*, embracing Hungarian interests, and thus a *Hungarian party*.

In the first period (1944–1945) the MNSZ avoided giving a factual illumination of the current political context of the grievances but instead placed the blame on the past. Yet it was precisely the existing governments that had created the obstacles,⁷ on the one hand by unilaterally rectifying grievances committed in the past by always favoring only the demands of one side (the Romanian

one), and on the other by legislative practice that ignored the claims of the Hungarian community in the course of passing laws. And if by chance the minority policy of the MNSZ drew criticism, then the organization itself did not attempt to clarify the facts either, but rather it claimed to detect behind the contrary opinion an “ulterior” motive. Only reaction lurking in the regime could be criticized; the “unhealthy raising” of grievances immediately brought with it the reactionary label, because, according to the official explanation, “unhealthy” criticism aided the work of reaction.

The establishment of the MNSZ system of institutions for safeguarding and representing interests followed both from the organization’s political purpose and from the over-politicization of the Romanian state administration. Beginning in 1945 the decisions of the administrative organs were reviewed by committees of a political nature set up in accordance with the power relations in domestic politics, but it was here in fact that the ultimate decisions were taken. The MNSZ, as the political representation of the Hungarians of Romania as well as the supporter of the government coalition, the National Democratic Front (NDF), was guaranteed a place on these committees or demanded positions on them for itself.

It fell to the participants of the congress held in Kolozsvár in May 1945 on the one hand to call the government’s attention to the grievances of the Hungarians, and on the other to define what the MNSZ meant by national legal equality before the law, and what means it would make use of for the sake of achieving this end.

In the interests of ending Hungarian grievances, the MNSZ addressed memoranda to the government⁸ or to the various ministries. The MNSZ also had to resort to the classic form of interest enforcement, seeking to eliminate the Hungarians’ grievances through its formal and informal party contacts. The MNSZ initiated negotiations with representatives of the government and the NDF. However, the delegations participating in the negotiations had to face the fact that against the legal arguments of the MNSZ the government and the NDF on numerous occasions articulated

political protests and objections. For example, László Luka (Vasile Luca), a member of the RCP Central Committee Political Bureau (*Biroul Politic al Comitetului Central al Partidul Comunist Român*), did not consider the proposal of the MNSZ, which sought to solve the teacher shortage arising at the newly established Bolyai University with instructors of Hungarian citizenship who had remained or returned in 1945, to be appropriate from a political standpoint. Luka in fact claimed to have received information from Hungary that politically these teachers did not meet “democratic” requirements.⁹ At the same time, the MNSZ also had to see that the RCP did not treat the Hungarians’ concrete economic, social and cultural grievances as ethnic or communal issues, but rather interpreted them as ideological ones and as a question of conflicts existing between the classes, linking their solution to a settlement of problems affecting the whole of society.¹⁰

In principle the party structure of the MNSZ was suited for overseeing the tasks stemming from its role in safeguarding interests. The foundations of the organization’s institutional system for managing such tasks were laid out in the organizational statute adopted during the congress in 1945. Under the terms of that organizational statute, the goal of the MNSZ was: “... the institutional protection of the economic, cultural, legal and administrative interests of the Hungarians of Romania in a democratic spirit and the realization of national equality before the law.”¹¹ On an organizational level the overseeing of these tasks fell primarily to the legal and administrative committees,¹² but in daily practice the economic and cultural committees also performed similar activities.¹³

According to the original conception, the work of the legal and administrative committees set up at the national, county and, if necessary, district levels would have been headed by lawyers or MNSZ members experienced in legal and administrative affairs. In the interests of remedying the arising grievances, as a first step they turned to the local authorities; then in the event of a rejection the matter was forwarded to the Central Managing Committee,

naturally in accordance with the formal requirements prescribed in the judicial procedures.¹⁴

A record was made of the arriving complaints, and in the case of general legal grievances (injuries suffered because of the CASBI quasi-nationalizations,¹⁵ land reform, placing officials on the payroll, and so on) data were collected.¹⁶ The documentary evidence thus prepared served as a good basis for negotiations with the local administrative agencies, as well as during negotiations with the government and the RCP. Because of the flood of complaints, the MNSZ Central Executive Committee of the MNSZ in a circular issued in February 1946 instructed the legal and administrative committees not to turn to the Bucharest or central offices with individual grievances, but rather to take care of them wherever possible locally.¹⁷ Despite all this, one still cannot speak of effective legal defense, because in 1946 within the 23 Transylvanian county organizations some kind of permanent legal and administrative office, or at least legal advising, operated in only 12 counties.¹⁸ In possession of the concrete data (written evidence, records, and so on) the rapporteur of the office of legal affairs achieved success only if the recognized politicians of the MNSZ also embraced the cause¹⁹ or if they obtained the support of the county political committee.²⁰

According to the central instructions, at the local level the economic committees for the towns and the communes should have taken control of the farmers' associations and cooperatives (which counted as Hungarian communal property) operating in the territory of the given town or commune, but in reality they strove to address Hungarian economic grievances.²¹ In a few cases during the on-site investigation conducted jointly with the delegates of the Plowmen's Front (*Frontul Plugarilor*) or the RCP they remedied irregularities committed by the local or county administrative organs.²²

The records containing the individual complaints, the summaries prepared about grievances of a general nature, and the on-site visits conducted for the sake of settling the above matters all suggested that the MNSZ was taking the Hungarian population into its protection and representing "Hungarian affairs" against the

abuses of the Romanian state authorities. For the MNSZ the duty to represent Hungarian minority interests functioned as a means of self-legitimization, and it was mostly through this that it mobilized the Hungarian population. It was this fact that Gyárfás Kurkó, President of the MNSZ pointed out in an article appearing in the journal *Világosság*: “The Hungarians living here must finally know that there is only one single way to guarantee national minority rights, and this is to join forces with the MNSZ.”²³

For the Hungarian population the organization’s interest-advocacy function contributed to the identification with the MNSZ, and the formation of a party identity and party support. At the same time, it functioned also as a kind of protest channel. The report by the chairman of the organization in Kövend (Plăiești) in Torda/Turda County also proves this:

We boldly shout to the wide world that we want to live and we won’t allow ourselves to be plundered [a reference to the CASBI law – M.Z.N.]. We do not covet what belongs to others, *but let no one who values his life touch that which belongs to us!*

I close my report by stating that in everything we shall be faithful *helpers of the National Presidium of the MNSZ so long as it oversees the safeguarding of the Transylvanian Hungarians’ interests without fail* [my emphasis – M.Z.N.].²⁴

The reinforcement of the representational profile of the MNSZ was one of the prominent topics of the preparations for the 1946 elections. The new ideological bases for the organization’s policy of interest representation were set out at the meeting of the Central Managing Committee in Brassó (Braşov, March 18–20, 1946) and at the congress in Székelyudvarhely (Odorheiu Secuiesc, June 28–30, 1946).²⁵ The county organizations evaluated the resolutions adopted during the Brassó/Braşov conference by concluding that “the MNSZ switched to a certain tactic: its own self-defense and the establishment of its rights.”²⁶ At the Székelyudvarhely/Odorheiu Secuiesc congress Kurkó also stated unequivocally that the MNSZ

reserved for itself the exclusive right to represent Hungarian interests:

No matter how serious a democratic organization we may be, and in no matter how close an alliance we may be with the democratic organizations speaking other languages, every Hungarian democrat must nevertheless see clearly *that in achieving legal equality, in the development of our culture, in the service of our people, there can be only a single organization that represents us from this point of view. And this is our own Hungarian organization, the MNSZ. (Hear! Hear!) [my emphasis – M.Z.N.].*²⁷

In his speech Kurkó referred primarily to disturbances that had arisen in the sphere of minority political action. The leadership of the MNSZ rejected the effort of the National Hungarian Committee of the Romanian Social Democratic Party (RSDP) to establish a common electoral bloc. But in the counties of the Székelyföld (Szekler Land) differences of opinion had arisen, among other reasons, because of the left-wing party organizations, since here the latter could recruit their membership only from the ranks of the Hungarian population. At the same time it was also a signal to the Plowmen's Front, because the president of the organization wanted to make it clear that the Hungarian populace of the villages was the base of legitimation and the constituency of the MNSZ.

In the interests of intensifying legal defense activity, in April 1946 the National Executive Committee established an electoral and legal defense fund;²⁸ then in September of the same year a Legal Affairs Committee was set up alongside the Office of Legal Affairs in Bucharest.²⁹ In parallel to this, the county legal and administrative committees recorded several hundred cases, or on numerous occasions they provided legal assistance.³⁰ Their activity was justified by the fact that because of unresolved grievances the Hungarians of certain counties had fallen into a "demoralized" state.³¹ "On behalf of our communal section, I respectfully ask the National Presidium of the MNSZ through the present assembly," reads the letter of the MNSZ organization in Marosludas/Luduș,

“that for the sake of the existence of our downtrodden Hungarian people it urgently obtain from the government legal decrees that clarify once and for all, and to the satisfaction of all, the concept of absenteeism and completely erase the egregious injustices of CASBI and the land reform against the Hungarians of Transylvania.”³²

In the area of rectifying general Hungarian economic grievances, neither the legal defense offices nor the National Economic Department of the MNSZ proved effective. The leading politicians of the MNSZ had to face the fact that, lacking suitable expertise, the work of the departments was fruitless, and the professionalization of the apparatus was needed. Károly Kós, chairman of the MNSZ organization in Kolozs/Cluj County, himself argued in favor of this in an article that appeared on the pages of *Világosság* in January 1946. The “forces” that had come to the surface in the first phase of the formation of the MNSZ, Kós opined, “were suitable and sufficient and in themselves were even able to perform good work in the first phase of laying the groundwork and reconstruction work.” Then he continued: “In the second, entirely different phase of construction, they must be complemented and they must be expanded by such forces as can perform this work, as well as guide and lead it.”³³ At the congress in Székelyudvarhely/Odorheiu Secuiesc Kurkó himself admitted that when it came to the “honorable, proletarian warriors” placed in the organization’s leading team, “political warriors [...] did not in every case correspond to the facts.”³⁴

The politicians of the MNSZ also had to acknowledge that not only was the organization lacking the expertise necessary for economic legal defense, but the system of institutions connected to this also was outside the structure of the MNSZ.

Although after the first congress of the MNSZ numerous attempts were made to amalgamate the Transylvanian Hungarian Economic Association (*Erdélyi Magyar Gazdasági Egyesület*, EMGE) into the organization’s National Economic Committee,³⁵ as well as to unify the two cooperative centers and bring them under the direction of the MNSZ,³⁶ one by one these efforts failed. For this reason, in January 1946 the MNSZ resorted to a new tactic.

On the one hand the MNSZ provided an opportunity for the EMGE and the cooperatives to articulate their demands, but on the other it established parallel organizations for the safeguarding of economic interests at the same time.

A year and a half later, in February 1946, the EMGE was allowed to hold its assembly to elect its officials in Marosvásárhely/Târgu Mureș,³⁷ and in April of that year the *Szövetség* and *Kaláka* cooperative centers – at the suggestion of Gyárfás Kurkó and the head of the National Department of Legal and Administrative Affairs, János Demeter³⁸ – debated the discriminatory state measures afflicting the cooperatives at a joint congress. However, within a short time it became clear that the MNSZ would not drop the subject of safeguarding economic interests, nor its institutional representation.

It was not by chance, at the conference of the MNSZ economic committee, held in Marosvásárhely/Târgu Mureș on April 10, 1946, that two main problems were debated: the situation of the Transylvanian Hungarian banks and that of industry and commerce in the Székelyföld. The espousal of the cause of the Transylvanian Hungarian banks served to win the material and moral support of the Hungarian bourgeoisie (thereby strengthening the community as well), while the plan for the economic development of the Székelyföld aimed at winning the Hungarian votes in the region. It was decided at the conference that a national economic conference would be convoked for May 10 in Brassó/Brașov, the headquarters of the MNSZ, to which, apart from the MNSZ delegates of the county economic committees, experts among the Hungarians of Romania in “light industry, heavy industry, commerce, agriculture, the technical, chemical, financial and timber industries and the cooperatives” also received an invitation. It was declared that “as far as possible a detailed plan would be elaborated regarding the industrialization of the Székelyföld” in time for the conference in Brassó/Brașov and “a proposal would be drafted for setting up a Romanian–Hungarian and a Hungarian–Romanian economic chamber in Bucharest and Budapest respectively.”³⁹ According to

their plans, the economic chamber would have established branches in the various towns of Transylvania.

At the conference of the MNSZ economic committee, held on May 10–11 in Brassó/Braşov, the experts of the institutions representing Hungarian economic interests and other invited experts provided a briefing on the situation of Hungarian agricultural and industrial production. At the end of the deliberations a draft resolution was adopted, the first point of which declared the following: “Our Transylvanian society can stand its ground only if it reorganizes its remaining economic and financial institutions under unitary direction. To achieve this end it will form the Hungarian Economic Council of Romania, operating alongside the economic committee of the MNSZ.”²⁴⁰ According to the plans the Hungarian Economic Council of Romania (*Romániai Magyar Gazdasági Tanács*, henceforth ROMAGÁT) would have set up its central office in in Kolozsvár/Cluj Napoca, while the opening of a representative office in Bucharest was planned. The various Hungarian economic interest groups would have received places on the 25-member council on the basis of invitation, while the presidium of the MNSZ was called on to assemble its governing board.⁴¹

This new tactic of the MNSZ reaped partial success, because it appeared – or better, at least the appearance was given – that it was capable of cooperating with the various social strata, and what is more, that the interest groups would be involved in the political decision-making. In reality it tried to form its own institutional group out of the interest groups existing within the Romanian Hungarian population and based on free association, or to put it another way, it wished to turn them into its own stratum of officials, its bureaucracy. The MNSZ on its own was not capable of surmounting the problems, in order to the preserve the legitimacy it had to increase its institutional capacity. The connection to the system of (not just) Hungarian economic institutions and interest groups at this time was interpreted as yet another sort of coordination system, which in reality presupposed a division of labor: in return for political

protection the Hungarian interest groups would cooperate with the MNSZ. At a rally held after the meeting of the managing committee in Brassó/Braşov in March 1946, Gyárfás Kurkó explained this proposition as follows: “However, for our organization to function in an even healthier manner, a healthy division of labor was needed. In the past we had various nationality organizations: agricultural, cooperative and ecclesiastical associations, and social institutions.”⁴² The “broadening” of the MNSZ framework of cooperation was necessary, opined the president of the MNSZ, so that “this work may be carried out not by our political people.”⁴³ At the Székelyudvarhely/Odorheiu Secuiesc congress Kurkó put it even more precisely:

We have made the resolutions of these organizations, our institutions and our general assemblies, our program, we shall acquaint the congress with those resolutions adopted by our competent expert associations or advisory organizations, [and] reviewing these from a political viewpoint we shall make them our own, and we shall attempt to realize them by bringing our political forces completely to bear on the matter.⁴⁴

But the votes in the Székelyföld were not forgotten either: the plan previously raised at the economic conference in Marosvásárhely/Târgu Mureş and aiming at the economic development of the Székelyföld was considered. To this end the formation of the Horizont Co. was announced at the economic conference in Brassó/Braşov. According to the original plans, Horizont “was formed to exploit natural resources, found lumber and weaving companies, sell Székely acidulous waters, to sell and import agricultural crops, and establish factories and offices” in the Székelyföld.⁴⁵

Subsequent events would prove that the MNSZ was incapable of increasing its institutional capacity. On the one hand, this was because the established parallel economic institutions had not established their own organizational system, but nor had they successfully integrated into Romanian economic life either (from 1947 onwards now the RCP itself felt that the MNSZ did not need to have economic enterprises⁴⁶). The central office of ROMAGÁT was

only window-dressing,⁴⁷ the formation of Horizont dragged on so long that amidst the new economic conditions it lost its topicality,⁴⁸ and the reorganized county economic committees did not fulfill their mission either. “In my opinion, as long as CASBI exists, or the CASBI seizure of Hungarian assets is not lifted,” claimed István Polonyi at the October 1, 1947, meeting of the Kolozs/Cluj County MNSZ county economic committee, “the elevation of the Hungarians’ economic life is not possible to an extent that it would be significantly perceptible, and thus the functioning of the Hungarian economic committee, too, is only idle talk.”⁴⁹ At the same time, tactical shifts occurred in the Hungarian policy of the RCP, which further increased its position of power after the November 1946 elections.

In light of the election results the politicians of the MNSZ felt that the parliamentary mandates obtained⁵⁰ had made legitimate the organization’s ambition to regard itself as the political representation of (all) Hungarians in Romania. At the same time, the fact that the Hungarians’ unitary electoral behavior and the loyal cooperation of the MNSZ displayed towards the victorious Bloc of Democratic Parties (henceforth BDP) had contributed to the consolidation of the political situation in Romania justifiably raised the hope that nothing could now stand in the way of national emancipation. For the sake of politicking more successfully for the safeguarding of interests, the MNSZ Executive Committee decided in favor of joining the BDP at its meeting on February 11, 1947.⁵¹

The Liquidation of the Hungarian Institutional System and the End of Organizational Autonomy

At the meeting of the MNSZ county organizational chairmen and secretaries on March 25–26, 1947, Gyárfás Kurkó came out in favor of the autonomy of Hungarian economic institutions; indeed, for the sake of defending them he was even willing to assume a stance of confrontation against the RCP: “In the Communist Party there are elements who strive to confiscate Hungarian assets.”⁵² As a result of

the meeting of Hungarian and Romanian heads of government in Budapest,⁵³ Kurkó had expected the creation of a customs union and economic alliance with Hungary.⁵⁴ However, shifts in balance that had occurred in foreign and domestic policy had reordered the place occupied by the MNSZ on the Romanian political palette.

The state political conception of the RCP, which was driving for power, did not tolerate those notions that intended to extract various resources from under state control. But not only did it bring resources in state ownership under its supervision, but in parallel to this, in order to abolish or absorb organizations and institutions based on free association, too, it took various measures. Consequently the RCP did not support the continued survival of the autonomous Hungarian economic (and other) institutions. László Luka's article appearing in the May 22 issue of *Igazság*, which may be regarded as a political indictment, in fact called attention to this. The charge of "unprincipled 'Hungarian unity'" had a sobering effect. Luka disapproved of the MNSZ intention that institutions brought under the supervision of the MNSZ, or established by it, as well as the Hungarian institutions sharing in the work, should jointly determine membership in the Hungarian nation – and with it the interests of the Hungarians.

The RCP thought not in a vertical model of society but rather a horizontal one, a class society where state supervision and state distribution were the guiding principles. The MNSZ everywhere found itself at odds with the Party and the state, but in 1947 the two had now begun to become one, and the state party was not to be held accountable.

Beginning in 1948 the Hungarians could not claim a share in power as an autonomous political community, because henceforth power was possessed not by the representatives of the majority and the minority nation, but rather – according to the official ideology – the *working class*. It followed from this that amidst the new realities of power there was no longer any need for a national minority mass organization.

The MNSZ consented to the Hungarian cooperatives joining the Romanian cooperative center, INCOOP, which was tantamount to the nationalization of cooperative assets.⁵⁵

Press reports that appeared on the subsequent EC session held on July 17 and 18 also suggest that a tactical change had set in. The first page of the July 20 issue of *Világosság* bore the following headline: “We can guarantee our rights by carrying forward not the politics of grievance but rather people’s democracy.” Lajos Takács, who had legal training, made the following declaration: “The nationality question [...] is primarily not a legal issue. The nationality question is a question of democracy, but only one of its questions. Because the democratic system still has plenty of questions awaiting a solution.”⁵⁶ Leading the conference in Kurkó’s absence, Sándor Kacsó also pointed out that “the Communist Party is the vanguard that gives momentum to the development of democracy.”⁵⁷ In the resolution adopted at the MNSZ congress that took place in Temesvár (Timișoara) between September 21 and 22, 1947, not only was the priority of the RCP accepted, but it was also declared that the grievances were remedied not without assistance but rather “together with the progressive democratic forces.”⁵⁸

After the Romanian parliamentary elections that took place on March 28, 1948, the room of the MNSZ to maneuver further narrowed. In the resolution passed at the meeting of the EC held in Csíkszereda/Miercurea Ciuc on July 23–24, 1948 – among other things – two main principles were declared: 1) the MNSZ would turn its efforts to the class struggle; 2) once again it was made clear that national equality before the law could be achieved only in tandem with the Romanian Workers’ Party (Partidul Muncitoresc Român – the official name of the party since 1948, henceforth PMR).⁵⁹

The resolution of the Romanian Workers’ Party adopted on December 12, 1948, formulated new concepts in the area of the Party’s minority policy.⁶⁰ It declared the minority question to be solved, but it also warned that in spite of this the spirit of “bourgeois nationalism” and chauvinism continued to be present among the nationalities. The resolutions adopted at the MNSZ

congress held in Kolozsvár/Cluj Napoca between December 10 and 12 were conceived as if the PMR resolution had already been known. In the congress's resolution not one reference can be found to the organization's role in interest advocacy. Instead, space was given to emphasis on the class struggle, "bourgeois nationalism" lurking within the ranks of the Hungarians, and participation "in building the foundations of socialism."⁶¹ With the liquidation of the legal and administrative as well as economic committees in 1949, those institutional structures that suggested that the MNSZ functioned as an interest-advocacy agent were eliminated.⁶² The entries in the "Calendar of People of the Villages" (*Falvak Népe Naptára*) issued for the year 1949 either report on socialism being built in the villages, the struggle led by the PMR, the profitability of the collective farms and the fight for peace, or put these topics in the forefront.⁶³ After the popular council elections held in December 1950, the abolition and/or transformation of the MNSZ was placed on the agenda. A decision was finally reached on whether to maintain the MNSZ at the PMR Central Committee meeting on April 19, 1951.⁶⁴ In accordance with the directive of the PMR, Sándor Kacsó demarcated the place of the MNSZ within the political system at the June 8 session of the Executive Bureau: "We are a mass organization in form only; essentially we must operate as a committee."⁶⁵ Henceforth, the mobilization of the rural organizations could occur only through the popular councils (from the autumn of 1952 onwards the employees of the MNSZ were taken over by the Popular Democratic Front), and only the district (*raion*) and regional *aktiv* were permitted to have separate work plans.⁶⁶ After the intensification of the "class struggle" and the expulsion of "right-wing" deviants within the PMR, with disregard for the provisions of the charter, the president of the organization, Sándor Kacsó, was removed and his place taken by Lajos Juhász during the meeting of the Executive Bureau on September 1, 1952. After the establishment of the Hungarian Autonomous Region, the Party's general secretary, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, declared in late January 1953 that the nationality question had been solved in Romania.⁶⁷

This anticipated the elimination of the MNSZ, which took place at the beginning of 1953.⁶⁸

Mass Organization Ideology versus Party

Analysis of the role of the MNSZ as an agency safeguarding and representing ethnic minority interests provides one of the best examples for demonstrating that the MNSZ – within the given political system – cannot be regarded as simply a mass organization or satellite organization. Although it is true that because of its origin the MNSZ was a political ally of the RCP, it was also capable of representing Hungarian interests that stood in opposition to the notions of the RCP. The model of minority society advocated by the MNSZ could not be incorporated into the class society model of the RCP. The changes that took place in international and domestic political life rendered the institutional articulation of ethnic interests superfluous, and over time the MNSZ was downgraded to the status of a satellite organization.

Examining the period between 1944 and 1953 from the viewpoint of the Hungarian national minority, we may state that not only did the forms of assuming national identity change, and not only was its preservation put in danger, but the *national value system and the system of communal institutions* also entered a grave state of crisis. Wrapped in Communist ideology, the étatist governmental system abolished the existence of the system of non-state nationality institutions and the inherently autonomous Hungarian economic and cultural institutions within a very brief period of time, terminating the activities of organizations standing outside the structures of the party state. With the destruction of the middle class of independent financial means, the disappearance of its bourgeois value system and not least the elimination of political pluralism, national minority culture and identity were now more than ever at the mercy of the new Hungarian elite, serving the Communist Party, as well as of the state, or rather, the state-forming nation.

Notes

- 1 These political organizations were the following: the Hungarian Alliance, the Hungarian People's Party, the National Hungarian Party, the Hungarian Ethnic Bloc and the Transylvanian Party; for more on these, see the following: Imre Mikó, *Huszonkét év* [Twenty-Two Years]; Béla György, ed., *Iratok a Romániai Országos Magyar Párt történetéhez* [Documents on the History of the National Hungarian Party of Romania], vol. 1 (Kolozsvár/Cluj Napoca – Csíkszereda/Miercurea Ciuc, 2003); Nándor Bárdi, "A múlt, mint tapasztalat. A kisebbségből többségbe került erdélyi magyar politika szemléletváltása, 1940–1944" [The Past as Experience. The Change in Transylvanian Hungarian Political Views after Shifting from Minority to Majority, 1940–1944], in Gábor Czoch and Csilla Fedinec, eds., *Az emlékezet konstrukciói. Példák a 19–20. századi magyar és közép-európai történelemből* [Constructions of Memory. Examples from Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Hungarian and Central European History] (Budapest, 2006); Gábor Egry, *Az erdélyiség "színeváltozása". Kísérlet az Erdélyi Párt ideológiájának és identitáspolitikájának elemzésére 1940–1944* [The "Transfiguration" of Transylvanianism. An Attempt to Analyze the Identity and Identity Policy of the Transylvanian Party 1940–1944] (Budapest, 2008).
- 2 Nándor Bárdi, *Tény és való. A budapesti kormányzatok és a határon túli magyarság kapcsolattörténete* [Fact and Reality. History of the Relations of the Governments in Budapest and the Hungarians beyond the Borders] (Bratislava, 2004), p. 39.
- 3 For more on this, see Tamás Lönhárt, *Uniunea Populară Maghiară în perioada instaurării regimului comunist în România (1944–1948)* [The Hungarian Popular Union in the Period of the Installation of the Communist Regime in Romania (1944–1948)] (Cluj-Napoca, 2008), pp. 103–127, and Mihály Zoltán Nagy and Ágoston Olti, comp., *Érdekképviselő vagy pártpolitika? Iratok a Magyar Népi Szövetség történetéhez 1944–1953* [Interest Representation or Party Politics? Documents on the History of the Hungarian Popular Union 1944–1953] (Csíkszereda/Miercurea Ciuc, 2009), pp. 22–39.
- 4 Regarding this, see Csongor István Nagy, "A romániai kisebbségi jog 1945 és 1989 közötti történetének tendenciái, különös tekintettel a romániai magyarság történetére (I–II)." [Tendencies in the History of Romanian Minority Law between 1945 and 1989, with Particular

- Regard to the History of the Hungarians of Romania (I-II)], *Magyar Kisebbség* 2 (2002): 292–338, and 3–4 (2002): 257–282.
- 5 For more on the formation and history of the MNSZ, see the literature cited in Note 3.
 - 6 *A Romániai Magyar Népi Szövetség szervezeti szabályzata* [Organizational Statutes of the Hungarian Popular Union of Romania]. (Kolozsvár/Cluj-Napoca, 1945).
 - 7 János Vásárhelyi, president of the MNSZ organization in Marosludas/Luduș, shed light on this very fact at the MNSZ assembly in the Marosludas/Luduș District. He expressed his lack of understanding over “Petre Groza” and “Vasile Luca” blaming the state apparatus for the errors, whereas it was precisely “these new people and precisely the government’s people who commit them”; Arhivele Naționale Direcția Județeană Mureș [Directorate of the Romanian National Archives for Mureș County, henceforth ANDJ MȘ], f. 1082. Uniunea Populară Maghiară [Hungarian Popular Union; henceforth UPM], Organizația județeană [County Organization; henceforth Org. jud.], Mureș, d. 7/1945, ff. 18–19.
 - 8 Resolution of the MNSZ Central Managing Committee on the matter of grievances affecting the Hungarian minority. Marosvásárhely/Târgu Mureș, November 18, 1945; Arhivele Naționale Direcția Județeană Cluj [Directorate of the Romanian National Archives for Cluj County; henceforth ANDJ CJ], f. 28. UPM, Org. jud. Turda, d. 1/1945, ff. 260–263.
 - 9 Minutes of the joint negotiations of the leaders of the MNSZ and the NDF. Bucharest, August–September 1945; Arhivele Naționale Istorie Centrale [Central National Historical Archives; henceforth ANIC], f. 2348. CC al PCR, Cancelarie, d. 125/1945. registered as 136/1945, f. 5.
 - 10 See, for example, László Luka’s speech at the session of the MNSZ Central Executive Board in Marosvásárhely/Târgu Mureș; ANIC, f. 27. UPM, d. 138/1945, f. 4.
 - 11 *A Romániai Magyar Népi Szövetség szervezeti szabályzata* [Organizational Statutes of the Hungarian Popular Union of Romania] (Kolozsvár/Cluj Napoca, 1945).
 - 12 Under Section 26 of the Organizational Statutes the task of the legal and administrative committees was to “catalogue the legal and administrative issues affecting the Hungarians of the county and to forward them through the county leadership to the competent county public agencies or the organizational headquarters”; *ibid.* p. 12.

- 13 The provisions of Section 17 of the Organizational Statutes: “The economic committee deals with the economic questions of the Hungarians of Romania. Its task is to connect Hungarian economic institutions, within the framework of the Hungarian Popular Union, and to coordinate their activity with the activity of state and other institutions of a similar character”; *ibid.* p. 9.
- 14 Circular letter of the MNSZ National Executive Committee on the subject of regulating the functioning of the legal and administrative committees. Kolozsvár/Cluj Napoca, June 1945. ANDJ CJ, f. 26. UPM, Org. jud. Cluj, d. 1/1945. circular nr. 335. f. 149.
- 15 *Casa de Asigurare si Supraveghere a Bunurilor Inamice* (In Hungarian: *Ellenséges Javakat Ellenőrző és Felügyelő Pénztár*, the Center/Savings Bank for Insuring and Supervision of Enemy Belongings and Goods. This center was created in February 10, 1945, by Law 90, according to which – among other things – the assets of the Hungarian private individuals living in Romania and Hungarian-owned Romanian corporations were blocked.
- 16 See the breakdown by commune of agrarian grievances in Torda/Turda County; ANDJ CJ, f. 28. UPM, Org. jud. Turda, d. 2/1946, ff. 82–164, 239, as well as the cases in Maros-Torda/Turda-Mureş County: ANDJ MŞ, f. 13. UPM, Org. jud. Mureş, d. 2/1945. In the circular of the Central Managing Committee’s legal and administrative department issued on February 4, 1946, asked the county legal and administrative committees not to send incomplete data. ANDJ CJ, f. 28. UPM, Org. jud. Turda, d. 1/1946, f. 2. The legal affairs department of the MNSZ, in possession of a power of attorney properly drawn up by the person involved, could also take action in the courts; *ibid.*, f. 16.
- 17 ANDJ CJ, f. 28. UPM, Org. jud. Turda, d. 1/1946. f. 7.
- 18 For the summary report of the Central Office at the Székelyudvarhely congress, see *Nemzetiségi Anyaszervezetünk. Kurkó Gyárfás két beszéde, Intézőbizottsági jelentés, közgyűlési záróhatározat az MNSZ Székelyudvarhelyt 1946. június 27–30. között megtartott országos nagygyűlésén* [Our National Mother Organization. Gyárfás Kurkó’s Two Speeches, Managing Committee Report, Assembly Closing Resolution at the MNSZ National General Assembly Held in Székelyudvarhely/Odorheiu Secuiesc between June 27 and 30, 1946] (Kolozsvár/Cluj Napoca, 1946), p. 26. In his report, the head of the Central Office, Béla Csákány, emphasized the point that the

- well-functioning legal offices for some county organizations had become “complaint offices”; *ibid.*, p. 16. Béla Csákány listed the legal and administrative committee in Torda County among the well-functioning county legal offices, whereas it is precisely the committee’s report for the month of October that casts light on the fact that there was no permanent county legal affairs office; ANDJ CJ, f. 28. UPM, Org. jud. Turda, d. 1/1946, f. 180.
- 19 At the meeting of the MNSZ executive committee for Kolozs/Cluj County on October 18 the legal affairs office requested political support, because according to the rapporteur there was “a need for 2–3 politicians who, right where the jurisdiction of legal defense ends and political weight is needed, ensure results with their pugnacious espousal”; ANDJ CJ, f. 26. UPM, Org. jud. Cluj, d. 2/1946, f. 252.
- 20 At the meeting of the Kolozs/Cluj County MNSZ executive committee on December 3 the head of the county legal affairs office proposed that the matter of the vacating of business premises be forwarded to the county political committee, because in this matter only there could results be attained; *ibid.*, f. 285.
- 21 ANDJ CJ, f. 28. UPM, Org. jud. Turda, d. 1/1946, ff. 10, 13, 14. For example, it was through the economic committees that the tasks connected with the endless CASBI laws were made known; *ibid.*, ff. 21, 30–31.
- 22 Review of possessory irregularities in Kolozs/Cluj County; ANDJ CJ, f. 26. UPM, Org. jud. Cluj, d. 5/1947, f. 135.
- 23 *Világosság*, August 9, 1945.
- 24 ANDJ CJ, f. 28. UPM, Org. jud. Turda, d. 3/1946, ff. 83–84.
- 25 We have already described this previously; here we present merely the arguments of the new tactic relating to legal defense.
- 26 Károly Kós’s remarks at the session of the Kolozs/Cluj County Executive Board on April 14, 1946; ANDJ CJ, f. 26. UPM, Org. jud. Cluj, d. 2/1946, f. 133.
- 27 ANIC, f. 27. UPM, d. 140/1946, f. 140.
- 28 “Liberated reaction attacks our national rights ever more brazenly, and because of this the struggle of our Popular Union is also becoming more serious”; ANDJ CJ, f. 28. UPM, Org. jud. Turda, d. 1/1946, f. 83.
- 29 *Ibid.*, f. 26.
- 30 According to the data of the MNSZ Executive Committee for Kolozs/Cluj County the county legal affairs and administrative committee

- from July 11, 1946, up until September 10, 1946, dealt with 711 cases; ANDJ CJ, f. 26. UPM, Org. jud. Turda, d. 2/1946, f. 246.
- 31 Summary report of the activity of the Torda/Turda County organization for the month of June; ANDJ CJ, f. 28. UPM, Org. jud. Turda, d. 1/1946, f. 120.
- 32 Letter of the Marosludas/Luduş MNSZ organization to the county headquarters in 1946; ANDJ CJ, f. 28. UPM, Org. jud. Turda, d. 3/1946. f. 204.
- 33 *Világosság*, January 7, 1946.
- 34 ANIC, f. 27. UPM, d. 140/1946, f. 142. Kurkó was probably referring to the fact that these persons under the given circumstances had not been able to satisfy the obligations stemming from their positions.
- 35 Circular letter of the MNSZ National Executive Committee on the subject of regulating the “amalgamation” of the EMGE farmers’ associations; Kolozsvár/Cluj Napoca, June 1945. ANDJ CJ, f. 26. UPM, Org. jud. Cluj, d. 1/1945. circular nr. 335, ff. 148–149.
- 36 Circular letter of the MNSZ National Executive Committee on the subject of the functioning of local cooperatives; Kolozsvár/Cluj Napoca, June 1945. ANDJ, Cluj, f. 26. UPM, Org. jud. Cluj, d. 1/1945. circular nr. 335/1945, f. 149.
- 37 For information concerning organization, see Magyar Országos Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives; henceforth MOL], a Külügyminisztérium TÜK-iratai, Románia, XIX-J-1-j (1945–1968. I), d. 17, 16/b, document nr. 281/pol/1946, without pagination or number.
- 38 ANDJ CJ, f. 790. Alianța Cooperativelor Economice și de Credit, d. 3/1945–48, f. 76.
- 39 MOL, a Külügyminisztérium iratai, Románia admin. 1945–1965, XIX-J-1-k, d. 18, 16/b, registered as 1057/1946, without pagination or number.
- 40 *Világosság*, May 16, 1946. The eleven-point draft resolution touched upon agricultural problems (fruit-growing, bee-keeping, animal husbandry, and placing Hungarian veterinarians on the payroll), agricultural vocational training, the situation of Hungarian financial institutions, as well as the matter of CASBI and the cooperatives.
- 41 Also joining the three-member committee appointed to complete the preparatory work was the same Sándor Böszörményi who between the two world wars had acted as the managing director for Transylvania and the Banat of the General Union of Industrialists

- of Romania (*Uniunea Generală a Industriașilor din România*, UGIR).
- 42 MOL, László Bányai collection, XIX-J-1-1 (1945–1958), d. 1, 1/g, without pagination or number. Remarking at the meeting of the managing committee in Brassó/Brașov, the delegate of the EMGE defined this relationship as follows: “We who enjoy the political protection of the MNSZ and enjoyed it in the past, we cannot and will not be ungrateful. It is precisely therefore that we desire agreement and peaceful understanding”; *ibid.*
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 ANIC, f. 27. UPM, d. 140/1946, f. 143.
- 45 MOL, a Külügyminisztérium iratai, Románia admin. 1945–1965, XIX-J-1-k, d. 18, 16/b, registered as 40.971/1946, without pagination or number.
- 46 See László Luka’s declaration at the meeting of the MNSZ central *aktiv*; ANIC, f. 27. UPM, d. 4/1947, f. 47.
- 47 For the central office in Kolozsvár/Cluj Napoca one room was set aside in the building of the Szövetség Cooperative, and in the office only Böszörményi and the secretary “borrowed” from the Szövetség Cooperative Headquarters worked. I am indebted to András Kiss, retired chief archivist at the State Archives in Kolozsvár/Cluj Napoca, for the information.
- 48 According to press reports the formation of the Horizont Company dragged on until mid-December 1946 (see *Népi Egység*, December 14, 1946), while the archival sources testify that the ministerial permission was obtained and the firm registered only at some point in early 1947; see the Horizont Company’s written note of April 22, 1947, to the MNSZ economic committees on the subject of establishing branches of the Horizont Co., as well as the joint stock company’s basic charter. ANDJ CJ, f. 26. UPM, Org. jud. Cluj 1945–1950, d. 5/1947, ff. 276–273.
- 49 *Ibid.*, f. 83.
- 50 The MNSZ obtained 29 electoral mandates, although according to some opinions they could have obtained up to 40 seats in Parliament. On the electoral results of the MNSZ and the course of the elections, see the report of embassy councilor István Gyöngyössi to Minister of Foreign Affairs János Gyöngyösi on the Romanian parliamentary elections, Bucharest, November 25, 1946; the document is printed in Vincze, *Történelmi kényszerpályák – kisebbségi reálpolitikák*, pp. 85–91.

- 51 ANIC, f. CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, d. 4/1947, f. 6.
- 52 ANIC, f. 27. UPM, d. 151/1947, f. 45.
- 53 The Romanian government delegation headed by Petru Groza negotiated in Budapest between May 3 and May 5, 1947. On the antecedents to the negotiations and their course, see Ágoston Olti, “Osztálytalálkozó jeles meghívottakkal. Petru Groza 1947-es budapesti látogatása” [Class Reunion with Distinguished Invitees. Petru Groza’s 1947 Visit to Budapest], *Magyar Kisebbség* 1–2 (2007).
- 54 ANIC, f. 27. UPM, d. 151/1947, f. 48.
- 55 Regarding the entire question, see Gábor Vincze, “Az erdélyi magyar szövetkezetek sorsa a második világháború után” [The Fate of the Transylvanian Hungarian Cooperatives after the Second World War], *Valóság* 3 (1998).
- 56 *Világosság*, July 20, 1947.
- 57 *Világosság*, July 19, 1947.
- 58 *Romániai magyarság a békéért és népi demokráciáért* [The Hungarians of Romania for Peace and People’s Democracy] (Kolozsvár/Cluj Napoca, 1947), p. 61.
- 59 *Romániai Magyar Szó*, July 25, 1948.
- 60 *Igazság*, December 15, 1948.
- 61 *A Romániai Magyar Népi Szövetség IV. országos kongresszusa* [The Fourth National Congress of the Hungarian Popular Union of Romania] (n.p., 1949), pp. 62–63.
- 62 The MNSZ Central Managing Committee’s circular letter dated January 17, 1949, on the subject of the setting up and reorganization of expert committees; ANDJ Cluj, 26. F. UPM Cluj, d. 3/1949, ff. 1–2.
- 63 *Falvak Népe Naptára* [Calendar of the People of the Villages] (n.p., 1950).
- 64 ANIC, f. 2348. CC al PCR, Cancelarie, d. 10/1951, registered as 17/1951, ff. 5–9.
- 65 ANIC, f. 27. UPM, d. 183/1951, f. 88.
- 66 *Ibid.*
- 67 *Igazság*, January 29, 1953.
- 68 The minutes of the joint meeting between the leading activists of the MNSZ and the representatives of the RWP can be found in ANIC, f. 27. UPM, d. 197/1953, ff. 1–8. The resolution of the MNSZ Central Executive Board on the organization’s self-dissolution can be found in: ANIC, f. 27. UPM, d. 197/1953, ff. 43–45.



**TRANSYLVANIA
IN COMMUNIST ROMANIA,
1945–1989:
Coercion, Collectivization
and Popular Resistance**



Judit Pál

THE LIQUIDATION OF THE TRANSYLVANIAN ARISTOCRACY AS REFLECTED IN MEMORY¹

The change of 1989–1990 everywhere in East Central Europe brought with it the “liberation” of memory as well. In the recent past several volumes – diaries, memoirs and interviews – have appeared, which according to popular belief erect a monument to a social stratum that has vanished into history forever: the aristocracy.² In these the members of the former elite (who almost without exception live/lived abroad, and many of whom have died in the meantime) or their descendants attempted to shape the dramatic events of the twentieth century, as well as their own human drama, into a coherent, comprehensible story, in which the “aristocratic values” and ethos received a distinguished role. By examining them I wish to illuminate the political cataclysms of the twentieth century and the destruction of the Transylvanian aristocracy from the viewpoint of collective memory.³

The fact that we are dealing with heterogeneous sources makes the examination difficult. From the methodological point of view the biographies and memoirs are distinguished from the interviews. The latter, moreover, were not prepared by experts using the methods of oral history, but generally by journalists or amateurs interested in the aristocracy’s past. From the substantial number of ego-documents, I analyzed first and foremost those that originate from persons who remained in Romania, or, if the persons in question had emigrated in the meantime, the documents that refer to their experiences at home. Likewise we must distinguish the recollections of people who experienced the events as adults from those detailing childhood experiences. Below, based on an analysis of the narrative structure of some 30 ego-documents, I try to sketch the attitude of the Transylvanian aristocracy to the events after the First World War, the Communist dictatorship, and

the collapse of their own world. I also examine how they tried to adapt to the changed circumstances, how they processed the trauma suffered and how the changed situation influenced the shaping of their identity. It is true of almost all the narrators that they move between the individual and the collective memory; they also make references to the official discourse contemporary with the narrative, although critically, since they experienced the political and social changes as a threat to their identity.

In Transylvania aristocratic titles appeared only following the incorporation of the autonomous principality into the Habsburg Empire, at the end of the seventeenth century; then during the eighteenth century several families received baronial and comital titles. Among these we find families that had played a leading role during the era of the autonomous principality and *homines novi* alike. The majority of them, however, had local roots and were Hungarian, and the few immigrant high nobles also assimilated into them. At the start of the nineteenth century some 24 baronial and 23 comital clans lived in Transylvania; these, however, had much more modest wealth than the aristocrats in Hungary proper. Despite this, they preserved their political role up until the First World War. In Transylvania during the Dualist period, too, we find aristocrats in quite large numbers among the lord lieutenants (*főispánok*) and parliamentary deputies.

It was at the end of the First World War that the great political turnabout in the history of the Transylvanian aristocracy occurred, the one that brought about the liquidation of their political and economic power and forced them to work out new survival strategies.⁴ For them, too – just as for the whole of Transylvanian Hungarian society – the lost war and the Treaty of Trianon (1920) represented the initial shock. A part of the Transylvanian aristocracy chose Hungary and left their native land. Several among them played a significant role in the political life of Hungary, such as Prime Minister Count István Bethlen or the minister of foreign affairs, Count Miklós Bánffy, who later chose to return home. With the 1921 land reform, during which the vast majority of the

lands held by the Transylvanian Hungarian large landowners were expropriated from them, the Romanian government aimed among other things at specifically altering the estate structure in terms of ethnicity.⁵ The so-called “Optants” moreover lost their entire estates. In the new Romanian nation state the Transylvanian Hungarian high nobility were not allotted a role in politics either; however, despite the breaking of their property status, through their social capital and prestige in local society, as well as in Hungarian nationality policy and public life and public bodies – including the leadership of the Transylvanian Hungarian Party coming into existence as well – they still played an important role.

The majority of the authors of the analyzed texts either lived through the end of the First World War only as children or were born after the war and grew up in Romania. Although they considered the terms of the Treaty of Trianon and the loss of the great part of their estates to be a blatant injustice, despite this for them the period between the two world wars – especially in the light of later events – meant a period of prosperity and stability. Count Mihály Teleki (born 1908) discussed the negative consequences of the agrarian reform, but afterwards sketched at length how together with his father he attempted to modernize the remaining land.⁶ It was particularly for those living through the era as children that this period was seen as a lost paradise. “We were free, freer than a bird,” was how one elderly aristocratic lady recalled her childhood.⁷ Yet another begins her recollections of her childhood thus: “Back, back to our carefree spring, back to Kolozsvár!”⁸

But soon even greater traumas awaited the members of the Transylvanian aristocracy than what they had had to experience in the wake of the First World War. The Second Vienna Award (1940) divided up Transylvania between Hungary and Romania. Among the deputies from Northern Transylvania invited into the Hungarian Parliament the aristocrats once again were overrepresented. Even if their political influence was much greater than it had been in Romania, they did not get back their estates expropriated during the Romanian land reform. It is interesting that despite the fact that

they welcomed the Vienna Award and the reannexation of Northern Transylvania to Hungary, in the memoirs the joy finds only very subdued expression. Overshadowed by the subsequent events, they recall mostly those moments during which they attempted to prevent or at least soften ethnic tensions between Hungarians and Romanians and/or Jews, and almost always emphasize their outsider status with regard to official politics, and their apolitical stance. Mihály Teleki related several such stories, for example, how he had prevented the authorities from arresting the Romanian village constable, or how he had helped one of his Jewish acquaintances, who was shut up in the ghetto, with food.⁹ The protagonists who are portrayed negatively in these little stories are almost always Hungarians from the “mother country.” Countess Gabriella Kornis wrote the following of the civil servants from the “mother country,” the “foreigners”: “The contempt is mutual, as is the cordial smile.”¹⁰ A recurrent motif of her writing is the idealized patriarchal relations that had tied her family to the Romanian village, and the despair felt over the destruction of these. “We silently lament the village, the village that will never again be what it was,” she wrote.¹¹ In her opinion once again only the “foreigners” were the ones responsible for this: before the war the extreme right-wing agitators from the “Regat” – that is, from beyond the Carpathians – and then the partition of Transylvania. The family considered the reannexation of Northern Transylvania to be a fleeting glory that had fatefully divided the people. “Your flag and mine are different,” a Romanian peasant woman told her in the autumn of 1940, and then asked, “Are we enemies now?”¹² Also eloquent is the tragicomic scene when the comital family drives out in the long unused carriage with liveried footman, dressed in ceremonial attire, to greet the entering Hungarian troops, and her 19-year-old brother, raising his sword high, exclaims in Romanian, turning towards the people of the village, “Noroc” (Good luck). To this the narrator commented as follows: “I tried not to see the face of the village, not to hear its silence, but I could feel that out of the ribbons in national colors, the ceremonial Hungarian attire taken out of the mothballs, and

shiny clasps, a strong, indestructible wall was now slowly growing between the village and us, an unbroken wall.”¹³

The role of the nobility – and especially the high nobility – in village society was similar in Transylvania to that in Germany east of the Elbe, where even at the start of the twentieth century there was a close connection between the aristocracy and its landed estate and the inhabitants of the village. This connection was obviously loosened after the First World War, and then the Second World War sealed the process, but several participants experienced this painful process as the fall of their former world.

The years 1944–1945 represented a further break, a further reversal of fate, when once more vital decisions had to be made. The majority of the aristocrats fled from Transylvania in the face of Soviet troops. During the flight they experienced and survived various adventures. Again they experienced the situation as the failure of the previous value system: “Where is that norm, that life principle, upon which we could build our life, which could fill our soul? Everything that until now we had considered to be good and unshakeable is beginning to sway and crumble into dust. Christian religion, the sanctity of family life, and the love of work deriving from property are all branded as obsolete and incorrect. But what will tomorrow bring in place of these?” wrote a then young count to his friend in the summer of 1944.¹⁴

By the autumn of 1944 the Romanian administration had once more returned to Northern Transylvania, and after 1945 Romania came under Soviet influence. The turnabout at the same time ultimately sealed the fate of the aristocracy as well. The majority emigrated in time, while those who remained at home counted as class enemies. Those whose assets and castles had not been destroyed during the war would witness such destruction later. The expropriation of their property was accompanied in fact by the systematic destruction of valuables. Some had been arrested earlier, and then in March 1949 the rest were rounded up and forcibly resettled. By this time they had no room to maneuver whatsoever in the totalitarian dictatorship; years of complete helplessness followed.

For those who had emigrated still earlier, separation from the native land meant a traumatic experience. Some consciously prepared for this: “In the final weeks I became increasingly more aware; my eyes photographed razor-sharp images so that [everything] would be preserved... that I might recall all that signified my childhood at any time, that I might recall it indelibly,” wrote Countess Gabriella Kornis, who was forced to leave her native land very young. She then continued: “As I stepped out of our gate for the last time, I already knew then that no matter what direction my path would take me, I would stumble deafly and blindly in an alien world; no one would understand my speech, and nor would I that of others.”¹⁵ According to psychologists, in emigration the process of idealizing the distant good is at work; then “emigration diminishes the intrapsychic trauma by projecting it onto the social sphere, and then replaces it with another: separation, the subsequent mourning, and adaptation.”¹⁶ The well-known author Count Albert Wass, who after the war emigrated to the United States of America, expressed his homesickness as follows: “It is impossible to forget Transylvania. Who could forget Transylvania? Not even the foreigners. Even they remember Transylvania.”¹⁷ Despite the forced separation from the native land they attempted to preserve the Transylvanian identity in part or in whole. “Even today I am Transylvanian,” declared Albert Wass even decades later.¹⁸ This strong local patriotism can be observed among others as well, and is frequently emphasized even *vis-à-vis* those from Hungary. Gabriella Kornis also attempted throughout her entire life to maintain her Transylvanian identity, which was largely based only on memories, and which she perceived as threatened.

In the memoir literature of nobles who fled or were chased from eastern Prussia, too, an honored place is occupied by the continuity of that harmonious, paternalistically arranged world, in which social welfare is allotted an important role, and which interweaves even the most harrowing situations. For the noble families from there, too, the bond with the surroundings/region was an important part of family tradition,¹⁹ just as we have already seen in the case

of the Transylvanians as well. The Transylvanian aristocrats also constantly emphasize the solicitude shown towards the villagers and to those in need generally. They were likewise proud that, as one count living today in Germany writes, the “castles were always bearers of culture as well.”²⁰ Another constantly recurring motif is the love of nature, the close bond with the country rather than the town. “Unfortunately after 1945 I became a town-dweller, but I could not forget the spell of nature, the concert of bird songs, the richness of the woodland flowers and the assorted game of the forests,” writes Count Sándor Degenfeld-Schonburg.²¹

Whoever did not return home saw his leftover lands, immovable and movable property confiscated and come under joint Soviet–Romanian management through CASBI (*Casa de Asigurare si Supraveghere a Bunurilor Inamice* or *Ellenséges Javakat Ellenőrző és Felügyelő Pénztár*, “Institution for the Supervision of Enemy Belongings,” created formally on February 10, 1945, by the Decree of Law Nr. 10 of the Romanian Government).²² On the other hand, difficult times awaited those who remained or returned. In most cases the motivation was attachment to the leftover property, as well as to the native land and family traditions, or possibly the wishes of the elderly parents. “Many more returned to Transylvania than to Hungary. Here the attraction is somehow stronger, local patriotism is somehow greater,” Mihály Teleki wrote, once more emphasizing the aforementioned regional bond and identity. At that time he thought thus: “My ancestors weathered the Turks, the Tatars, 1848 [the Revolution]; why should I be the one to run away? This is somehow inherited or born with us; I don’t even know what else to call it but local patriotism...”²³ “If the Telekis endured it for three hundred years, we will endure this, too – or so we thought.”²⁴

Katalin Bethlen recounted how her uncle had returned to Transylvania because “his place was there,” then added: “He went home to Transylvania a beggar.”²⁵ The uncle, Count Béla Bethlen, had been the government commissioner for Northern Transylvania in 1944, and after the war he stubbornly insisted on returning home, even though on the first occasion he was arrested and sent back to

Hungary. Despite this, he returned a second time as well, and only now did his Calvary truly begin. He was arrested several times, interrogated and finally sentenced to nine years' imprisonment. In 1952 they offered to let him resettle in Hungary, but he chose to stay even then: "I, after a brief time to reflect, decided in favor of Transylvania, since it was here that I was born, here that I lived most of my life, and I felt a certain moral obligation to share the fate of my approximately two million Hungarian brothers who were stranded here."²⁶ Afterwards he was held captive without judicial sentence in the various prisons of Romania under terrible circumstances. He spent a year and a half in solitary confinement where he could not see even the prison guard. He described his prison experiences with a certain degree of detachment and humor, despite the fact that several times his life hung by a thread. The parts of the punishment most difficult to bear – this is true in the case of other similar recollections, too – were the miserable hygienic conditions and the lack of "privacy" (body searches, during which their mouth cavity and rectum were also searched, the lack of a separate place to sleep, and so on). Bearing all this without a word of complaint, however, was part of the aristocratic ethos. Béla Bethlen's conclusion was that those who were faint of heart in prison did not survive it; self-discipline, as well as faith and humor, helped him.

If the fate of the others was not this dramatic, they, too, nevertheless received more than their share of sufferings and humiliations. The first shock that they had to confront after their return home was generally the looting of the castle and the destruction of the park. Many "objects of irreplaceable historical and artistic value" were lost, as one of the interview subjects said. This recurs in each memoir and interview: not even in their old age were they able to process the senseless destruction. "In Szentbenedek in October 1944 the senseless destruction began: irreplaceable valuables were destroyed, several thousand volumes were caught on the Szamos dam, and the unicorns guarding the gate stood beheaded. The park ravaged, our gravestones toppled over, the drinking trough placed across my mother's grave."²⁷ "Why? Why did you do it? What good

was the vandalism? For you could have taken away everything that had been ours, you could have been rich – why was it necessary to destroy chapel, picture, garden, book, statue, house, flower, why?” asked Countess Kornis rhetorically after half a century had passed.²⁸

Everything, therefore, had to be started all over again, and most actually did begin to work the remaining land without animals or tools. By the time that they had recovered, however, the next blow came. By Party decree on the night of March 2–3, 1949, the so-called “exploiters” were rounded up and deported with one piece of hand luggage to their assigned dwelling. The decree affected everyone this time, without distinction by nationality. “... and this was that moment when the family lost everything in the strict sense of the word. What started then would last fifty years. What is painful in this historical process is not the loss of the silver spoons, but how individual human fates were forced to evolve,” commented Countess Katalin Mikes.²⁹ She happened to be at home with her grandmother, and because they could not hear the knocking, the door was broken in on them. Frightened, her grandmother protested that they had no money, but they could take from the pantry whatever they could find. To this the men began to explain that they were “nationalizing,” whereupon her grandmother replied with astonishment: “So you are not burglars?”³⁰

The note stamped into their personal identification document “for a decade and a half restricted their room to maneuver and their opportunities to apply for an apartment and a job.”³¹ The forcibly assigned dwelling in every case was a miserable room without any conveniences, a basement apartment, a barn, a field guard’s hut on the edge of town, where water had to be brought from two kilometers away, or something similar. This was made worse by the difficulties of finding work: the “exploiters,” despite their diplomas and doctoral degrees often earned abroad, could perform only the most menial physical work, but this was not simple to find either. We could quote from the various reminiscences at length, but here let a single typical episode suffice: in the case of the abovementioned Mikes

family the author's mother had to support her five-year-old daughter and her 78-year-old sick mother, but found only hard physical work in a sand quarry. Her daughter quotes a letter written by her mother to the authorities, which closed with the following formula: "I am glad that I may work and that with my work I may contribute to the reconstruction. Long live the Romanian People's Republic!"³² In the socialist countries the main goal of the official "identity policy" after the war was to impose on people, instead of the multifaceted identity stolen by force, a uniform identity pattern; a chasm thereby formed between public and private forms of identity – as this previous quote also shows.³³ However, her mother was soon taken away to Dobrudja to perform forced labor; the absurd charge was that together with 70 other companions she had obstructed collectivization.³⁴ The little girl stayed with acquaintances and lived apart from her mother even after the latter's return home, even when both lived in Kolozsvár, since her mother lived with several others in the same room and could not take her daughter there. We could sketch other similar fates, but this illustrates the atmosphere of the Communist dictatorship of the 1950s well. Later the situation improved somewhat: the former "exploiters" on the whole continued to perform physical labor, but finding work no longer caused such difficulty, chicanery was not an everyday occurrence, and in the difficult situation they tried to help themselves generally by teaching languages, profiting from the multilingualism fashionable among the aristocracy.

Some recounted the solidarity of those around them, while others on the contrary talked rather about how great the fear was and complained that they lived practically as outcasts. "Everyone was afraid to communicate with us. At the end of the week we went by bus out to the edge of the city and walked out into the nearby woods, to forget the city with its own troubles, and we imagined ourselves back in that village environment in which we grew up." Illusion was needed for survival, and thus when conditions had stabilized they often attended operas and operettas, where for two or three hours they forgot about their misery: "We recalled that elegant world into which we had been born, and we maintained in ourselves

the hope that it would return.”³⁵ Countess Éva Bethlen together with her husband rented a garden and sold vegetables in the market: “We got used to it, we accepted our fate. We knew that we must live, and for us to live, we must work. I was never ashamed of work, and I was brought up to know how to accomplish everything.”³⁶ She accepted her fate, but it was much more difficult to bear the discrimination against the children; she, too, was most hurt by how her children’s fate evolved: her daughter was removed from the school at the age of ten, while her son, despite his talent, could not become a student at the music school. “They kicked all of us wherever they could. They tried to break us, to constantly humiliate us. We bore it, we knew why everything was happening, but it was quite hard for the children to bear it.”³⁷

The fate of the children was the most difficult, since the experience of stigmatization formed an important part of their socialization. They did not understand the situation, but felt that they were different from the other children. Countess Ilona Bethlen was not allowed to study either: “That is when I learned the word: *class alien*. It taught me a bitter lesson. Even now, in my advanced age I regret that I could not continue my studies...”³⁸ The attitude of the teachers varied: the “old teachers” generally showed understanding, whereas the “activists” on the other hand made the children, too, feel the class struggle. The parents experienced the discrimination against their children with much more difficulty than their own terrible situation. The most serious discriminatory measure, one impacting their entire future, was exclusion from education. Regardless of their academic achievements, the fact was that the children of the “class enemy” could not continue their studies, and every form of higher education was closed to them. With this the regime wanted to prevent them from possibly attaining a higher social status once more. After the seven years of elementary school, which were compulsory for every child, often even continued study in a vocational school was prevented. But the search for jobs also encountered great difficulties, and most of the time young persons, too, were hired only for difficult physical work. With the softening

of the dictatorship in the 1960s, the severity abated somewhat, and at that time youths of aristocratic descent, too, were now allowed to complete secondary school as well. For the longest time they were barred from college and university training. This is clearly exemplified by the case of Count Mihály Teleki's children as well. The oldest of his four children, who as a child "still enjoyed the advantages of the landowner's existence," became a locksmith, while the second, a girl, was taken out of the eighth grade of the elementary school as a "class enemy," worked from the age of 14 at a construction firm and graduated from an evening school. However, for copying an anti-regime leaflet, a military court sentenced her, barely eighteen years old, to fifteen years' imprisonment; in addition, her father was also taken away to the Danube Canal to do forced labor. For seven years she was not allowed to receive letters; after seven years she was released ill and broken. To the question about how his wife bore their daughter's trial, the reply was "She sat and remained silent. As befits a lady born a Tisza."³⁹ The dispassionate voice with which Teleki narrated his and his children's fate sounds almost cruel. Control over emotions was deeply inculcated into the members of the aristocracy, which Calvinist Puritanism only strengthened more. When the children attempted to continue their studies or take on a job far from their birthplace, where nothing was known about the family's past, they had more success. The fate of the two younger children is also interesting, and it exemplifies well how it was possible to outwit the regime's absurd decrees. The third daughter was removed from the school prior to graduation, but at that time went to acquaintances in the southern part of Romania, where in the purely Romanian region the historical-sounding family name was unfamiliar and she graduated easily, and then completed first technical school, and later university. The youngest boy was adopted by an acquaintance in the southern part of Transylvania; thus under a different name he too could complete university without hindrance.⁴⁰

The parents tried to protect the children; one strategy was to keep silent. One quite young representative of the above-mentioned Tisza family said the following:

No one initiated us... into the painful insider secrets of our family and history. You know, in Communist Romania my father and grandfather were hurt too many times for having been born Tiszás. From this it followed that they wanted to spare us, the children, to protect us from everything for which we ourselves could have been exposed to attacks. My mother and father thought it better if they did not speak at all about certain questions.⁴¹

In the initial years the discrimination against the children included denying them admission into youth organizations (pioneers, young workers), membership of which was compulsory for their contemporaries. Baroness Éva Bánffy's great sorrow in her childhood was that she could not be accepted as a pioneer: "What hurt me awfully as a child, and in this, too, I felt excluded, was that I was not a normal child."⁴² The humane teacher, seeing Éva's despair, helped her by making her an honorary pioneer: she received a red ribbon, and was allowed to take part in the assemblies and activities, "and the satisfaction of being allowed to be with the others meant more to me than anything else."⁴³

According to Erving Goffman's typology, "tribal stigmas" form one type of stigmatization; these – like race, nationality and religious affiliation – are inherited through family descent and infect, "taint," every member of the family.⁴⁴ A fundamental trait of stigmatized persons is that whoever they come into contact with will treat them differently throughout their whole lives from those without stigmas; they are not judged in the same way as "normal" people are.⁴⁵ Stigmatized persons gradually amass experiences of the consequences of this situation and protect themselves against the negative reactions of the environment. The majority of children born into aristocratic families had to face this fact when they left the protective family nest and entered school. There many confronted not only the official image of the enemy but also the negative reactions of their contemporary surroundings. "Then in the secondary school I became an outcast once and for all, a kind of constant class enemy," Éva Bánffy added bitterly to her earlier

account.⁴⁶ She had been a successful athlete, setting national records in the 100- and 200-meter backstroke, and was fourth in the world. Despite this, the coach of the swimming section dismissed her from the team because of her ancestry and she was never rehabilitated; after the competition she was removed from the hotel as well, and a girl who had not even competed stood on the podium.⁴⁷ She would have liked to be a kindergarten teacher, but this dream of hers never came true, because she was not accepted into the training college because of her name. Despite this unsuccessful life, she summed up her attitude thus: “But however things were, we did not beg like people today. You clench your teeth, [take] a deep breath and move on – this is what we were taught: bearing.”⁴⁸ Her brother added, with gallows humor: “If you like, we were pushing the wagon of Communism, because we worked honestly.”⁴⁹

In the 1960s the situation improved somewhat, but later the dictatorship associated with the name of Ceaușescu introduced measures that afflicted the entire population, which by the 1980s had resulted in the direst situation even in comparison to the other socialist countries. As a result of the drastic measures, the misery and the harassments by the secret police – which the regime’s rampant nationalism and the oppression of the minorities compounded – many members of the former Transylvanian aristocracy who remained in the country chose to emigrate, if they could do so. According to a survey in 1987 there were only 84 members of 21 aristocratic families (11 comital and 10 baronial) living in Transylvania, mainly in Kolozsvár and Marosvásárhely.⁵⁰

But just how did these “aristocratic” or “noble” themes appear in these ego-documents?⁵¹ It is interesting to examine how much – if at all – the peculiar (high) noble norms and forms of conduct, as well as a peculiar mentality, are reflected in these self-stylizations. After all, the autobiographies are the expressions of group affiliation as well, the results of a social practice that determines how the members of a certain group in a certain time period “must” present and describe their lives.⁵² In the case of the nobles, it is well known that a notion of honor, connected to rank as a means of social distinction *vis-*

à-vis other social groups, played a very important role for a long time. When reading the analyzed texts, it is not difficult to find such specifically (high) noble norms and forms of conduct. I would like to convey what I mean with a few quotations:

“The centuries-old mentality remained: in other words one should not be concerned only with the problems of everyday life. The reflexes remained. As soon as I glance at a stranger, I immediately know from the way he greets me, shakes hands, holds a knife and fork, that he is not someone of the old type, that he was not properly raised.”⁵³

“I believe that the aristocracy left home with a head start... The aristocrat brought honor from home. This was natural; no one expected praise for it.”⁵⁴

“All of them endured their fate with honor and honesty [...] they bore this humiliation without complaint or grumbling.”⁵⁵

“Backbone, bearing and honesty were of primary importance in our family. This far exceeded the material concerns...” says Béla Bethlen’s grandson about his grandfather, who had astonished him in his childhood by his ability to discipline himself even while asleep.⁵⁶

Or as the great-grandson of Prime Minister Kálmán Tisza wrote about his father, “Although the regime had deprived him of his material goods in 1949, no one could take away his spiritual wealth and virtues.”⁵⁷

“Yet they were unable to destroy us so much that we could not preserve our spiritual nobility. I, too, was brought up by my parents in Marosvásárhely to believe that my name obliged me to display moral purity and national-mindedness...”⁵⁸ “My father brought up his children to believe that indeed there exists at all times and everywhere a moral standard by which we are obliged to measure our actions. No matter how much the world contradicts this, we must respect the eternal values. These include honor, homeland, family, justice, love, faith, tradition and refinement. I call that person who holds the abovementioned values to be his guiding ideal and compass a noble of the spirit,” claims the young author, Kata Tisza, born in 1980.⁵⁹

A sociological survey recently conducted in Hungary accords well with this. According to the survey, the self-definition of young people with an aristocratic identity emphatically contains a kind of particular upbringing, behavior and a value system that are defined by Christianity, the family past, conservative thinking, love of homeland and the obligations stemming from these.⁶⁰ “There is no resurrection without tradition,” says Baron Miklós Bánffy, whose great-grandfather was prime minister and father was minister of agriculture.⁶¹ International research also confirms this same thing. Honor, bearing, obligation, sacrifice and chivalry are “noble topoi,” which we may understand “much rather as linguistic stylizations,” in which the group in a constantly discursive manner constantly recreates itself.⁶²

In summary we may state that despite the tragic events of the twentieth century, the traumas experienced, and the disappearance of their world, those involved attempted with their narratives to establish coherence in their lives as well. In the striving for coherence the values and ethos considered to be “(high) noble” formed an important foothold. Countess Éva Bethlen summed this up with the following words: “Perhaps it was preordained thus. Of course I look back with pain, since one could have lived more nicely, better, more usefully, but at the same time with great pride as well, because we proved that we survived it while remaining human.”⁶³

Notes

- 1 The research was supported by the Hungarian National Research Fund (OTKA) project no. 83521.
- 2 In Hungary and Romania several interviews and memoir volumes have appeared, but in contrast to Germany, for example, specialist literature on the subject is lacking. In the successor states of the Monarchy interest in the subject has increased somewhat. A few titles are as follows: Hannes Stekl, “Österreichs Adel im 20. Jahrhundert,” in Hannes Stekl, *Adel und Bürgertum in der Habsburgermonarchie 18. bis 20. Jahrhundert. Sozial- und wirtschaftshistorische Studien* (Vienna and Munich, 2004), pp. 101–139; Zdeněk Hazdra, Václav

Horčíčka and Jan Županič, eds., *Šlechta střední Evropy v konfrontaci s totalitními režimy dvacátého století. Der Adel Mitteleuropas in Konfrontation mit den totalitären Regimen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Prague, FFUK, 2011).

- 3 On the collective memory of the various groups, see Frances Pine, Deema Kaneff and Haldis Haukanes, eds., *Memory, Politics and Religion. The Past Meets the Present in Europe* (Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Eurasia, vol. 4) (Münster, 2004); Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, eds., *Contested Pasts. The Politics of Memory* (Routledge Studies in Memory and Narrative) (London and New York, 2003). “Underpinning contested and changing histories, and the tension between public and hidden memories and commemorations, is a struggle for power. Conflicting memories are not only about what ‘really’ happened. They are also about identity claims, identity formation and identity politics. In the most basic sense, legitimation of and through memory is an ideological tool. Through mutual understandings and hence confirmation of particular shared pasts, people build their identities and make their social relations. By contesting the pasts remembered by others, they mark these others as different and may exclude them from various social, political or economic relationships.” “Introduction,” in Pine, Kaneff and Haukanes, eds., *Memory, Politics and Religion*, pp. 3–4.
- 4 On the position of the aristocracy in Hungary between the two world wars, see Gábor Gyáni and György Kövér, *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a reformkortól a második világháborúig* [A Social History of Hungary from the Age of Reform to the Second World War], 2nd ed. (Budapest, 2001), pp. 223–236; Levente Püski, “Arisztokrácia a 20. századi Magyarországon. I–II” [Aristocracy in Twentieth-Century Hungary I–II], *Korunk* 9–10 (2008). at <http://www.korunk.ro/?q=node/8&ev=2008&honap=9&cikk=9278>, <http://www.korunk.ro/?q=node/8&ev=2008&honap=10&cikk=9328> (May 15, 2012)
- 5 On the agrarian reform, see Dumitru Șandru, *Reforma agrară din 1921 în România* [The Agrarian Reform of 1921 in Romania] (Bucharest, 1975), pp. 42–79.
- 6 Ildikó Marosi, *Örökbe hagyott beszélgetés gróf Teleki Mihállyal* [A Conversation for Posterity with Count Mihály Teleki], 3rd ed. (Csíkszereda, 2009), pp. 49–53.
- 7 Gabriella Kornis, *...Őrizz..., és én is őrizlek téged* [Watch over Me... and I Will Watch over You, Too] (Kolozsvár, 2006), p. 10.

- 8 Mária Lázár, *Jó volt élni* [It Was Good to Be Alive], edited by Hella Sessoms-Sztojanovics, private publication (1999), p. 73.
- 9 Marosi, *Örökbe hagyott beszélgetés gróf Teleki Mihállyal*, p. 100.
- 10 Kornis, *...Őrizz..., és én is őrizlek téged*, p. 76.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 112.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 114.
- 13 *Ibid.*, pp. 117–118.
- 14 Count Sándor Degenfeld-Schonburg, *Elmélkedések* [Ponderings], edited by Gyöngy Kovács Kiss (Kolozsvár, 2008), p. 25. Later on he himself inserted the private letter into his memoirs.
- 15 Kornis, *...Őrizz..., és én is őrizlek téged*, pp. 125 and 129.
- 16 Edit Szerdahelyi, “Emigráció, mint a trauma ismétlése” [Emigration as the Repeat of Trauma], in Dénes Lukács, ed., *Irányzatok és kutatások a mai magyar pszichoanalízisben. Magyar Pszichoanalitikus Egyesület 1994. évi konferenciája* [Trends and Research in Contemporary Hungarian Psychoanalysis. The 1994 Conference of the Hungarian Psychoanalytical Association] (Budapest, 1995), p. 112.
- 17 Albert Wass, “Erdélyt nem lehet elfelejteni” [It is Impossible to Forget Transylvania], in Gyöngy Kovács Kiss, ed., *Álló és mozgóképek. Vázlat az erdélyi főnemességről (Visszaemlékezések, feljegyzések, beszélgetések, tanulmányok)* [Static and Moving Images. A Sketch of the Transylvanian High Nobility (Reminiscences, Notes, Conversations, Studies)], 2nd ed. (Kolozsvár, 2007), p. 229.
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 Monika Wienfort, “Adlige Handlungsspielräume und neue Adelstypen in der ‘Klassischen Moderne’ (1880–1930),” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 33 (2007) 3: 419.
- 20 Degenfeld-Schonburg, *Elmélkedések*, p. 23.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- 22 According to this decree, the goods, especially real estate, banks and enterprises, belonging to Germans and Hungarians from Romania were taken into state administration, on the basis of declaring all members of these ethnic communities to be “declared enemies.”
- 23 Marosi, *Örökbe hagyott beszélgetés gróf Teleki Mihállyal*, pp. 66–67.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 104.
- 25 Countess Katalin Bethlen, Mrs. Károly Stipsicz, “Stipsicz Károlyné gróf Bethlen Katalin visszaemlékezése” [Countess Katalin Bethlen’s Memoirs], in Kovács Kiss, ed., *Álló és mozgóképek*, p. 38.

- 26 Béla Bethlen, *Észak-Erdély kormánybiztosa voltam* [I Was the Government Commissioner for Northern Transylvania], edited by Ignác Romsics (Budapest, 1989), p. 274.
- 27 Gabriella Kornis, “Az Anjou-kárpit” [The Anjou Carpet], in Kovács Kiss, ed., *Álló és mozgóképek*, p. 118.
- 28 Kornis, ...*Őrizz..., és én is őrizlek téged*, p. 96.
- 29 Countess Katalin Basu Roy Chowdhury of Ulpur Mikes, “Visszatérés a zabolai Mikes-gyökerekhez” [Return to the Mikes Roots in Zabola], in Kovács Kiss, ed., *Álló és mozgóképek*, p. 126.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 Count Kálmán Tisza, “A Tisza család (borosjenői és szegedi gróf)” [The Tisza Family (Count of Borosjenő and Szeged)] in Kovács Kiss, ed., *Álló és mozgóképek*, pp. 192–193.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 127.
- 33 Ferenc Erős, “Psychische Spätfolgen des Holocausts. Forschungsergebnisse und -erfahrungen,” in Brigitte Mihok, ed., *Ungarn und der Holocaust. Kollaboration, Rettung und Trauma* (Dokumente – Texte – Materialien. Veröffentlichung vom Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung der Technischen Universität Berlin, Bd. 56) (Berlin, 2005), p. 133.
- 34 Basu Roy Chowdhury of Ulpur Mikes, “Visszatérés a zabolai Mikes-gyökerekhez,” in Kovács Kiss, ed., *Álló és mozgóképek*, p. 128.
- 35 Degenfeld-Schonburg, *Elmélkedések*, p. 34.
- 36 Countess Éva Bethlen, “Countess Éva Bethlen, Szentkirályi Gyulané,” in Gabriella Kornis, ed., *Elődök és utódok. Erdélyi főnemesek a XX. században* [Ancestors and Descendants. Transylvanian High Nobles in the Twentieth Century] (Budapest, 2002), p. 128.
- 37 *Ibid.*
- 38 Countess Ilona Bethlen, Mrs. László Polányi, “Mikor és kit zsákmányolhatott volna ki egy fiatal lány?” (Visszaemlékezés-részlet) [When and Whom Could a Young Girl Have Exploited? (A Memoir Excerpt)], in Kovács Kiss, ed., *Álló és mozgóképek*, p. 151.
- 39 Marosi, *Örökbe hagyott beszélgetés gróf Teleki Mihállyal*, p. 108; Kálmán Tisza and his son, István Tisza, were prime ministers of Hungary in the Dualist period.
- 40 *Ibid.*, pp. 109–110.
- 41 Countess Kata Tisza, “Tartson ki, írónő!” [Persevere, Author!], in János Adonyi Sztancs, ed., *Arisztokraták ma* [Aristocrats Today], vol. I (Budapest, 2007), p. 164.

- 42 “Összeszorítod a szád, mély lélegzet és méész tovább.’ Báró Bánffy Évával és Bánffy Tamással beszélget Kiss András” [“You Clench Your Teeth, Take a Deep Breath and Move On.” András Kiss Speaks with Baroness Éva Bánffy and Tamás Bánffy], in Kovács Kiss, ed., *Álló és mozgóképek*, p. 82.
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 Erving Goffman, *Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York, 1963), cited in Zsuzsanna Körösi and Adrienne Molnár, *Mit einem Geheimnis leben. Die Schicksale der Kinder der Verurteilten von 1956* (Studien zur Geschichte Ost- und Mitteleuropas, Bd. 4) (Herne, 2005), p. 95.
- 45 *Ibid.*
- 46 “Összeszorítod a szád, mély lélegzet és méész tovább,” in Kovács Kiss, ed., *Álló és mozgóképek*, p. 82.
- 47 *Ibid.*, p. 83.
- 48 *Ibid.*
- 49 *Ibid.*, p. 84.
- 50 János József Gudenus and László Szentirmai, *Összetört címerek. A magyar arisztokrácia sorsa és az 1945 utáni megpróbáltatások (bevezetés egy szociológiai vizsgálathoz)* [Broken Family Crests. The Fate of the Hungarian Aristocracy and the Post-1945 Tribulations (Introduction to a Sociological Examination)] (Budapest, 1989), p. 419.
- 51 For the content of *Adeligkeit*, see Eckart Conze and Monika Wienfort, “Einleitung. Themen und Perspektiven historischer Adelforschung zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert,” in Eckart Conze and Monika Wienfort, eds., *Adel und Moderne. Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Cologne and Weimar, 2004), p. 12.
- 52 Volker Depkat, “Autobiographie und die soziale Konstruktion von Wirklichkeit,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 29 (2003) 3: 442.
- 53 Marosi, *Örökbe hagyott beszélgetés gróf Teleki Mihállyal*, p. 112.
- 54 “Összeszorítod a szád, mély lélegzet és méész tovább,” in Kovács Kiss, ed., *Álló és mozgóképek*, p. 83.
- 55 Ferenc Harmath, “Ismertető a Hallerekről” [An Introduction to the Hallers], in Kovács Kiss, ed., *Álló és mozgóképek*, pp. 218–219. These ideas appear in almost all (even those not mentioned here) interviews and memoirs.
- 56 Count Farkas Bethlen, “Csizma, kantár, gerinc” [Boots, Bridle, Backbone], in Adonyi Sztancs, ed., *Arisztokraták ma*, p. 26.

- 57 Count Kálmán Tisza, “A Tisza család (borosjenői és szegedi gróf),” in Kovács Kiss, ed., *Álló és mozgóképek*. p. 194.
- 58 Tisza, “Tartson ki, írónó!” in Adonyi Sztancs, ed., *Arisztokraták ma*, p. 164.
- 59 *Ibid.*, p. 167.
- 60 Éva Kézdy Sztáray, *Egy eltűnt réteg nyomában. Egykori arisztokrata családok leszármazottai a mai Magyarországon* [On the Trail of a Vanished Stratum. The Descendants of Former Aristocratic Families in Today’s Hungary] (Budapest, 2009), pp. 189–191.
- 61 Miklós Bánffy, “Nem esküsznek szőnyegen” [They Do Not Take Oaths on a Carpet], in Adonyi Sztancs, ed., *Arisztokraták ma*, p. 217.
- 62 Conze and Wienfort, “Einleitung,” in Conze and Wienfort, eds., *Adel und Moderne*, p. 12.
- 63 Count Éva Bethlen, “Countess Éva Bethlen, Szentkirályi Gyulané,” in Kornis, ed., *Elődök és utódok*, p. 128.

Márton László

JÁNOS MÁTHÉ – THE MAN AND THE SYSTEM

János Máthé was born on October 4, 1898, in the village of Magyarhermány (Herculian) in the Székelyföld (Szekler Land). He earned his living as a farmer, and until 1945 he filled several leading posts in the village. In addition, he was also engaged in research on subjects relating to history, local history, linguistics and ethnography. Because of this, the Securitate had him watched, and it is this several-decades-long surveillance that we present in our study.

Historian Stefano Bottoni, who has carried out research in the Archives of the National Committee for the Study of the Securitate Archives (ACNSAS), made János Máthé's personal file available to me, for which I hereby thank him.

The informers appear in the documents under cover names; in their case I have put the code name in single parentheses (“”).

Investigation for the Years 1954–1955

The Securitate opened a file on János Máthé on February 16, 1954, when a countrywide investigation was conducted to identify “former exploiters” and uncover their possible anti-regime activity: first a list of names was compiled based on the data provided by the commune popular councils, and then in the course of the on-site investigation the potential suspects were interrogated. During the interrogation Máthé acknowledged that he had been the local leader of the Transylvanian Party.¹

Information-Gathering. February 4, 1961–April 24, 1962

On February 4, 1961, the Securitate began gathering specific intelligence on János Máthé under Ministry of the Interior Directive No. 70, which called for the identification of the local leaders of the

party abolished in 1948 throughout the entire country.² Lieutenant Márton Gödri of the Securitate headed the investigation, the goal of which was to determine what relationship János Máthé had with the “Hungarian nationalist” figures in the commune, or with leaders of parties “of the past”: if he did conduct hostile (that is, anti-regime and anti-state) activity, then by what methods and in what form did he do so?³

The Securitate officers learned that the informer ‘Miklós’ was on friendly terms with János Máthé, and for this reason Márton Gödri instructed him to visit Máthé at his home in order to converse with him there at length about the topics provided by Gödri.

During the conversation they wanted to probe Máthé’s opinion about the village association and collectivization.⁴ This may have functioned as a test of loyalty: the regime classified the subject of the surveillance as loyal or hostile based on a few straightforward criteria. In that period – or so it appears – the Securitate measured loyalty to the regime from the position on collectivization.

In accordance with the instructions received, the informer ‘Miklós’ had a number of conversations with Máthé throughout 1961–1962.⁵ He brought up the two “topics” provided (opinion regarding collectivization and political viewpoint) in a number of conversations, and based on these the informer opined that Máthé did not have “hostile manifestations” in connection with collectivization, disclosing merely objections of a technical nature.⁶ Either out of caution or suspicion, Máthé had not stated his true opinion, since his writings reveal unequivocally how much he opposed collectivization.

In January ‘Miklós’ also asked what he occupied himself with in the evenings, to which Máthé stated that he read only scholarly books. Gödri “jumped” on this piece of information, because he instructed ‘Miklós’ to uncover what books Máthé read.⁷

According to the closing report drafted by Gödri, Máthé did not conduct anti-regime activity, and did not have such manifestations, and because of his poor hearing he did not much keep in touch with the locals, but rather read scholarly and literary works.

On the basis of all this he was categorized as “loyal,” and the investigation of him was closed, but they continued to keep a file on him and watch him.

Preliminary Verification.

March 1967/April 5, 1968–February 4, 1969

In 1967 the Securitate – probably during a routine check – opened János Máthé’s correspondence and judged its content to be so dangerous that a preliminary verification of facts was initiated.⁸

In his letter of January 24, 1967, addressed to the editorial board of the daily *Magyar Nemzet* in Hungary, Máthé wrote of his interest in Hungarian history and asked for help in answering his questions related to this.⁹ The translation of the letter was sent from the post office to Márton Gödri for urgent examination.

Máthé on February 19, 1967, wrote the following about Millerand and Clemenceau to a relative living in Budapest: “[...] the two gravediggers of Hungary – in their hatred for the Hungarians, with lies and slanders, in their maniacal rage they destroyed the country.”¹⁰

Based on the letter Máthé was categorized as a “nationalist,” and then in March a preliminary verification action was launched.¹¹

In June 1967 János Máthé’s letter written to the geologist János Bányai of Székelyudvarhely, in which he reported on geological research conducted on the outskirts of Magyarhermány, was seized. Because these geological data were classified as state secrets, they represented another negative for Máthé.

Based on the data gathered, in April 1968 a more thorough investigation into Máthé was launched.

Information-Gathering. April 5, 1968–February 4, 1969

On April 6, 1968, intelligence-gathering on Máthé commenced; this was justified by the fact that Máthé had been the chairman of the Transylvanian Party in the commune, he was a nationalist, he was

preoccupied with the history of the Hungarians, and he was writing a monograph about the village, for which he was collecting historical data, in 1966 he had purchased a typewriter, with which he was preparing historical studies, the content of which was unknown, as was his intention with them, and furthermore, he collected and passed on to others geological data, which were classified as a state secret.¹² Even the director of the state archive in Sepsiszentgyörgy, József Árvay, reported about Máthé that the latter had asked to be allowed to do research in this archive.¹³

The purpose of the intelligence-gathering was to discover the contents of the manuscripts that Máthé possessed and what he intended to do with them. They attempted to do this in a number of ways: they wished to put informers onto Máthé, and Máthé's foreign and domestic correspondence had to be opened.¹⁴

Another plan was to “organize” József Árvay's visit to Magyarhermány, where he was to probe into the contents of Máthé's manuscripts, and find out what he intended to do with them and what documents of historical value he possessed.

In August 1968 János Máthé's letter of July 28, in which he described how through two citizens of Hungary he had sent his collection of dialectal words to the Hungarian linguist Lajos Lőrincze, was intercepted.¹⁵

This information entailed quite serious consequences, because the export of any kind of intellectual product out of Romania without permission was strictly forbidden.

On April 10, 1968, ‘István Miklós’ reported that he exchanged words with Máthé almost daily, but the latter rarely talked about politics, and even then declared an opinion about domestic political events only.¹⁶

Gödri gave the informer the task of uncovering in what state Máthé was with his works and whether he wanted to have them published. The state security officer also gave tips about how this could be coaxed out of Máthé: “You can find this out by saying look, time is passing, you're getting old, who will you give [your works] to, because our end is approaching (you being about the same age).”¹⁷

The informer was also to uncover what Máthé had written in his work about the origin of the Székely people and of the people of Magyarhermány. Thus at this time it was already clear what mattered to the regime in connection with historians: the position held on the question of origins.

On this same day Gödri sought out the principal of the primary school in Magyarhermány, István Benedek, with whom he discussed the latter's monograph about the commune. Benedek stated that he had collected data from János Máthé's monograph, which Máthé was typing at that time. According to the principal, the work mainly highlighted the heroism of the Székely.¹⁸

That same day Gödri also went to see the local Reformed minister, whom Gödri had known previously. At first the two discussed their family matters, then the questions of interest to the Securitate. Gödri knew that the minister was also working on the history of the congregation and asked him where his data for this came from. The latter stated that he had received all data from Máthé. The officer thereafter inquired about Máthé, to which the minister stated that he had seen the village monograph, and Máthé was researching the origin of the Székely and had also made use of his foreign, Hungarian, contacts to compile his work.¹⁹ At Gödri's request, the minister undertook to uncover what kind of books Máthé had.

That same day, on April 10, 1968, the report of the informer 'Endre Vincze' was drafted as well: he found out from Máthé that the latter had about 60 books, among them some that he had purchased between 1940 and 1944. According to 'Vincze', Máthé was writing the history of "the country" (Transylvania?) from 1848 to the present.²⁰ He found out that he had connections with the townspeople and looked up his acquaintances living there, and they collected data for his research, almost monthly. According to 'Vincze', Máthé did not show what he wrote to others, but wanted to publish it in a book, and worked the most on the village monograph.²¹

At the time when he was enlisted, on May 31, 1968, the informer 'Ferenc Hogyi/Hodi' was made to write down what his relationship

to Máthé was and what he knew of him. According to ‘Hogyi’, Máthé was dealing with the history of Transylvania and the Székely and was collecting dialect words.

The handling officer thereupon instructed ‘Hogyi’ to find out from Máthé whether there were other people – mainly in Erdővidék – who were conducting similar research.²²

‘Hogyi’ was preparing to travel abroad, and so Gödri instructed him to ask Máthé whether or not he needed any old books.²³ The purpose of the measure may have been to deepen Máthé’s trust in ‘Hogyi’ and to find out what books Máthé needed, from which it would have been possible to deduce the subject of his research.

On March 21, 1968, Máthé requested a research permit from the State Archives Sepsiszentgyörgy Branch, where he wanted to collect material for the village monograph. The next day Árvay had already typed a report about the purpose of Máthé’s visit to them.²⁴ Árvay also wrote down that he had learned from Máthé that the latter was corresponding with historians from Kolozsvár and Hungary, from whom he received data concerning the history of the village.

The Securitate was aware that Máthé had invited József Árvay to his home, and for this reason they decided to “organize” Árvay’s visit to Magyarhermány: Captain Adalbert Harmati would go along with him and together they would examine Máthé’s old documents.

Árvay visited Máthé at his home on May 15, 1968, probably alone, giving an account of his trip to Officer Márton Gödri, to whom he stated that Máthé possessed eighteenth- and nineteenth-century documents, was writing the village monograph, and was researching Áron Gábor’s life story.²⁵

The results of the nearly year-long investigation were summarized by Gödri in a report on December 31, 1969, in which he described the works that Máthé was working on, the source materials that he possessed and his working methods (with the help of his contact network, which extended to Hungary too, he obtained the necessary data through correspondence).²⁶

Gödri also reported that Máthé had handed over his work containing the dialectal words for publication in Hungary, but “it had not turned out that he pursued other hostile activity.”²⁷

Gödri in the end recommended closing the investigation, but also continuing to keep Máthé in the file of potential suspects in order to measure the effect of the persuasion and know his prevailing position.

The recommendation to close the case was approved on February 14, 1969, and an interesting proposal was made: “For the purposes of preventing certain documents and works of historical value from being taken out of the country by the aforementioned person, it is necessary for the competent agencies to influence him in this direction.”²⁸

In accordance with the recommendation, on November 18, 1968, the Securitate drafted a memorandum to the county organization of the Romanian Communist Party, in which they proposed that Máthé be persuaded in such a way that he would hand over his materials to the museum or the archives.

Captain Adalbert Harmati’s memorandum of September 1969 also speaks of influencing: “Based on the information received, Comrade Lajos Syilvester, head of the Cultural and Artistic Committee of the Kovászna County Popular Council, got in touch with the aforementioned János Máthé, persuading him numerous times not to share his works for the purposes of publication to foreign persons in the future.”

Just what did persuasion actually mean? In 1969 Máthé spoke about this to an informer as follows:

He stated that he had been visited from the county cultural division, and they had asked for his writings. He stated that he had sent a dialect dictionary to Hungary, too, to Lajos Lőrincze, who promised to have it appear in Hungary, and he [Máthé] had given his consent to this. [...] He also said that Comrade Syilvester had asked him to write to Lajos Lőrincze, so that the dialect dictionary would not be printed there, but he had already given his word to Lajos Lőrincze, and a man’s word is a contract, and he would not take it back.²⁹

Surveillance. February 5, 1969–May/July 1970

After the investigation was ended, Máthé was only observed and the information coming in about him was collected (reports by informers and his correspondence).

On February 2, 1970, Máthé wrote a letter to his relative, Ferenc Máthé of Vargyas, in which he wrote in detail about his historical perspective, with special regard to the origins of the Székely.³⁰ The letter also aroused the attention of the Securitate:

Dear Ferenc!

I have received your letter, and I can only be glad of the interest that you display towards our Székely nation. I can assure you that the stories of the conquest of the homeland in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are not true. [...] We possess such an enormous amount of historical material about our past that we can smash those who falsify history in the mouth with both fists. Those who would date our birth certificate to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries themselves don't believe it.³¹

The translation of the letter was received by Captain Cerghizan and First Lieutenant Dănilă Harro. Presumably it was not of particular interest to them which conception about the origin of the Székely Máthé espoused: what caught their attention was the rejection of the official Romanian historical position – specifically the point that Máthé put the settlement of the Székely in Transylvania much earlier than the accepted time period.

But why was such a question, one that was within the purview of professional historians, classified as dangerous? Behind the matter lies the utilization of the results of historical science for the purposes of nation-building. Beginning in the eighteenth century, in the age of the Enlightenment the Transylvanian Romanians, in order to buttress their national demands, utilized their Daco-Roman origins as an argument, emphasizing the point that they were the autochthonous inhabitants of Transylvania.³² The use of historical facts as a political device would later on have serious consequences:

in the Ceaușescu era – when the state and the Party leadership utilized the historical past for their own legitimization – the state financing historical research presented history and its practitioners with expectations, setting out, through publishing opportunities, just what the past could be.³³

Máthé therefore had not only refuted an abstract viewpoint that affected only professional historians, but at the same time had attacked the legitimacy of the state power acting in the name of such views, and for this reason his activity was classified as “dangerous.”

What is striking in Máthé’s letter is his commitment towards the past and present of his people, the Székely, to which a letter of his from February 1970 also attests.³⁴

In the spring of 1969 Máthé stated the following to an informer: “Up till now he had always trusted that we would get back to Hungary, but now he says that nothing will come of this now.”³⁵

What lies behind this statement of Máthé? Máthé had grown up in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and had completed his secondary school studies in the final years of the Monarchy. As a soldier of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy he had fought and been wounded for his homeland in the autumn of 1916, on the Romanian battlefield.³⁶

The country that he had fought for as a soldier lost the war, while he himself became the citizen of another country. It wasn’t he who had left his homeland: his country had shrunk, and the state border had passed over him and over his village. But this fact – for all of Máthé’s life – had been rather just an abstract, “virtual” reality, for throughout Máthé’s life Magyarhermány remained for the most part a Hungarian-inhabited settlement, as did the entire region, the Erdővidék. Living in this village and in this region, only the “local” or “regional” reality, that this was for the most part a Hungarian-inhabited region, could be perceived, and the fact that the country, and the overwhelming part of Transylvania, had become majority-Romanian could not be perceived.

What had the new country, Romania, brought him, a Transylvanian and a Székely-Hungarian? Let us read through Máthé's works from this point of view: for the interwar period we find the description of attempts at assimilation: they tried to forcibly convert the Calvinists to the Orthodox faith and exerted pressure to have an Orthodox church built in Magyarhermány.³⁷

After the Second World War Máthé noted down in his own hand the names of the 173 Hungarian prisoners-of-war who perished due to inhumane treatment in the Romanian prison camp at Barcafdvár (Feldioara), and it was likewise he who described the anti-Hungarian bloodshed of the Maniu Guards in Szárazajta (Aita Seacă), not far from Magyarhermány.³⁸

Or let us examine the laconic entry from Máthé's *Magyarhermány kronológiája* (The Chronology of Magyarhermány) for the year 1951: "Evening of Oct. 22 in Szentkeresztbánya drunken Romanian soldiers shot a young man from Hermány, Sándor Baló (Szöcs), for singing with his companions in Hungarian. He died from the shooting." Something similar to this happened to Máthé's son as well in 1952, when he was likewise harassed because he had been singing in Hungarian with his fellow soldiers.

Even if there are no reports of violent acts for the subsequent period, there are entries about linguistic assimilation: on August 23, 1964, Petőfi's name was whitewashed over from the sign of the local Petőfi Cultural Center.³⁹

If we put these entries in order, we can understand what lies behind Máthé's outburst: for Máthé the Romanian state represented the institution that – beyond the change in political systems and methods – pursued a single aim: the assimilation and disappearance of his nationality, the Székely Hungarians. Máthé, who had a strong national consciousness, worried that his nation would disappear: this can be read from his letters.

Máthé felt that as a literate person it was his obligation to preserve his people from being assimilated, by counterbalancing such attempts. But what could he do? He found two avenues for this: *historical* and *linguistic scholarly activity*.

From the viewpoint of historical research his goal was the preservation of the collective identity of the Székely and the Transylvanian Hungarians, which he could serve through a nurturing of historical consciousness – and by writing the history of the Székely as he saw it and publishing it uncensored. This sense of responsibility comes through clearly in his pronouncements, as is recorded: “History is history, and events must be rendered as they happened. [...] he will not change anything [in his writings], because he would not be able to die peacefully knowing that he had betrayed his nation, his own people, which for so long had fought for justice and freedom.”⁴⁰

From the linguistic point of view Máthé’s purpose was to preserve the purity of the Hungarian language, and therefore he fought against all foreign-language influences, in articles and speeches.

His fear for the nation’s fate manifested itself in other ways as well. In May 1978 Máthé wrote this to one of his relatives: “I don’t know whether you are still unmarried? Be convinced that it is a great error on the part of an offspring of the Székely, who are full of vitality, to walk the path set out by nature alone, to retreat without descendants.”⁴¹

Information-Gathering. May 30/July 3, 1970–April 4, 1971

In early 1970 the Securitate gained access to the monograph on Magyarhermány written by Máthé, and on this basis the investigation into Máthé, which was headed by First Lieutenant Dănilă Harro, was reopened.⁴²

According to the officer,

In the monograph the aforementioned János Máthé makes numerous references to the continuity of the Romanian people on the territory of Transylvania, and he asserts his own hypothesis about the origins of the Székely, which deviates from that of Romanian historians. In a similar way he outlines his views on the aforementioned problem in his letters.

It is known of János Máthé that he is 72 years old and clings to his views fanatically. [...] his views and works, if they fall into the hands of the younger generations that are unprepared for this, may prompt them to commit acts against which the state organs will have to move.⁴³

The Securitate classified Máthé's activity as dangerous because of his historical views' "deviating from the official [version]." The regime did not tolerate separate opinions. Máthé was asserting "deviant" views, and this was reason enough to intervene. The goal of the regime was homogenization, and this legitimized the intervention, which was seen as a correction.

The Securitate justified the intervention by citing the danger of Máthé's activity: after reading Máthé's works, the young readership would have committed anti-state acts. This clearly reflects the totalitarian outlook, since on such grounds every work that writes about past (or for that matter, contemporary) errors of the given state/nation/political system could be banned. Moreover, a question of historical scholarship of concern to historians was classified as a problem of state security.

In his works dealing with the history of the 1848–1849 War of Independence, Máthé glorifies the martial deeds of the Székely. Thus the Securitate may have feared that young readers of Máthé's works – like their ancestors of 1848 – would rise up against oppression and dictatorship.

The purpose of the action was the "isolation" of Máthé, "to prevent the spread of the views held by him." They probably wanted to achieve this by obstructing Máthé's publications relating to the origins and history of the Székely. If we examine which of Máthé's writings were published at the time, it appears that there really did exist such a restrictive decision: his more extensive works on the history of the Székely and relating to the history of the Revolution of 1848 in the Székelyföld were not made public.

As part of the campaign they planned to put informers onto him and open his correspondence, but also intended that he be "guided" towards other areas of research.⁴⁴ Specifically he had to be diverted from "his research on where Transylvania belongs" (which only

reflects the paranoia of the regime, since this subject appears in not one of Máthé's works).

They sought to carry out the "diversion" in two ways: 'David' (a former informer and the Reformed minister of the village) was to influence Máthé. First 'David' had to be convinced to accept the Securitate's attitude about Máthé, and then he had to persuade Máthé to prepare a study of the Reformed Church. In addition, the chairman of the county cultural and artistic committee, Lajos Sylvester, was to suggest to Máthé that he write the history of the village after August 23, 1944.

In the summer of 1970 the informer 'Sándor Zoltáni', as a journalist, wrote a letter to Máthé, in which he posed various questions.⁴⁵ It appears that Máthé did not trust him, mainly because he had to answer in writing, because he wrote that he had never wanted to publish this village monograph.

In October 1970 the arrival of the Barót puppet theater in Magyarhermány was a further occasion for informers to try to obtain information from Máthé. On October 11, 1970, two members of the troupe, the informers 'Sándor T.' and 'Sándor Zoltáni', visited Máthé. When they inquired whether he continued to do research, Máthé stated the following:

Well for sure I have lost some of my enthusiasm for the work, because the Securitate threatened me and told me not to deal with such things any more. What happened was that an acquaintance of mine, a young girl, returned home from Hungary and came to see me to request certain historical data, since she is a historian and an ethnographer. And so I gave her my notes, so that she might write out what she needed. The Securitate found out about this and sent word that if I wanted to avoid unpleasantness, I should give up such matters, especially giving out data. Since then I don't really dare to occupy myself with anything. Let me tell you, I held the plow and that's how I educated myself; I read and researched a lot to get this far. I collected a great many things that would have been lost to oblivion. I wanted to save everything for posterity, and this is the reason why they harass and threaten me.⁴⁶

We have no written sources concerning Máthé's having been threatened by the Securitate. He was given a mild warning (reprimand), which – in accordance with the Securitate's internal regulations – was not recorded in the files. This may have happened during Dănilă Harro's on-site investigation in Magyarhermány on May 19, 1970.⁴⁷

On May 19, 1970, Dănilă Harro went out to Vargyas to look up Ferenc Máthé in order to gather information from him about János Máthé. But why did the Securitate visit him? The motivation was János Máthé's letter of February 2, 1970, to Ferenc Máthé, in which he gave a detailed account of his research and his views on the origins of the Székely. According to the letter, Ferenc Máthé was also interested in the history of the Székely, and it appears that they were on familiar terms with one another.

Thus, from the Securitate's point of view, Ferenc Máthé could provide valuable information about János Máthé, and in addition he, too, could have been a potential source of danger to the regime. This is why First Lieutenant Dănilă Harro, who was heading the investigation regarding János Máthé, went out to see him.⁴⁸

In the course of the preparations, Harro documented the following about Ferenc Máthé: "In his spare time he creates handicraft items out of wood. [...] It turned out that he had a personal exhibit in his residence, where he received guests daily."⁴⁹

After the preliminary inquiry they located Ferenc Máthé at his workplace. They told Máthé that they had heard about his home exhibit, and since they had had to be on their way to Vargyas on a work-related matter, at the same time they would like to view his exhibit. Ferenc Máthé readily led them to his residence and showed them his exhibit. Harro examined the objects, too, with the eyes of the Securitate, and could sense the identity-preserving role of folk art: "I noticed that the objects carved by him depicted certain local Székely traditions and customs."⁵⁰ Meanwhile Ferenc Máthé spoke about his exhibits, and about how they had written about him in the *Megyei Tükör*. Harro now cleverly steered the conversation onto János Máthé: he asked Ferenc whether he happened to be the

Máthé about whom the *Megyei Tükör* had written. Thereupon the information of interest to the Securitate officer began to pour out of Ferenc Máthé:

Ferenc Máthé clarified that it was not him but rather an elderly man more than 70 years old who was called János Máthé: he was very sharp-witted and they were distant relatives. [...] When we asked why he didn't write in the [*Megyei*] *Tükör*, Máthé stated that the elderly János Máthé knew a lot of historical information about the Hungarians that was true and had been accurate in a given time period, but currently – the old man had declared – it was not possible to publish it, and because of this he does not write for scholarly journals.

Ferenc Máthé stated that the old man did not like it when his works that he sent to be published were excessively 'weeded.'

Harro had achieved his aim: he had learned new information about Máthé, and in addition he had identified an additional person who could be classified from the regime's point of view as a suspicious element: "It turned out that to a certain extent he, too, is dominated by certain nationalist ideals."⁵¹

From what did they draw the conclusion that Ferenc Máthé was a nationalist? From the motifs of the wood carvings preserving "local, Székely traditions"? For, according to the summary, this was all that had been said about the Hungarians and the Székely. The attempt aimed at preserving the identity of the Hungarian people, who were to be assimilated, was classified as nationalism.

On September 9, 1970, Harro visited the informer 'David', the village's minister.⁵²

Our having requested his help in solving certain problems, he consented to assist us temporarily. During this meeting a conversation ensued about the aforementioned subject, János Máthé of Magyarhermány, [with us] pointing out that our agencies were displaying 'understanding' towards János Máthé's nationalist ideas, and we had no intention of forcing him to relinquish these views, but

the popularization of these among the youth represented a threat. The former informer agreed and proposed [...] that the old man's attention ought to be distracted from his present preoccupations. [...] In this vein he pointed out that in his opinion a good preoccupation for the entire winter season would be if they suggested to him that he write a study about the activity of the József Dénes [Dienes] Hermányi, a priest originating from Magyarhermány, who was a professor in Nagyenyed, had conducted rich ecclesiastical activity, and lived in the 1600s. We agreed that when he visited the old man he would tell him that the compilation of this work would be important both to him and to the bishopric: perhaps it could also be printed [...]⁵³

It cannot be known whether the minister in question really did keep his promise to persuade Máthé, or whether he was just making promises in order to get rid of the Securitate. It is a fact that Máthé did research the work of József Dienes Hermányi, and in 1973 even published an article about him.⁵⁴

In late March 1971 Máthé had a cerebral hemorrhage and was admitted to the hospital in Barót for four weeks. He was brought home, but his right hand was paralyzed, and his cognitive ability was damaged. Thereafter Máthé was placed under a lower degree of surveillance.⁵⁵

Several reports from the first half of 1972 state that Máthé was trying to have his works published. After the hemorrhage he may have thought that perhaps he no longer had very much time left to live and had to hurry if he wanted to see his works published. The replies that came back from the publishers must have asked for changes to his work, which provoked extremely heated opposition from Máthé: "Either they publish it just as it is, or I'll try to publish it in Hungary, and if I don't succeed, I'll die, but even then it is better than not writing the truth, or if they add something that isn't true."⁵⁶ The news had brought the expected result, because the surveillance of Máthé was elevated to a higher degree.⁵⁷

On March 17, 1972, Márton Gödri had a conversation with a resident of Magyarhermány, who stated that János Máthé had written a study about Áron Gábor that he wanted to publish in Romania, but because they had not agreed to publish it here at home, he wanted to send it abroad for publication. Upon hearing the news Gödri tried to help: he recommended that in the interests of publishing it in Romania they should get in touch with Lajos Sylvester from the county popular council.⁵⁸ Perhaps he thought that, rather than letting an unchecked work somehow make its way abroad and be published there, it was a better solution to help Máthé to publish the more acceptable of his works at home, in the hope that he would desist from trying to send it abroad.

On May 30, 1972, it was learned from an informer that Máthé was worried about the fate of his monograph:

Before he dies, he would still like to see his book published. [...] he stated that they simply exerted pressure on him to amend his work in a few places, but he did not accept this [...] the old man stated that he would not change anything, because he would not be able to die in peace knowing that he had betrayed his nation, his own people, which for so long had fought for justice and freedom. [...] He stated that this pressure had been exerted by those at the county publisher. Those with whom he spoke did not say so openly, but he could sense that his work could appear only by lying or by omitting a few truths.⁵⁹

He stated that at the *Megyei Tükör* they had promised him that they would carry it in installments, but it hadn't happened, and because of this he was thinking of having it published in Hungary.

They urged [amending] those parts that detail the beginnings, more precisely the founding of the state; he claims that [the theory that] in these regions there had existed a human community – true, a very primitive one, as the documents themselves show – before the Dacians, and well before the Székely settled here, about this he says that it is nonsense invented by our [i.e. Romanian] historians in order to explain away the existence of the Hungarians on the presumed territory of Romania.

Thus Máthé had come up against the theory of Daco-Roman continuity, and for this reason the parts of his work also relating to the legitimacy of the state could not be published under any circumstances. Now the only question was who would inform him of this. A report of July 17, 1972, provides a clue to this; in it the informer ‘B. Domokos’ recounts how Lajos Syilvester had declared of Máthé that “although the old man had written a good work, a very successful monograph, they are not publishing it, but simply obstructing it, because Máthé described everything just as it had been and as he felt it to be, and he would not consent to changing anything at all, *even though they discussed this with him* [my emphasis – M. L.]”⁶⁰

The Securitate officer following this recommended prevailing upon the editor-in-chief of the *Megyei Tükör* to carry certain parts of “appropriate” content from the work so that Máthé would drop the idea of sending it abroad.⁶¹

In June 1972 the informer ‘Béla Domokos’ chatted with Máthé about the “comradely” hunting parties happening in Magyarhermány.

He said with great irony that they were hurrying to repair the bridge at the end of the village of Kisbacon, lest the minister be unable to come to hunt. He said he didn’t know why the hell he always came here to hunt, because, as they say, Romania is big and beautiful, and yet he still comes to Transylvania, let him go to the devil back to his Romanians. He used insulting words about the head of government [Ceaușescu]; for example he said that he was ‘obese’ [...] He said that he was simply disgusted after reading the Romanian press (*Előre, Megyei Tükör*), because it was filled with lies and the empty speeches of the state president [...]⁶²

The report prompted Securitate Captain Ștefan Cerghizan to order that surveillance on Máthé be resumed, and at the same time that he be prevented from disturbing the visit of the state or Party leaders.⁶³

Let us try to trace what lay behind Máthé's declarations. On the one hand he attacked Ceaușescu's cult of personality, and his main objection to the Romanian Hungarian press was that – like the rest of the country's publications – it was full of Ceaușescu's lies and glorification of him.

Another grievance is of a center–periphery nature: “as they say, Romania is big and beautiful, and yet he still comes to Transylvania,” Máthé burst out – they still come here to hunt. This is the outburst of the local patriot of Magyarhermány. But what lies behind it? Máthé had lived through the nearly one century during which the prevailing state had impoverished and debased the self-sufficient, largely self-governing village community of Magyarhermány, turning it into a colony.

Let us page through his writings from this point of view: one can trace how the state – first the Hungarian, then the Romanian one – through administrative means increasingly drained and then took away the income of the forest, one of the main bases of self-sufficiency. At the end of the nineteenth century the publicly owned forests were brought under state supervision, which meant an enormous loss of income to the locals, while it involved no advantages whatsoever, and by various administrative procedures revenue even above this was squeezed out.⁶⁴ Between the two world wars the “contribution” (which is to say bribery) cost for having the forest logging plans approved also enriched the state's employees or their retainues, while the nationalization of the year 1948 took everything.⁶⁵

After the nationalization of the forest, therefore, the poor alpine land was left for making a living, but the state through its measures rendered this impossible as well. The wild game stocks were allowed to multiply unrestrictedly so that the various Party figures might have a place to indulge their passion for hunting – at the expense of the people of Hermány, because the overpopulation of wild game grazed and destroyed the village's crop lands. In vain did they erect fences: “the bears smash them, the deer jump over them,” stated my local conversational partners. Because of this the village – with its formerly extensive crop land – had shrunk catastrophically.⁶⁶

The center, therefore, had taken away the resources of the periphery – Magyarhermány – and drained off its revenue. No investment or development occurred, or if it did, it was only because of the interests of the center: the bridge on the road towards Kisbacon was repaired not for the locals but rather for the comfort of the Party leader, who was coming to hunt. It is no wonder, therefore, if Máthé reacted furiously against the “outsiders” exploiting his village.

The third grievance is ethnically based: “let him go to the devil back to his Romanians,” went Máthé’s insult. In this the consciousness of regional identity can be perceived: Máthé, as a local, a Transylvanian, is furious with the “intruders.”

As far as Máthé’s attitude to the Romanians is concerned, I consider what he wrote in a 1983 letter to be indicative:

I respect the language and culture of every nation, the value of every nation, but only as long as the latter also respect my nation. For me the history of the Székely is a sacred and inviolate matter, and I am not willing to place it under the heel of any nation, or subordinate it. It is my opinion that the Hungarian press in Romania is excessively subservient. Fight against nationalism! What a crazy idea! *It is the main obligation of every dignified person – apart from respect for the other nations – to cling to his own nation* [my emphasis – M. L.]. It would be tilting at windmills to fight against it under the slogan of internationalism, whether Hungarians or Romanians.⁶⁷

Supervision. November 3, 1972–April 11/May 10, 1983

From November 3, 1972, surveillance on Máthé was reduced to a milder level, or so-called “supervision.”⁶⁸

In 1977 once again informers were put onto him: on February 9, 1977, the informer ‘Pál Tóth’, in accordance with the task received, sought out Máthé on the pretext that the latter could help him to buy sheep. The informer learned that Máthé noted down everything that happened in the village.⁶⁹

In August 1977 Máthé went to conduct research in the archives in Sepsiszentgyörgy, where he requested commercial and agricultural data relating to the commune, but they did not give any to him.⁷⁰

In early March 1981 the Securitate gained knowledge of several previously unknown works of Máthé, for Máthé had sent a letter to the editorial office of the paper *Új Élet* in Marosvásárhely, requesting the printing of one of his works, whereupon they had sent a colleague to look and see what other writings Máthé had, and thus they found out that he had compiled several manuscripts, and they also obtained knowledge of the list of names that contained the information about those of Hungarian nationality who died in the Romanian prison camp at Barcaföldvár in 1944–1945.⁷¹

In May 1982 the informer ‘Mrs. Fülöp’ disclosed the fact that Máthé “even included in the monograph when bread began to be rationed.”⁷²

Surveillance. April 11/May 10, 1983–May 27, 1986

Beginning on April 11 or May 10, 1983, János Máthé, by that time 85 years old, was once more placed under surveillance. The respectful “Philosopher” was chosen as a code name for him.⁷³

On March 5, 1983, Captain Mihai Lazăr prepared a report, in which he illustrated with excerpts taken from the correspondence and the informer reports that János Máthé was a nationalist-chauvinist, had prepared a village monograph that he had through certain persons visiting him smuggled out to Hungary in order to be published there, and had voiced the complaint that he was not receiving the periodicals sent to him from Hungary.⁷⁴

Based on the report, once again a surveillance action was launched against Máthé; again they wanted to uncover the purposes and methods of his activity, and his network of foreign and domestic contacts, and henceforth Máthé was still to be prevented from popularizing his views.

They wanted to achieve these aims by the already customary means: placing informers onto him, opening his correspondence,

and investigating the people that he corresponded with; an on-site visit was also planned to find out from Máthé how he had got his manuscript to Hungary. They wanted to confiscate those of his materials “with inappropriate content” and warn (intimidate) him not to hand over materials to foreign citizens in the future.

Máthé’s guests from Hungary had to be put on file and their data had to be disclosed to the border guards, so that if they once more entered Romanian territory, the guards should report it to the central organs, and then observe them and document their hostile activity; then they were to be declared *persona non grata* and thus deported.⁷⁵

They also planned on convincing Máthé’s sons and grandson to talk the elder Máthé out of research and sending his writings abroad.⁷⁶

The proposed measures were approved by Securitate Colonel Alexandru Aulik, who ordered his subordinates to travel to the scene: “You will go to see the subject, explaining that by having the manuscript sent abroad he had violated the law. Obtain a copy of it; at the same time verify what books he has. Finally warn him [...] to stop such preoccupations and live out his old age.”⁷⁷

And perhaps Aulik’s final instruction reflects a little humanity, or simply just the intent to avoid a possible news sensation because of the harassment of a public personality: “Take it into account that he is 85 years old and deaf.”

On May 10, 1983, Captain Mihai Lazăr and Lieutenant Colonel Ștefan Cerghizan went out to visit János Máthé, taking with them Zoltán Máthé, János Máthé’s grandson, as a translator.⁷⁸

The officers first asked the elder Máthé by what means the village monograph had made it out to Hungary, to which he stated that in 1982 he had handed over a copy of his work to two Hungarian citizens in order to publish it with a publisher in Hungary. Máthé argued cleverly that Hungary was a “friendly” country, and that because of his advanced age it had been very important to him that his work be published, which the Hungarian nationals had promised.⁷⁹

Cerghizan was certainly well aware that Máthé had already been warned several times, but they accepted the formula that Máthé had “unconsciously violated the law” and that “the Hungarian citizens had exploited his state of health and his advanced age and had taken away the manuscript” and they reprimanded the relatives present for not having prevented this.

They informed the elder János Máthé that he had acted illegally when he sent his manuscript to another country, and they warned him “not to conduct further similar activities,” while the two relatives were charged with reporting what persons from Hungary visited Máthé and preventing Máthé from saying anything or handing over any document that “could be interpreted hostilely.”

The officers thereafter searched the house and – according to his recollections – “carried off even the very last postcard.” The officers probably did not suspect that they would no longer find a significant portion of Máthé’s materials: part of it was hidden with relatives, while another part of it had been burned, in expectation of a house search.

Of course, the officers gathering the documents did not know the first thing about this. While they “worked,” the elder János Máthé typed a statement dictated by the men carrying out the search.⁸⁰ “I acknowledge that I committed an act in violation of the law and through this statement of mine I have been informed that I have been warned by the state security organs about my actions, and I pledge that such an act on my part will not occur in the future.”

At the end of the report on the house search, Lazăr recommended that his typewriter be taken away from him, and that his activity continue to be watched closely. The threat of losing the typewriter spurred Máthé to take an unusual step: he wrote a letter to the officer who had visited him.

Honorable Comrade Captain!

On the occasion of your recent visit to me, you stated that perhaps the privilege of using the typewriter will be [revoked]; I therefore ask you to hear my defense against the, for me, burdensome procedure.

[...] Because I am hard of hearing and because of a partial paralysis on my right side I am able to write by hand only with painful difficulty, without a typewriter I am not even capable of writing a letter; without a typewriter my contact with the outside world would cease.

In what followed, Máthé cited his “merits”: the articles he had written and an interesting incident.

Below I mention in connection with my writing activity an incident that has not really happened to anyone else. When the country was celebrating Party Secretary-General Ceaușescu’s fiftieth birthday and the celebratory telegrams of state leaders arrived from all parts of the world, I myself personally sent a congratulatory letter. I wrote the letter in Székely runic script, some three weeks later comes the chairman of the Popular Council, he is asked by the Party in [Sepsi] Szentgyörgy, to find out what I had asked of Comrade Ceaușescu in the letter, because they were unable to read the letter. I assured him that I had not requested anything but I congratulated him on the occasion of his birthday, and wished him a long life to be spent in continued good health. The reply was sent off, and afterwards I received thanks for it from the Party office in [Sepsi] Szentgyörgy on behalf of the secretary-general of the Party. I believe that there are those in Szentgyörgy who still remember the case of the letter. Therefore I ask the comrade captain to endorse my request.⁸¹

We can only guess as to how Máthé interpreted the sending of the greeting in runic script. Was it simple “Székely craftiness”: just let those “know-it-all” comrades rack their brains over the unfamiliar scribbling? In any event the congratulatory gesture had significance beyond itself because of the chosen form: it shows Máthé’s Székely identity and his attachment to it – and the oft-cited Székely bravado.

Whether it was thanks to the letter or for some other reason, in the end they left Máthé his typewriter.

The written note dated three months after the house search cited new charges against Máthé: “He tried at the same time to encourage some youths to retain the Hungarian nationalist mentality from the ‘oppressed minority’ point of view. Similarly, he has established tendentious ties with citizens coming from ‘Helga’ [Hungary], to whom he presents a distorted view of the socio-political reality in our homeland.”⁸²

The Securitate – after several decades of observation – finally defined the essence of Máthé’s activity more precisely: activity aimed at retaining identity. His other “sin” was that he established contact with persons from Hungary, and the third “charge” was that he had given an unvarnished account of conditions in Romania.

Máthé probably believed that he was now too old to have anything to lose: he did not cease his activity even despite the prohibition and terror: he researched, corresponded, made inquiries, wrote, and once more tried to have his work published. Nor did the Securitate cease to observe him either.

On January 1, 1985, the informer ‘Péter’ visited Máthé, as his former neighbor, to wish him a happy New Year, and at the same time obtain information about him.⁸³ Máthé was lying under the blanket fully dressed, so weakened that he could not get out of bed. He complained that his grandson, Zoltán Máthé, had not allowed him to type recently, even when he would have had the strength to do so.

On June 6, 1985, on the back of the report on Máthé a Securitate captain wrote the question: “What shall we do with this file?” This outburst indicates the Securitate’s indecision: what to do with that 88-year-old old man who despite the warning stubbornly continued to send off his letters and continued to collect data? “The subject was warned in 1983 [...] But János Máthé continues to send notes, and receive them from ‘Helga’ [Hungary]. [...] it must be decided whether or not it is worth dealing with him at the current level of investigation.”⁸⁴

János Máthé died on January 18, 1986. The officers of the Securitate concluded with satisfaction that he had not succeeded in

having the village monograph published; however, the observation of foreign citizens in contact with Máthé had to be continued.⁸⁵

The dossier on János Máthé, the “Philosopher,” by now massive in size, was closed for good.

Summary – János Máthé and the Securitate

As early as the late 1940s János Máthé had been aware that informing on people had become an everyday fact of life:

On March 9, 1948, three delegates from headquarters arrived from [Székely] Udvarhely. [...] At the meeting no one dared to speak out, because at that time the situation was such that a person thought twice about what he said; secret informing had already begun years earlier, and in its wake the state security organs frequently made the rounds of the village, and for sure there were people who experienced the workings of the ill-will lurking in the background at first hand. Secret informing is the livelihood of the cowardly, dark-hearted person.⁸⁶

Elsewhere he wrote the following: “The present generation cannot even imagine that there were people holding power in their hands who in the political climate of the time held the people in fear and taught them to think cautiously: what I don’t say won’t hurt me [*ne szólj szám, nem fáj fejem*], because in the background there is a secret denunciation, and the Siguranța shows up immediately.”⁸⁷

The Securitate threatened Máthé, telling him not to conduct research, but he nevertheless continued to work, since the importance of his purpose did not allow him to rest: the preservation and transmission of Hungarian-Székely identity, Hungarian culture (particularly historical knowledge) and the Hungarian language, and the written recording and transmission of collective memory and knowledge. It was in these aspirations of his that he came into conflict with the machinery of oppression of the Romanian state, the Securitate.

In the 1960s and 1970s Máthé's historical views, which deviated from the official version, were regarded as dangerous, because a question of interest to professional historians was classified as a problem of state security. Máthé's work was classified as an obstacle from the viewpoint of Romanian nation-building. The Romanian state, which in the long run strove to assimilate the Hungarians and all nationalities in general, deemed it contrary to its interests that somebody should write works that would have reinforced the identity of the Hungarians, whom it sought to assimilate. The Securitate was an instrument of this state-building policy. It was thus that a rural intellectual could come under the investigation of the Securitate for several decades.

Notes

- 1 Arhiva Consiliului Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (Archives of the National Committee for the Study of the Securitate Archives, henceforth ACNSAS), dosar nr. (henceforth d) 6598, vol. 4, ff. 12–16.
- 2 ACNSAS, d. 6598, vol. 4.
- 3 Márton Gödri was probably in charge of a district, meaning that he supervised for the purposes of state security a district comprising approximately 6–7 communes, which included regular field work and setting up the network of informers in the settlements of the district.
- 4 ACNSAS, d. 6598, vol. 4, ff. 23–24.
- 5 *Ibid.*, ff. 19–24.
- 6 For example, group work won't be good because the arable land is not evenly distributed, the management is weak, and so on. *Ibid.*, ff. 23–24.
- 7 *Ibid.*, f. 20.
- 8 *Ibid.*, f. 32.
- 9 *Ibid.*, ff. 73–73 v; Máthé's letter, in which he asks the editorial board of the *Magyar Nemzet* to forward to László Dobossy the letter that he had written to him.
- 10 ACNSAS, d. 6598, vol. 4, f. 70.
- 11 *Ibid.*, ff. 54, 60 and 76.

- 12 *Ibid.*, ff. 32–33.
- 13 *Ibid.*, f. 32.
- 14 *Ibid.*, f. 33.
- 15 *Ibid.*, f. 35.
- 16 *Ibid.*, f. 48.
- 17 *Ibid.*, f. 48.
- 18 *Ibid.*, f. 49.
- 19 *Ibid.*, f. 50.
- 20 *Ibid.*, f. 58.
- 21 *Ibid.*, f. 58.
- 22 The document writes the Baróti Basin, but this is not used in the spoken language; the geographical name was probably meant for the Romanian-speaking superiors who lacked knowledge of local conditions.
- 23 ACNSAS, d. 6598, vol. 4, f. 36.
- 24 *Ibid.*, f. 52, 52 verso (henceforth v.).
- 25 Áron Gábor was one of the leading figures of the Revolution of 1848 in the Székelyföld.
- 26 ACNSAS, d. 6598, vol. 2, ff. 26–27.
- 27 *Ibid.*, f. 27.
- 28 *Ibid.*, f. 25.
- 29 *Ibid.*, f. 48.
- 30 *Ibid.*, ff. 68–69.
- 31 *Ibid.*, ff. 68–69.
- 32 For more on this, see Zoltán I. Tóth, *Az erdélyi román nacionalizmus első százada 1697–1792* [The First Century of Romanian Nationalism 1697–1792] (Csíkszereda, 1998).
- 33 On the intervention of politics in historiography, see Gabriel Moisa, “Nicolae Ceaușescu și proiectul tratatului de Istoria României” [Nicolae Ceaușescu and the Project of Treating the History of Romania], *Arhiva Someșană* 3-a (2004) 3: 267–284.
- 34 Nota nr. 81. ACNSAS, d. 6598, vol. 2, f. 64.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 2, ff. 51 and 53.
- 36 See János Máthé’s letter to Ferenc Máthé; Posthuma of Máthé János – Correspondence.
- 37 János Máthé, *A magyarhermányi református egyházközség története* [The History of the Reformed Congregation of Magyarhermány], edited by László Demeter (Barót, 2004), pp. 63–69.

- 38 Posthuma of Máthé János – Documents. Fd. 97, Fd. 345, and *Magyarhermány kronológiája* [The Chronology of Magyarhermány], entry for September 27, 1944.
- 39 See the entry for that day in the chronology.
- 40 ACNSAS, d. 6598, vol. 1, f. 14.
- 41 *Ibid.*, f. 61.
- 42 ACNSAS, d. 6598, vol. 2, ff. 1–3.
- 43 *Ibid.*, ff. 1–2.
- 44 *Ibid.*, f. 2.
- 45 *Ibid.*, ff. 37–38.
- 46 *Ibid.*, f. 34, in Hungarian.
- 47 “Reprimand – a preliminary measure in the case of those persons who showed defiant behavior towards the Communist system, with the aim of convincing them to give up this behavior. This could be performed by the Securitate officer or the head of the institution in which the person in question pursued his or her activity. This measure was not indicated in the Securitate’s operative notes”; see Carmen Chivu and Mihai Albu, *Noi și securitatea. Viața privată și publică în perioada comunistă, așa cum reiese din tehnica operativă* [We and the Securitate. Private and Public Life in the Communist Period, as Revealed from Operative Techniques] (Pitești, 2006), p. 202.
- 48 ACNSAS, d. 6598, vol. 2, ff. 40–41.
- 49 *Ibid.*, f. 40.
- 50 *Ibid.*, f. 40 v.
- 51 *Ibid.*, f. 40 v.
- 52 *Ibid.*, f. 35, 35 v.
- 53 *Ibid.*, f. 35, 35 v.
- 54 János Máthé, “Olasztelek,” *Megyei Tükör*, September 16, 1973, p. 4.
- 55 ACNSAS, d. nr. 6598, vol. 2, f. 28.
- 56 ACNSAS, d. 6598, vol. 1, f. 9.
- 57 *Ibid.*, f. 9.
- 58 *Ibid.*, f. 12.
- 59 *Ibid.*, f. 14.
- 60 ACNSAS, d. nr. 6598, 1 k, f. 15, 15 v.
- 61 ACNSAS, d. 6598, vol. 1, f. 14 v.
- 62 *Ibid.*, f. 13.
- 63 ACNSAS, d. 6598, 1 k, f. 13 v.
- 64 On this, see *Magyarhermány monográfiája*, pp. 99–102.
- 65 On this, see *ibid.*, pp. 102–103.

- 66 See *Magyarhermány monográfiája*, p. 12; János Máthé, Sr., “Egy magángazda székely falu életéből” [Scenes from the Life of a Székely Village of Private Farmers], in István Imreh, ed., *Változó valóság. Szociográfiai tanulmányok* [Changing Reality. Sociographic Studies] (Bucharest, 1978), p. 200.
- 67 ACNSAS, d. nr. 6598, vol. 1, ff. 70–71.
- 68 *Ibid.*, ff. 1 and 28.
- 69 *Ibid.*, f. 16.
- 70 *Ibid.*, ff. 17–18.
- 71 *Ibid.*, f. 56.
- 72 *Ibid.*, f. 22.
- 73 *Ibid.*, 1, cover.
- 74 *Ibid.*, ff. 28–30 v.
- 75 *Ibid.*, f. 2 v.
- 76 *Ibid.*, f. 2 v.
- 77 *Ibid.*, f. 1.
- 78 *Ibid.*, f. 7 v.
- 79 *Ibid.*, f. 7 v.
- 80 *Ibid.*, ff. 41 and 82.
- 81 *Ibid.*, f. 75.
- 82 *Ibid.*, f. 42.
- 83 *Ibid.*, f. 38.
- 84 *Ibid.*, f. 81 v.
- 85 *Ibid.*, f. 179, 179 v.
- 86 *Magyarhermány monográfiája*, p. 217.
- 87 *Ibid.*, p. 219.

Sándor Oláh

**STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL:
FORMS OF PEASANT RESISTANCE
TO COLLECTIVIZATION IN ROMANIA**

*“The building of socialism in agriculture is a tough fight.
But we will win this battle.”*

Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, March 1949

Until very recently research on collectivization in Romania has been dominated by an oversimplifying approach. According to the most recent overview of the history of research,¹ in the 1960s and 1970s Western researchers regarded collectivization mainly through the prism of modernization, as the political elite’s Leninist response to the transformation of backward agrarian conditions. Research also went astray in its approach in regarding the cooperative organizations that started at the beginning of the twentieth century as the antecedents to collectivization.²

From the late 1970s onwards, anthropologically inspired social research introduced new criteria for interpreting the social processes of the recent past. In an approach that emphasizes the research of culture, space-time, social relations, property relations, and above all the local social contexts, the nuancing of the operation of Communist systems and their dependencies and a more elastic interpretation of power relations as processes of negotiation between society and regime gained ground.

Field research convinces us that collectivization was not a unitary process precisely because of the peculiarities of the local social networks opposing the political intentions, and the deployment of the various individual and communal strategies of resistance. It was not exclusively the power center that decided its course, but rather it was the social product of the complex interrelations of those above and those below, of the regime and the multitude of local factors opposing the regime’s aims and/or embracing them.

Collectivization thus may be interpreted as a socio-political process in which the transformation of property relations changed the social relations and the peasant identity, at the same time it established and institutionalized Communist rule in rural society.

With the collectivization program announced in March 1949, the state broadened its jurisdiction over disposition in economic life to a degree not previously experienced. In village production work it regulated economic actions that had previously belonged to the sphere of the producers' individual decisions: it restricted the possibility for individual planning and decisions to a minimum. In addition to the well-known forms of seizing crops (the quota system, or the signing of compulsory contracts with state purchasers), it prohibited payment for agricultural work in kind, purchasing based on estimate ("by sight") in the markets and fairs, unreported slaughter of animals (including the sale and slaughter of turkeys and geese), the preparation of baked flour goods, the harvesting of unripe oats, and the picking of unripe corn. It regulated the price of meat and firewood, the manner of selling vegetables, the distribution of flax and hemp, the picking of potatoes, and the consumption of meat, bread and corn mush. It expropriated the resources needed for subsistence (woodlands, pastures), then established the criteria, amount and price of using these. The regime implemented the new regulations and bans by placing officials, tax collectors, crop gatherers and foresters in office, as well as by the prospect of sanctions and serious penalties. The new legal order from one day to the next classified as transgressions a multitude of self-subsistence activities considered as natural for generations and rooted in custom.

The inhabitants of the villages at this time believed that their goods had been *unlawfully expropriated* and *they launched a series of defensive actions*, the goal of which was to tip the balance of material goods in favor of the subordinate populace. A silent, constant process began, an "unremitting guerilla war" (James C. Scott), in which the characteristic feature of defensive practices was concealment, anonymity and tacit collaboration among the actors. Openly opposing the state's superiority would have meant great

risk to the actors: danger to their personal freedom, and material losses. This is why a much wiser, more successful strategy was to choose concealment and anonymity. In general there was no room for the other more open forms of protest and resistance to the appropriations. But there were brief periods when the regime's exercise of authority was less effective: at such times the producers immediately recognized that there was little or no risk attached to open confrontation, and immediately offered resistance to the tax collectors and crop collection agents, refused to pay the tax arrears, and did not sign contracts with the state for vegetable crops, milk or meat, but instead sold their goods on the free market. These were the rare moments of freedom – free disposition over property – in state socialism, when for some reason for a short time the pressure weighing on the producers weakened, and supervision was looser. However, it was the duty of the host of officials, bureaucrats, agitators and collectors to make the strict supervision over the village producers permanent, and carry out the most varied forms of state expropriation by the states.

The results of our research up till now show that the group of those tacitly collaborating in resistance was organized at the level of the settlement, but *only within social groups with identical interests*.

The subordinate resisters could count on success only if their acts remained obscured, in anonymity: “to the extent that they achieve their goal, such activities do not appear in the archives.”³ This nature of the workers renders the work of the researcher extremely difficult. We find hardly any sources that could help us to gain a direct glimpse into the hidden transcript of everyday resistance. The “underground” stories of resistance can be reconstructed from the surviving documents of the regime's administration, the minutes of the meetings of the popular councils' executive committees, the reports of crop collectors and tax collectors sent to their superiors, the records of fines, and the furious outbursts of district delegates and agitators. In official documents most often we can detect only the traces of resistance.

Below we shall speak about the forms of social resistance of villages along the Kis- and Nagy-Homoród rivers uncovered from written documents and narratives sources of the period between 1947 and 1962.

Providing False Information

This was the most common defensive technique used against the violent economic extractions. As early as the first period of the compulsory delivery system, the producers had realized that material benefits could be derived from concealing the real extent of their arable lands, for the quantity of crops assigned for obligatory delivery to the state was fixed in relation to the extent of the family estate. Delivery quotas for cereals, potatoes, oil-seeds, fodder, meat, milk and wool were imposed on farms according to landholding categories, and the quantities rose proportionately to the extent of the agricultural area. It was advantageous to assign ownership of the family estate to the adult family members, divided into two or three parts.

To prevent or uncover the partitioning of the estate, on orders from the district local “land clarifying committees” were formed. The members of the latter verified whether the owners of the partitioned holdings lived in separate households, kept their animals separately, and/or separated the fodder, and whether the quantity of farm equipment was sufficient for two farms. Those landowners who were in state employ attempted to be rid of the burdens imposed on their estate by giving away the land to relatives and acquaintances, or relinquishing it in favor of the local popular council or the collective farm.

After the abolishment of compulsory deliveries and the introduction of the “free” contractual state purchase of crops (at officially established prices) on January 1, 1957, the producers’ new weapon was the *fictitious contract*. This technique was no longer the lonely defensive fight of farmers against state appropriation, but rather the complicit cooperation of many persons, in which at times the members of the local leadership were also allies.

In its circular letter to the communal popular councils in 1958, the Udvarhely District Marketing Division recounted the following situation:

The verifications carried out in the field have established that the ECs [executive committees] of certain communal popular councils approved the contracts signed with the Recolta state enterprise or the Cooperative without having investigated the existence of material security. Such deficiencies of certain EC members provided an opportunity for certain malevolent elements to sign fictitious contracts under the names of unknown producers, falsely sign for certain producers, sign contracts without financial capital for quantities that exceeded the production of those in question, or for such crops that those in question did not even produce. Through unlawful advances collected on the basis of such contracts, great sums of money have been extracted from our national economy.⁴

Fictitious names, false signatures and non-existent crops were the elements of a false construct of reality. The results of the cooperation – at least symbolically – were spectacular: the producers succeeded in extracting money from the state.

The other most frequently occurring case of saving assets was the concealment of the true number of animals – especially sheep. In the period examined, uncovering “unreported sheep” and penalizing such acts represented an annually reoccurring problem for the district agents. The advantage of successfully concealing the animals was that afterwards the owner did not have to deliver milk, meat, cheese and wool, or pay tax and grazing fees.

Disguise, Feigning

The feigning of loyalty to the regime, obedience, goodwill, ignorance and sincerity, while in the meantime failing to pay taxes, concealing crops and not reporting animals, in short, the *disguising* of resistance – even through lying – was from the producers’ point of view rather free of danger, and was a tactic all the more frequently used.

After the organization of the framework for collective farming – under the guise of these – in many small villages private farming went on in secret for years. For example, the association in Abásfalva (Aldea) for years violated the most important principles prescribed in the model charter of the associations: the lands were not worked collectively, the consolidated parcels given to the association were once again divided up, the formation of the farm's indivisible fund was rejected, and, after the harvesting of the crops, joint threshing on the threshing ground, which was the scene of the grain delivery, was also rejected. In the small remote villages away from the commune seats, where it was hoped that the regime's supervision would not be as strict and their deeds might remain unnoticed, violations of these rules occurred through the cooperation of the membership and the local management.

In those settlements where in the first half of the 1950s the collective farms and associations were formed, only some of the farmers of the villages joined agricultural collectives. The more well-to-do stratum of farmers resisted, or they were excluded from the socialist sector. In Dálya (Daia), Homoródszentpál (Sânpaul) and Recsenyéd (Rareș) private farmers were present in significant numbers, while in Homoródszentpéter (Petreni) and Városfalva (Orășeni) the organizers succeeded in forming the associations only after long years of hard work. At the assemblies of the communal EC the representatives of these villages and the Party members were often forced by the district delegates and the leaders of the collectivized associated communes to declare their position on the expansion of the socialist sector. The representatives protected themselves by feigning agreement.

In the report of the Homoródszentpál Communal EC sent to the district on March 23, 1956, it can be read that the EC “has been dealing with the transformation of socialist agriculture in Városfalva and Szentpéter, but the farmers have still not been convinced enough and do not want to join the association, not even the Party members, citing their advanced age.”⁵

In Homoródszentmárton (Martiniş) there was one Party member who at the EC meeting defended himself with the hardly believable claim (seeing that the question had been on the agenda for years) that “we have not discussed in the family whether to be members of the association.”⁶

One representative of Városfalva recounts how his fellow villagers “are convinced [of the importance of joining the association], they want to be members of it, but when it came to signing the requests, he could not persuade them.”⁷ There was a case when “he invited [one of his fellow representatives] to conduct educational work: he suddenly became ill and yet in the evening was still able to go to the dance.”⁸

Feigned agreement with the current appeals, tax and crop demands, and plans during a communal EC assembly, where strict district delegates had the local representatives give an account of the results achieved, was certainly a useful tactic and a momentary solution to the situation until the next meeting.

Procrastination, Passivity

A constant phenomenon that accompanied the implementation of every form of appropriation by the state was the postponement of fulfilling the obligations. From year to year the number of those who were behind with their taxes and quotas or who neglected to fulfill the signed crop contracts grew. However, what the anonymous actors cropping up in the sources wanted to postpone most of all was naturally the decisive turn, the moment of being deprived of their property: the voluntary joining of the collective farms.

Procrastination and passivity were serious political questions mainly in the socialist sector. Where the associations already existed in 1952–1953, even there the further expansion of the collective farms came to a halt. In December 1956 in Homoródszentmárton the following was concluded: “It is a shortcoming that both the members of the association and the representative comrades occupy a neutral position, so to speak, concerning the socialist transformation of

agriculture. Seeing this, we should not be surprised if the workers of the village do not hurry to join the association.”⁹ Even that outrageous case occurred that “the association’s leadership signed and approved the minutes in which a new association member requested postponement of consolidating the landholdings.”¹⁰

To the degree that pressure was reduced, and the regime was more permissive, so did the producers’ resistance strengthen. In the reports of the crop purchasers the producers’ “incomprehensible,” “impossible,” “improper” and “ill-willed” behavior represented the various techniques of resistance.

The committees established to support the state crop procurements were in many cases passive, and sometimes openly admitted this: in Homoródszentmárton, “the Citizens’ Committee, the chairman of which is D.N., despite having been reorganized, declared categorically that they would not do anything”¹¹ in the interests of convincing the producers. At mid-year a district circular letter determined that barely 23.3 percent of the contract-signing plan had been fulfilled, the main cause of this situation was that “neither the communal representatives, nor the members of the cooperatives’ managing council signed contracts in many places, and yet they would have had the opportunity to do so [...] thus naturally there was no moral basis for the individually working peasants signing contracts.”¹²

The postponement of the fulfillment of the obligatory deliveries was general when it came to meat and wool deliveries. Towards the end of the era the number of those in arrears was increasingly larger, and especially meat deliveries were a great burden to the private farmers.

Deflecting Responsibility

Against the appropriations and the various forms of power subordination, instead of potentially dangerous open resistance, one form of cloaking disobedience was *deflecting responsibility*. The uncovered cases can be classed in different varieties according to the

positions of those employing this technique. There were situations when those working in institutions at the same level in the hierarchy deflected the blame for resisting the economic pressures onto each other, or the subordinate local institutions blamed the failures on the superior institutions. After the introduction of state contractual purchasing, the cooperative contracts continued to be in force. Grain, vegetables, legumes, eggs, wool and meat contracts were imposed not only on the private producers but also on the tillage associations and collective farms. The producers placed the blame on the failures of the bureaucrats working in the state institutions or other persons not on the scene to be called to account and held responsible, and at times on the whims of nature. Thus disobedience as a rule could be adjourned without immediate consequences and postponed until the next settling of accounts.

At times the consequences of the persistent fight of village society to resist appropriations by the state caused tensions among the local institutions. At the meeting of the Executive Committee of Homoródszentpál in November 1959 the conclusion was reached that “the cooperative purchase plan has not been fulfilled, since the harmony between the cooperative’s managing council and the EC is lacking. Likewise there is no harmony between the managing council of the collective farm and the Cooperative.”¹³ The lack of the desired “harmony” was caused by the resistance of the producers. Cooperative purchasing plans were imposed on not only associations and collective farms but on the members of these economic organizations as well. A common complaint about members who entered the collective farms was that “they do not participate individually in the signing of the contracts.”¹⁴ Those who signed the contracts and did not fulfill the crop quota placed the blame for the failure on the collective farms.

When it came to tax obligations, too, the postponement of payment by deflection was widespread. “When they receive the sugar-beet advance, they will immediately meet” their tax obligations, claimed the taxpayers of Homoródszentpál to demonstrate their willingness.¹⁵

Responsibility for postponement of the decisive turn – entry into the socialist sector – could be cast onto even the closest relatives without any particular consequence, if they were not physically present to be called to account. The organizers of the associations in Városfalva and Szentpéter described individuals who employed this defensive technique:

It is also a difficulty on the part of the working peasants that in many cases we encounter persons who say that they are still not convinced about the socialist transformation of agriculture, or that their wives do not want to agree to join the association. A great shortcoming is also the fact that the founding members display a completely passive behavior in this question.¹⁶

The collectors arriving in small villages far from the communal seats frequently placed the blame for the failure of their actions on the local representatives. These were not willing to support the work of the tax collectors and crop collection agents arriving in their village.

If the rigor of supervision diminished, the path from deflecting and postponing obligations to refusing them was at times quite short. About the possibilities of fulfilling the delivery of the meat quota by the deadline, the chairman of one of the associations in Homoródszentmárton commune stated the following:

[As] a general complaint on the part of the association's members, I must mention the unfairness of this year's meat delivery quotas, because most of us must deliver the annual meat quota by July 5–15, 1958, which under today's conditions, and with today's pork prices, is completely impossible. In every case we at all times satisfy our obligation towards the state, but nothing at all is possible ahead of time: it is not possible to fulfill an annual plan in half a year.¹⁷

The chairman of the association softened the blunt, categorical refusal by mentioning their obedience at all times. His stance in the subsequent months would be unequivocally underscored by the meat arrears of the producers under his management.

It was a customary argument to blame the failure to fulfill the crop delivery obligations, or their partial fulfillment, on the whims of nature and the unfavorable weather. Excuses such as “it did not grow,” “the water damage was great,” “the grubs chewed up the potatoes” and other similar arguments were frequent when justifying the failure to meet obligatory crop deliveries. When coercion and oppression were openly practiced, the subordinates seized upon every means to save their remaining independence. They exploited every available environmental condition, element and feature that beckoned with success in attempts to evade the coercion.

Restraining Output

For every expropriatory practice the subordinates sought the opportunities for resistance and self-defense. If the state wanted to expropriate work hours with weekly or daily delivery, threshing or public work plans, the farmers answered with work slowdowns and desertion. Against the expropriation of manpower the most obvious defensive procedure was to reduce output. This had several different versions within the framework of private farms, tillage associations and collective farms. There were cases when it appeared in the form of resistance to production procedures. In August 1953 the economic representative of the commune reported thus: “We failed to start the harvest in due time, and thus beginning the harvest almost came to veritable close combat, as in Gyepes [Ghipeş] and Szentmárton, for example.”¹⁸ In other situations the new work schedule and use of time enforced by the regime’s administration was rejected: “The farmers took a position of convenience and did not observe the order; in other words, they obstructed the machine’s daily plan by beginning the threshing late and finishing it before sundown on Sundays or also on other days.”¹⁹

Work slowdowns and reduction of output were a general mode of conduct in the production organizations of collective farming.

Reappropriations

The state extended its jurisdiction over disposition of property first to the assets and economic activity of public institutions. The forests, pastures, sires, buildings of the commonages, communal mills, artisans' workshops and cooperative assets passed into state ownership.

Under Decree No. 1231/1950 of the Collecting Government Commission, the distribution of duty grain stocks of private and state mills was strictly prohibited: "The mill's duty grain is an organic part of the state grain collection" and so it had to be delivered to the centralized funds. Despite this provision, at the mill in Dálya the duty grain was not handed over to the state fund until 1958. "The collection of the mill's grain tariff is one of the components of the centralized fund,"²⁰ the people of Dálya were rebuked, when the nearly eight-year-long unlawfulness was revealed.

Occasionally the inhabitants of the villages made attempts to recoup the profits from their stolen public assets. Wherever clay of suitable quality was found on the nationalized pastures, they started to "dig up the fallow land" and made bricks. Elsewhere, despite the prohibitive laws in the autumn they mow the grass from the pasture, or quarry limestone, and pilfer firewood from the state forests.²¹

The agricultural class struggled to the utmost to retain its landed property. In each village the land exchanges between members who joined the association and those who remained outside burdened local societies with tensions. When the lands were entered in the land registry, the cause of the tensions between private producers and the associated members was that those who remained outside as a rule had better-quality plowlands, and for this reason the exchange for poorer-quality plots was disadvantageous for them. The local popular councils, on orders from the district, had to establish "land-exchange solving committees," but these were incapable of clarifying the chaotic conditions. Many entered into the associations, but brought in only part of the estate, most often only a few plots of poorer growing capacity. In January 1957 the association in

Homoródszentmárton was expanded by seven new members, who, however, did not appear at the land exchange, even despite repeated summons. In Abásfalva 14 new members could not be made to sign the exchange list, in Keményfalva (Comănești) five new members joined the association, and in Kénos (Chinușu) 37 new members. Everywhere the exchange list of farm lands was ready, but when it came to signing “we are unable to produce results,” the organizers reported.

In 1956–1957 the associations were formed in the villages of Oklánd Commune (Ocland) as well. Only some of the farmers joined the association. Further organization stalled because here too between those who joined and those who remained outside “through the land exchanges that were held, antagonisms came to the surface among the workers, and these to a large degree made the further organization of expansion of the associations difficult.”²²

When the situation was now untenable, when “destruction” was approaching and privately owned land and livestock could no longer be salvaged, forbidden slaughtering and sale of animals began as a last, only possible strategy.

Besides disposition over resources and holding back output, to reduce the losses caused by the serious crop duty the producers used other, smaller-scale techniques as well. One small-scale but constant procedure was the attempt to deliver animal products of poor quality and crops combined with foreign material. In 1951 at the district collection center it turned out that in Lövete (Lueta) the “producers obligated to deliver crops want to fulfill their delivery quota with tiny potatoes unsuitable for nutritional purposes.”²³ The local leaders, however, took the farmers under their protection: “The assigned potato delivery is 140,658 kilograms. Until now approx. 50,000 kilograms have been delivered. The potato harvest was poor here, so we cannot satisfy the potato delivery.”²⁴ The following year in Homoródalmás transport of the delivered cereals “had not occurred directly from the threshing ground, but rather from the workers’ residence, and the workers did not attempt to hand in grain free of foreign material,” reports the collector.²⁵ (Grain transported

to the collection centers could not contain more than 3 percent of foreign material.)

The regime attempted to prevent the handing in of low-quality grain mixed with foreign materials by decreeing beginning as early as 1947 that the harvested grain be threshed on a common threshing ground and delivered directly from there.²⁶ With the threshing inspectors dispatched from outside settlements, the quantity of grain produced on the threshing ground was more easily verifiable.

The farmers occasionally employed special techniques to lessen the appropriations. In Homoródszentmárton the commune collector related to his superiors that “at the time that the wool is collected there are differences between the producer and the collector, since the producers bring the wool either dampened with water or dusted with sand.”²⁷ An elderly resident of Abásfalva dusted the wool with sifted sand, and “when the collector pointed it out, he was unwilling to acknowledge it.” Another farmer, who tried to hand over wet wool to the state, claimed without batting an eyelash that he had delivered it to the collector in a dry state and it was here, “during the weighing that the dampness got into it.” From the collector’s report it turns out that these were not one-time, isolated cases: “Wetting down the wool at the time of delivery occurs on numerous occasions, but we help matters by laying it out in the sun or having them lay it out to dry.”²⁸

Theft

As one of the consequences of the violent transformation of property relations, in every sphere of the economy a constant process of expropriation commenced. In 1957 the district authorities uncovered 55 cases of damaging public property, the damage amounting to 221,000 lei (approximately the price of 100 cows). The district list of the pilferers of socialist property included employees, officials, shopkeepers, chairmen of popular councils, secretaries and foresters. The epidemic spread of pilfering public property was naturally a problem not only in the Székelyudvarhely

District but countrywide. It was a consequence of this situation that the main topic of the RWP plenum between June 9 and 13, 1958, was the protection of public property. Soon an amendment of the criminal code took place. Decree No. 318 of July 21, 1958, penalized those causing damages in excess of 100,000 lei with the death penalty and complete confiscation of property. Ministerial Council Resolution No. 417/October 15 of this same year provided for the compensation for damages caused to socialist units. Across the country a campaign was launched against the “speculators and scoundrels” whose crime, in addition to “theft, embezzlement, improper conduct towards public assets” and other transgressions – according to the picturesque wording of a Homoródszentmárton EC record – was that “they attempt to make themselves comfortable on the backs of the working people.”²⁹

The hostile attitude towards socialist property did not spare the assets of the two collective farms along the Homoród either. A bureaucrat at the EC meeting of the Homoródszentpál Commune interpreted the attitude of the population towards common property as follows:

It is to be condemned that in many cases certain persons know about the various thefts and embezzlements, but not only do they not fight against them but on the contrary, some almost praise such dishonest elements. This here is what is noteworthy and this is the most dangerous [...] Some of the thieves and mishandlers of public property are arrested, but there are hundreds and thousands of such types, and the competent organs are not able to nab all of them, and it is necessary precisely for this reason that we create hatred and a climate of scorn towards such dishonest elements in the masses.³⁰

The history of the subsequent years shows that, instead of any hostile climate towards the pilferers of the public property, rather tacit agreement was general.

Cooperation

As a consequence of the societal development of earlier historical eras, the village societies within the temporal and geographical boundaries of our examination were differentiated social formations. In catastrophic situations part of the self-defensive efforts of the local worlds was social solidarity: various collaborative “actions in small communities with dense informal social networks and rich, historically deep, subcultures of resistance to outside claims.”³¹

One of the peculiarities of the Communist exercise of power was the destruction of the subordinates’ spontaneous organizing efforts and the intensive systems of relations among social actors. This technique was also in use in the regime’s class-based, discriminatory economic interventions embedded in its society-transforming ambitions. Against external pressure the special defensive behavior of local societies was *cooperation*.

In Oklánd, to ward off the relentless material and societal oppression hitting the kulak families, relatives and neighbors joined forces: the fancy dress was hidden at the neighbors’ house, and the sole piglet was raised in secret at the relatives’ home. After threshing “on two occasions it happened that out of 60 quintals of wheat produced we took home not even one grain from the threshing field, and we could not even taste the fresh bread” made from their own crop. Relatives and acquaintances secretly gave wheat to the families in need, when

the potato harvest was poor, out of 120 quintals we were able to deliver only 60... He [the head of the family – S.O.] was summoned to the popular council, and amidst intense shouting he was informed that if he did not fulfill his compulsory delivery obligation, he would be put away so that he would never see the rising sun again. As to who was present at the Popular Council, who found out and heard this threat, we never found out, but the result was that the next day the inhabitants of the village gathered up the missing quantity and those who owned a horse cart transported it to Udvarhely without charge. The danger was averted...³²

The district circular letters and directives reveal that the subordinates' cooperation was occasionally made possible by the tacit agreement of the local leaders. One example of this was the working off of the obligatory meat quota. The farmers tried to fulfill this also by forming occasional coalitions: they purchased jointly one ox, cow and buffalo each to thus pay off the quota. The regime strictly forbade this form of association because transactions between producers thus became uncontrollable. According to a district circular letter dated February 18, 1955, "certain communal executive committees... issue permits to some farmers, who hand in their mandatory quota in tandem with others, which leads to speculation... we instruct the executive committees not to grant any sort of permits to associations, in order to prevent speculation..."³³

All forms of the coalitions by the subordinates and their occasional collaborations represented a danger to the regime striving to atomize society, eliminate horizontal relations and prevent their formation.

Refusal to Meet Obligations

According to the official ideology labor was not only a productive activity but also a matter of honor, glory and heroism. Whoever did not work honorably did not fulfill his/her patriotic obligation. From this scheme for interpreting reality, it followed that the producer who did not fulfill his contractual obligation to deliver crops, according to the regime's usage, "displays reprehensible conduct," shows evidence of "incorrect" thinking, and "is scheming" and "malicious" towards the state and the interests of the people. Despite every political and ideological pressure, when the producers found that open confrontation and the refusal of obligations did not present a dangerous risk, they unhesitatingly refused to work, deliver crops, sign contracts or pay various duties and fees. The expression of dissatisfaction in most cases occurred in groups, since in this way the risk of reprisal was smaller. On December 13, 1950, from Homoródalmás (Merești) the district's Agricultural Division was

notified of the following: “In view of the fact that the flax contracted for the year 1950 was collected by the Flax Factory in Makfalva [Ghindari] and up to the present day the farmers still have not been paid, therefore the greatest scandal arose among the farmers. For this reason the farmers do not want to sign the contract until they are compensated by the Flax Factory.”³⁴

In the period prior to the installation of the Communist regime in the villages along the two Homoród rivers, the cooperatives with pasts going back to the start of the century had substantial assets (machines and real estate) and market connections.³⁵ The state centralized and reorganized the jurisdiction and organizational structure of the cooperatives. The latter’s most important activity – after 1948 – in addition to uniform retail trade was the purchase of arable crops and animal products at officially fixed prices. Agrarian society was continually harassed by the communal cooperative employees and collection agents with purchase and contract-signing plans. The defiant farmers contracted their crops, but took the grain to the free market away from the state purchasing agents. The cooperative purchasers also demanded cereals, vegetables, wool and milk from the collectivists, who contracted the crops, but when the time came to deliver, they refused to hand over the grain, were no longer selective in their choice of evasive techniques, and did not disguise their defiance. The contracted crop “was not handed in because there wasn’t any”: they thought that this was a sufficiently grounded justification on their part. Why the land on the collective farm did not produce was no longer their responsibility.

The intention of evading obligations towards the cooperatives at times assumed unexpectedly vehement forms. In January 1959, in the commune of Homoródszentpál, the employees of the cooperative would have entered the unpaid business debt into the membership books, while “certain cooperative members were unable to produce their cooperative booklets, and among other things there was even a cooperative member who, instead of handing in his booklet, went ahead and tore them up.”³⁶

The above were now the gestures of open opposition: for similar resistance in the early 1950s those who displayed such disrespect to the regime were taken to the Danube Canal, or punished by several months of forced labor in the Baragan Plain.

Symbolic Attack

The demand for respect always forms part of the nature of any prevailing regime. By symbolic means of linguistic communication and behavior the subordinates can call the prevailing uneven social power relations into question, can balance them and indeed reverse them.

The most serious insults addressed to the regime could be committed in the “sacralized” space symbolizing the ideology. Publicly making fun of the dignity of the regime, however, was an undertaking that was never devoid of danger. When in the early 1950s a man, in the presence of other people, knelt down before the statue of Stalin in Szentkeresztbánya (Minele Lueta) and with his hat removed and his hands clasped in prayer sighed, “Dear Stalin, you so love the poor that you make a poor person out of everybody,” he could not avoid prison. The authorities could not tolerate such gross disrespect in a public space.

One of the milder forms of symbolic attack was the use of the elements of the regime’s rhetoric with inverted meaning. A farmer in self-defense inverted one of the much-proclaimed basic principles of Communist propaganda, the meaning of “voluntarily” requesting admittance to the collective farm. For this reason he was severely criticized at the communal EC assembly: “As a Party member Comrade I. H. displays very poor behavior when it comes to organizing the collective farm, making statements to the effect that perhaps they want to recruit him by force (?), which is not at all compatible with the thinking of a Party member.”³⁷

Out of the one-time interactions expressing the desire to balance the uneven relations and preserve individual independence, stories preserved in the communal memory for decades and often recreated

in everyday communicative-interactive situations were born. While the regime's propaganda dominated the public sphere by use of the varied means of "visual agitation," in verbal communication a second, hidden public sphere existed. In the stories of the latter, those without power were the ones who triumphed.

Notes

- 1 Dorin Dobrinu and Constatin Iordachi, eds., *Țărăimea și puterea. Procesul de colectivizare a agriculturii în România (1949–1962)* [The Peasantry and the Authorities. The Process of Collectivization of Agriculture in Romania (1949–1962)] (Iași, 2005) pp. 21–45; Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery, *Peasants under Siege. The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949–1962* (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford, 2011), pp. 123–149.
- 2 Dobrinu and Iordachi, *Țărăimea și puterea*, p. 23.
- 3 James C. Scott, "Az ellenállás hétköznapi formái" [The Everyday Forms of Resistance], *Replika. Társadalomtudományi folyóirat* 23–24 (1996): 93.
- 4 Romanian National Archives, Service of Ciuc/Harghita County (henceforth SJANCIUC) F.136. dossier 1958.1. f. 356.
- 5 SJANCIUC F.516, dossier 10, f. 6.
- 6 *Ibid.*, dossier 32. f. Sept. 18, 1957.
- 7 *Ibid.*, F.516. dossier 10. f. 43.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 *Ibid.*, F.517. dossier 16. f. Dec. 20, 1956.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *Ibid.*, F.517. dossier 32. f. July 27, 1957.
- 12 *Ibid.*, F.226. dossier 74. f. 58.
- 13 *Ibid.*, F.516. dossier 25. f. 278.
- 14 *Ibid.*, F.517. dossier 16. f. Aug. 1957.
- 15 *Ibid.*, F.516. dossier 19. f. 78.
- 16 *Ibid.*, F.516. dossier 10. f. 84.
- 17 *Ibid.*, F.517. dossier 41. f. Jan. 1958.
- 18 *Ibid.*, F.517. f. Aug. 1953.
- 19 *Ibid.*, F.517. dossier 6. f. Sept. 27, 1957.
- 20 *Ibid.*, F.516. dossier 1958.
- 21 *Ibid.*, F.517. dossier 41. f. Feb. 1958.

- 22 *Ibid.*, F.226. dossier 74. f. 192.
- 23 *Ibid.*, F.164. dossier 1. f. 189.
- 24 *Ibid.*, F.164. dossier 1. f. 190.
- 25 *Ibid.*, F.136. dossier 1952.5. f. 57.
- 26 *Monitorul Oficial*, June 26, 1947.
- 27 SJANCIUC F.517. dossier 40. May 15, f. 1958.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 *Ibid.*, F.517. dossier 42. f. Aug. 30, 1958.
- 30 *Ibid.*, F.516. dossier 23. ff. 67–69.
- 31 Scott, “Az ellenállás hétköznapi formái,” p. 123.
- 32 Domokos Fekete, 1998. Manuscript. Written for the competition *Hargita Népe* “*Kuláksors.*” Journalist Tibor Kristó, head of the competition, donated it to the KAM-D./K. [KAM – Cultural Anthropology Working Group] Repository.
- 33 KAM-D./K.: 17.
- 34 KAM-D./K.:124.
- 35 Dénes Balázs, *Ne nézze senki csak a maga hasznát... Szövetkezeti mozgalom a Kis- és Nagy-Homoród mentén* [Do Not Watch Anybody Only Their Own Benefit... The Cooperative Movement in the Little and Big Homorod River Valley] (Székelyudvarhely, 1995).
- 36 SJANCIUC F.516. dossier 25. f. 12.
- 37 *Ibid.*, F.516. dossier 38. f. 51.

Stefano Bottoni

**NATION-BUILDING THROUGH JUDICIARY
REPRESSION: THE IMPACT OF THE 1956
REVOLUTION ON ROMANIAN MINORITY POLICY**

The purpose of my study is to reconstruct the Romanian political changes that were launched under the influence of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, as a sort of counter-reaction, with particular regard to the nationality question.¹ The 1956 Hungarian Revolution had an outstanding impact on the internal dynamics of the Communist system of neighboring Romania. The unforeseen and dramatic collapse of all main Hungarian power agencies alarmed the leadership of the Romanian Workers' Party (RWP). Its first secretary, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, put the army, intelligence services and diplomatic corps on the highest alert. Hungarian-speaking cadres Valter Roman and Aurel Mălnășan were also sent to Budapest with the task of gathering inside information on the ongoing events. In fact, no mass actions or armed disturbances took place in Romania during the Hungarian revolt, not even in the most densely Hungarian-inhabited regions (a student rally held on October 30–31 in Timișoara was the exception rather than the rule). Romania's increasingly nationalist course cannot be simply explained, as some scholars have tried to do, by the "lessons learnt" by the Romanian Communist leadership.² From 1956, well before Nicolae Ceaușescu's seizure of power in 1965, the official Party line asserted the struggle for economic independence, the withdrawal of the Soviet occupation army and an increasing effort to "nationalize" the country by limiting the cultural rights of its most sizeable ethnic minority, the Hungarians. After 1956 the "classic" Stalinist-type structure was gradually replaced by a similarly rigid dictatorship, but one with a "more national" complexion (albeit refraining from the use of open violence). Nicolae Ceaușescu, who came to power in 1965, would maintain and further develop this up until his fall in 1989.³

The Judicial Balance of the Repression

The arrests and judicial proceedings, and measures implemented via administrative means (internment, house arrest, forced resettlement, dismissal, prohibition on further study, and so on), which began in Romania in November 1956 and culminated between 1958 and 1959, formed an organic part of the exercise of power that lasted up until the general amnesty of 1964.⁴ After the Securitate had carried out more than 1,000 arrests in October and November 1956 (a period of barely two months), in 1957 the number of arrests rose to 2,822.⁵ At the same time, in the final months of the year a shift can be observed, which may be linked to the Moscow Conference of the international Communist movement held between November 14 and 16. Whereas in September 1956 the state security organs arrested 162 persons, in December the number of arrests rose to over 300. In 1958, with the deepening of investigations connected with “counter-revolutionary organizations,” a further increase in the number of arrests can be observed: 212 arrests were carried out in January, 760 in February, 461 in March, and 1,103 between July 1 and August 8 (it was at this time that the Soviet troops withdrew from Romania, and the two events may be closely connected, due to a Romanian compensatory effort of loyalty towards Moscow).⁶

It was the period following Stalin’s death, in 1958, that saw the greatest number of convictions in political cases: a total of 4,083 in one year by the military courts operating in Bucharest, Iași and Cluj. Between 1957 and 1959 it can be demonstrated that 45 persons were executed for political offenses across the country. From 1958 onwards, however, many “political” trials were conducted as civil trials, masking the political motives behind the charges of economic crimes. Between January 1957 and July 1959 approximately 10,000 guilty verdicts were declared, but the number of citizens who ended up in prison was much greater than this. From October 23, 1956, until December 1963 approximately 25,000 persons wound up in prison, a further 4,000 were interned without being sentenced (the majority of them suffered “administrative penalties” between one

and five years), and 2,000 citizens were hit with house arrest.⁷ On May 30, 1959, for example, 17,728 persons were being held prisoner: of these, 13,957 persons had already been convicted, and 2,400 were in investigative custody, while 908 former Iron Guardists were performing forced labor, and for 463 persons forced resettlement was imposed.⁸ In the early 1960s a gradual relaxation commenced. The release of those imprisoned had begun in secret already in 1957, when approximately 900 Iron Guardists were set free⁹ (some, however, were arrested once again in 1958), but really gathered strength in February 1960. At this time 820 peasants convicted for “subversive activity” who had opposed the collectivization of agriculture in word or deed were released from prison; six months later 300 “Zionists” and “counter-revolutionary peasants” were set free. After a pause of almost two years, in 1962 first 773 farmers were released, followed by 1,462 convicted for “subversive activity against the social order.” In January 1963, with the first partial amnesty, 2,543 persons were released. Finally in 1964, on the basis of Decree No. 176 issued on April 9, Decree No. 310 of June and Decree No. 411 of July, altogether 9,522 people were set free.¹⁰ Their release was not followed by a complete restoration of their civil rights, since their sentences had not been expunged: only their implementation was suspended. In addition, it was just before their release that those freed between 1960 and 1964 were offered the option of collaborating with the state security organs. Many accepted the assignment, albeit out of fear: one of the most important long-term results of the post-1956 reprisals, therefore, was a significant strengthening of the agent networks. When on February 5, 1958, the Ministry of the Interior launched a general inspection to assess the networks operating by region, it was revealed that across the country the state security services had approximately 12,000–13,000 recruited, regularly reporting, agents. In the Hungarian Autonomous Region (*Magyar Autonóm Tartomány*, henceforth HAR), for example, an apparatus of 74 operative officers (two thirds of whom were of Hungarian nationality) worked with a network numbering 489 persons.¹¹ Countywide, the organs of the Ministry of

the Interior had 12,000–13,000 active agents at the time of the 1956 Revolution; by October 1, 1960, their number had risen to 30,000, and then, barely eight months later, in late July 1961, 42,809 agents were now registered, among whom more than a thousand operated in the HAR.¹² In 1963 the number of informers countrywide rose to almost 80,000, while in 1967, at the start of the Ceaușescu era, it reached 110,000. By the end of the era, in 1989, the number of “contacts” on file had risen to 489,000, and one quarter of these were considered to be “active.”¹³

Those who could not be enlisted the state security organs placed under direct surveillance, along with their relatives and friends. A significant part of Romania’s entire population first came into the Securitate’s sights at this time. In October 1959, for example, more than 2 percent of the entire adult population in Romania, some 290,000 persons, figured in the files of the Ministry of the Interior, entrusted with the surveillance of internal enemy elements. This number in the years following this most probably continued to grow, since according to the available data in that month alone the files of the Ministry of the Interior registered 3,222 “new recruits” and only 957 “retirees.”¹⁴ After sketching the general framework of the dynamics of the repression, we will examine just who was the target group, according to political affiliation, nationality and geographical location. The social affiliation of politically unreliable persons under surveillance is noted by the previously cited files. Of the 290,000 persons listed as enemies of the Communist regime, most came from the ranks of the underground Iron Guard movement (84,121), as well as from the members of the National Peasant Party (48,634) and National Liberal Party (32,174), liquidated in 1948. A further 12,691 persons were members and/or sympathizers of “other bourgeois parties” (it is almost certainly here that we find the representatives of the Hungarian “bourgeois” and extreme-right parties and movements operating between 1921 and 1944 as well). They were followed by the “kulaks and petty shopkeepers” (17,378), the “former policemen, gendarmes and officials of the bourgeois spy organizations” (15,432), the “religious and sectarians” (9,420) and the

“nationalists and Zionists” (9,402), in other words, those citizens of Jewish, Hungarian and German origin who were suspected not only of anti-Communist but also of anti-Romanian activity. Classified among the enemy elements, however, were also a few thousand persons who belonged to a completely different social group, such as those expelled from the Party for political reasons, former political prisoners, or those who “had relatives or acquaintances in imperialist countries.” It is worthwhile to compare the above figures with the political affiliation of those convicted between 1957 and 1959. Of the 10,000 convicts, only 1,695 counted as Iron Guardists, fewer than 800 as members of the Liberal or Peasant Parties, and barely 150 as belonging to “another bourgeois party.” Seventy-three percent of those convicted were non-Party members.¹⁵ Compared with the relevant data in the political files, the preponderance among the convicts of those for whom past political affiliation seemingly did not play an important role in establishing the “criminal act” is striking. It is particularly important to emphasize this phenomenon when analyzing the trials of the late 1950s. These affected society in a way that was noticeably different from that of the first wave, when in just a few years punitive measures were implemented against more than 120,000 people. The severity witnessed between 1957 and 1959 did not lead to mass deportations, as it had, for instance, against the revolting villages in 1949 or the 45,000 inhabitants of the Banat living in the borderland neighboring Yugoslavia in 1951. During the “purge” within the Party (the fall of Miron Constantinescu and Iosif Chişinevschi in 1957), which followed the thaw of 1956 and openly repudiated its achievements, several thousand Party members, among them veterans of the illegal underground movement such as Miklós Goldberger and Ileana (Ilona) Răceanu, were expelled from the Party. This was not accompanied by a show trial, as in the case of László Luka and Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu in 1954. The concept of enemy also changed from an easily identifiable, predetermined ideological stereotype into a multilayered category: during the interrogation of those arrested and through reports prepared by a continuously expanding network of informers, the Securitate discovered that

among the arrested and convicted “counter-revolutionaries” many were “latent” enemies, whose earlier activity and plans, whose very *thoughts*, remained unknown to the state security organs. This is the cross-section in which the function of repression, which is of crucial importance for research about the functioning of the Hungarian Autonomous Region, may be analyzed.¹⁶

The analysis is complicated, however, by the gaps in the available regional data that are broken down by nationality, as well as the distortion stemming from the fact that the verdict was not always announced by the court of the military district in which the alleged crime had been committed. One of the most striking examples is the conspiracy led by a Catholic priest serving in Arad, Aladár Szoboszlai’s conspiracy, which apparently aimed at reversing the political system through the creation of a Hungarian-Romanian multi-ethnic federative state, on which the military tribunal of the Cluj Region passed judgment during its itinerancy in Timișoara.

Because the central organs of the Securitate as well as those of the Timiș regional branch assumed jurisdiction in the matter, although most of the arrests were carried out in the territory of the HAR, these do not appear in the column for the “appropriate” region.¹⁷ In absolute numbers the greatest number of arrests occurred *not* in Transylvania, but rather in Bucharest and in the provinces of Craiova in Oltenia and Galați in Moldavia. It must be taken into account, however, that in the period between 1957 and 1961 the activity of the state security organs in the HAR steadily increased. In the first four months of 1957 the regional Securitate carried out 125 arrests (this was approximately 8 percent of the 1,000 arrests countrywide¹⁸). Although the data of the military prosecutor’s office in Tîrgu Mureș analyzed by archivist Sándor Pál-Antal cannot always be compared with the documentary materials of the Ministry of the Interior’s records department, a similar tendency emerges from the latter’s data.¹⁹ The number of arrests and newly opened investigations increased continuously until the summer of 1959, then a rapid-paced decrease followed, and between 1962 and 1964 cases categorized as political hardly occurred. By contrast, in 1965, that is, in the period

after the amnesty, 156 arrests occurred, although, it is true, of those interrogated only 27 were brought to trial.²⁰ Between October 28, 1956, and December 31, 1965, therefore, the most recent research records a total of 1,089 arrests and 826 judicial cases. As Sándor Pál-Antal, who has researched the documents of the state archive in Marosvásárhely, also indicates, a few dossiers are demonstrably missing from the surviving documentation. Thus it is not out of the question that the true number of those taken away may exceed 1,100. Among those brought to trial only eight were acquitted; with 818 guilty verdicts the HAR was overrepresented by 100 percent (we know of 10,000 sentences in total, while 4 percent of the population of Romania lived in the HAR²¹). In the HAR the number of “counter-revolutionary organizations and groups” liquidated by the state security organs was disproportionately high in these years (nearly one hundred). With this the small region ensured itself a leading place in the percentage of arrests in the period between 1957 and 1959.²²

Revealing more than the simple numbers about the post-1956 repression are the ethnic affiliations and occupations of those taken into custody. Three quarters of them (some 620) declared themselves Hungarian, and nearly one quarter Romanian. Characteristically, the majority of ethnic Romanians were brought to trial in 1956 (the Faliboga fall, an anti-Communist conspiracy unveiled in early November, involved 68 Romanians and only two Hungarians); in the following years their percentage decreased to around 10 percent (1959 formed an exception, when – primarily during the repression of demonstrations against collectivization – numerous arrests occurred in Romanian-inhabited settlements as well). By contrast, between 1961 and 1965, their proportion declined to 4–5 percent: at that time the local state security organs were dealing almost exclusively with “Hungarian” cases.²³ The reprisals (in this case we see the use of this expression as justified, taking into account the strongly conceptual character of the trials²⁴) extended to every social stratum. Nearly 20 percent of those arrested had graduated from university, and altogether 30 percent of them were officials,

Church figures,²⁵ university instructors or “declassed elements” belonging to the “former ruling classes.” Nearly 30 percent of those brought to trial were workers and tradesmen living mainly in Marosvásárhely and the small Székely (Szekler) towns. The greatest number nevertheless made their living from farming (38 percent): along with the men their wives were also taken into custody, mainly in the villages (we have knowledge of more than fifty cases²⁶). It is to be noted furthermore that in merely 46 percent of cases (380 persons) the indictment lists a specific charge of verbal (or in rarer cases) physical “counter-revolutionary manifestation” connected with public show of support for the Hungarian Revolution. Most became the victims of group trials (25 such trials were held, with 285 defendants²⁷).

1956 as a Turning Point in Romanian Minority Policy

The examination, in many respects still preliminary and incomplete, shows clearly that for the state security organs it was not solidarity with the 1956 Revolution, or the impact on Romania of the disturbances in Hungary, that represented the main risk. At the same time 1956 provided an excellent opportunity for a decisive response, the ethnic orientation of which became obvious in the last period, when the beginning of the releases coincided not only with the general ideological constraints, and the suppression of the spirit of the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, but also with the measures against “Hungarian nationalism.” In summary, therefore, the frequent claim of Transylvanian Hungarian memoir literature, according to which the reprisals linked to 1956 may be analyzed as an exclusively anti-Hungarian campaign, does not appear valid. Although the data relating to the nationality of those arrested are incomplete, after comparing the statistics concerning the type of crime and the partial data concerning the ethnic distribution of the arrests we may state that at least up until the summer of 1958 the purges did not have a straightforwardly “ethnic” character. The post-1956 political reprisals did not begin with the declared goal of

crushing certain *ethnic* segments of Romanian society. Serving to verify this are those recollections that present the prison world in Romania between 1957 and 1964, which in the cases of both the reception camps in Gherla and Jilava and following this the labor camps tell of the heterogeneity of the convicts in terms of ethnicity, religion, political beliefs and wealth (as well as the high degree of solidarity among them).²⁸ It is important to emphasize the fact that the majority of all citizens convicted and arrested (even for just a few days) after 1956 were of Romanian nationality, and that the leaders of the Romanian secret organizations, such as Teodor Mărgineanu, a professional military officer active in the vicinity of Beszterce, were punished with the same severity as were the Hungarian “counter-revolutionaries” (Mărgineanu was executed on June 26, 1957²⁹). Between 1957 and 1959 numerous Romanian intellectuals with right-wing pasts or ties, who had nothing to do with the echo of the 1956 Revolution, were also convicted. Such were, for example, the philosophers Nichifor Crainic and Constantin Noica, who in 1958 were found guilty of the “crime of wrecking the country,” and on the charge of “incitement against the social order” were sentenced to forced labor for life. Crainic was granted individual clemency in 1962, but Noica would be released only on August 8, 1964.³⁰ At the same time, it is thought-provoking that the military tribunals treated the ethnic Hungarian defendants with particular severity, in some cases with outright brutality. In 1958 of the officially recorded 34 individuals sentenced to death 13 were of Hungarian nationality: apart from the ten people sentenced in the Szoboszlai trial,³¹ Calvinist pastor Kálmán Sass and former military judge Tibor Hollós, who had established a secret resistance network in the northwestern Érmellék region, were also executed. By contrast, in the Romanian “equivalent” of the Szoboszlai trial, the Faliboga trial, no death sentence was carried out. Under Decree No. 318 the criminal code in force since 1948 was significantly stiffened beginning on July 21, 1958;³² the increased sentences conspicuously hurt many citizens of Hungarian, German and Jewish nationality. In 1957 the majority of the accused received prison sentences of

5–10 years; in 1958 and 1959 in the “Hungarian” trial conducted by Pál Macskási, a military judge of Hungarian nationality, the previously rarely imposed sentences of 20–25 years (imposed in the Szoboszlai trial, the EMISZ trial, the SZIT trial, the trials of the Protestant theologians of Cluj, and then in 1961 the trial against the organization “Youth Yearning for Freedom” in Oradea³³) became routine.

Among the targets of the reprisals following the 1956 Hungarian events, there may be found not only crimes considered to be political but also “social” and economic offenses. In Eastern European socialist societies, labor discipline slackened to an unbelievable extent, and the illegal but often tolerated expropriation of communal property became normal. In the various economic units all those who handled public funds (from the manager through the chief accountant right down to the cashier) obtained key roles. As politically reliable persons they enjoyed immunity, and perhaps because of this, too, a laxer moral discipline took root. To this it must be added that various tricks and crimes, such as the expropriation of raw materials (in popular parlance, “stealing from the common”), the falsifications of balance sheets regularly committed by the companies, or the fictitious fulfillment of “norms” that were considered to be too high, formed part of the survival techniques and passive resistance of several hundred thousand or rather several million people. Against this the Central Leadership of the RWP moved for the first time in 1952 with a comprehensive campaign, during which several thousand companies and factories received new boards of “popular” origin. The measure did not lead to any particular success, and in 1955 the Council of Ministers passed Decree No. 240, which on the Soviet model established the concept of crime committed against the “common property,” and held out the prospect of severe monetary fines (in serious cases prison terms of several years) for violations committed “against society.”³⁴ On February 25, 1957, the Council of Ministers adopted Decree No. 33/1957, which introduced two new paragraphs into the criminal code (578/4.§ and 578/5.§), establishing verbal insult and physical assault, as well as the “lack of respect for

society” and the “violation of the rules of socialist co-existence,” as crimes. These acts were recategorized from administrative misdemeanor to criminal case, which carried a term of imprisonment ranging from three months to five years.³⁵ According to the April 1958 report of the Ministry of Justice, countrywide between 1955 and 1957 some 150,000 people were legally sentenced for crimes of an economic nature.³⁶ At the same time, while two thirds of the some 100,000 persons punished in 1955 and 1956 received less than two years in a “correctional facility” and for one tenth of them the application of the prison sentence was suspended as well, in the second half of 1957 the chief prosecutor recorded with unconcealed satisfaction that the percentage of “excessively light” penalties had decreased significantly. The document at the same time proposed a further stiffening of the penalties: an increase from 10 to 25 years’ imprisonment for damage caused costing in excess of 25,000 lei, a penalty of between five and ten years for damage caused costing between 10,000 and 25,000 lei, and finally an increase from three months to two years in the case of damage caused estimated as costing less than 2,000 lei.³⁷ Central orders were carried out conscientiously in the Hungarian Autonomous Region, too: in the summer of 1957 the regional and district (*raion*) courts competed with one another in applying Decrees Nos. 240 and 324. In September, in his report meant for the regional Party leadership, the president of the regional popular court minutely analyzed the results of the application of the new regulations both to “social” crimes, such as hooliganism, and to “economic crimes.” The report reveals that the HAR was particularly affected by the stiffened code. In the first six months of 1957 9,592 persons were placed under investigation because of similar crimes (this was more than 2 percent of the entire adult population of the HAR), and among them 7,814 were convicted: 1,105 persons were sentenced to terms of imprisonment, while the rest received severe monetary fines. According to the president of the regional court of law, Aurel Ciupe, Decree No. 324 in particular had fulfilled the “hope” attached to it: during two and a half months (from early July until September 14) of its application the statistics

had “perceptibly improved,” since of the 303 convicts 283 persons were denied consideration of mitigating factors prescribed even by the law, and were sentenced to serve serious terms of imprisonment.³⁸ Between 1957 and 1959 in the HAR alone, for economically and socially motivated crime (begging, avoidance of work, prostitution) approximately 3,000 inhabitants were arrested and sentenced to terms of imprisonment (there were 1,500 in 1957 and 800 in 1958, and in 1959 almost 700 similar sentences were handed down³⁹). In another file reference is made also to a death sentence having been carried out in at least one case, and to several persons sentenced to life sentences of forced labor. Thanks to the “crime-fighting” activity in 1958 alone 10,000,000 lei were successfully returned to the “common assets.”⁴⁰ It is worthwhile to compare the results of the fight to suppress economic crime (tens of thousands of trials, 3,000 prison sentences) with the balance of the “political” repression (approximately 1,000 arrests up to 1965). As a cumulative effect of the process, a significant proportion of the population of the HAR was watched by the Militia and the Securitate, and more than 4,000 people ended up in prison. A similarity may be observed in the composition of the apparatus entrusted with uncovering the crimes as well. Two thirds of the officers of the Securitate, more than half the officers of the Militia, and the bulk of the judges, prosecutors and defense lawyers were Hungarian. The Romanian Ciupe was replaced in his post of president of the regional court of law in 1958 by the Hungarian judge Elemér Kincses.⁴¹ The available archival documents do not contain data on the ethnic affiliation of those convicts: for this it would be necessary after all to review the tens of thousands of cases that appeared in the regional and district courts. Based on the documents of the regional Party committee it may be hazarded that the struggle to eliminate economic crime started not out of ethnic considerations, but rather from the truly grave problem that the astonishing decline in workplace morality and discipline had caused.

The series of measures nevertheless had a “political” as well as an ethnic aspect, since, unlike the Jews, the Transylvanian Hungarians

did not leave Transylvania after 1956. Indeed, right up until the late 1970s – in spite of the assimilation process – their absolute numbers, if not their proportion, continued to grow, reaching 1.7 million. In parallel with this, there commenced the loss of position on the labor market, which with the passage of 30–40 years resulted in the above-average impoverishment of the Hungarian minority.⁴² This long-term process had already commenced in 1945, when the Transylvanian Hungarians lost their traditional bourgeois strata; however, the campaign against (often only seemingly) *non*-political crimes and “anti-social” behavior played an important role in emptying the “substance” of the Hungarian Autonomous Region, as well as in the paradigm shift in minority policy after 1956. The reorganization of the HAR in 1960 was influenced to a similar extent by the hitherto lesser-known, essentially unexplored economically/socially motivated reprisals, such as the closing of the autonomous Hungarian-language schools or the closing of Bolyai University in 1959. The local press played a particularly important role during the anti-corruption campaign, which in more than one case deteriorated into an “anti-bureaucracy” hysteria evoking Stalinist times. Unlike the strictly classified political trials, the defense of “socialist legality” unfolded before the public and enjoyed the latter’s vigorous support. This was particularly palpable from the spring of 1958, when the newspaper *Vörös Zászló* (Red Flag) initiated a column entitled *Court News*, onwards. On March 12 a report arrived from Csík District: in three villages a total of six wood thieves were sentenced to two years’ imprisonment.⁴³ The real campaign, however, began in late July, when a Party meeting was held in the “Vörös Csillag” (Red Star) Thermal Plant in Gyulakuta in the spirit of the RWP June plenum, which proclaimed ideological tightening: “At production meetings, Communists like Ioan Nicoleanu and Irma Hegedűs in their speeches unmask those who pilfer the people’s property and call the workers’ attention to [the need for] heightened alertness.” Following this, a public trial was conducted against five pre-selected workers in the building of the power plant. “Some of them were removed from the factory, while others were sentenced to monetary fines and

assigned to other jobs,” reported the *Vörös Zászló*.⁴⁴ Two days later, on July 26, another public trial took place, this time against Emma Végh, budget director of the “Higénia” (Hygiene) Cooperative in Marosvásárhely, who was convicted in the presence of 700 workers in the city law court. The *Vörös Zászló* provided extensive coverage of the case, which the judiciary entrusted to the president of the law court, Árpád Rézi, well known for his severity. The correspondent at once informed, warned and educated the readers:

For two years she stole from the cooperative’s common assets. [...] From the common property she expropriated 28,654 lei, and from the workers’ benefits 5,100 lei. Thus she stole more than 33,700 lei. [...] When she was apprehended, Emma Végh entered through the gates of the Kalapács Artisans’ Cooperative with her typical arrogance. However, when she found herself here face to face with the approximately 150 outraged workers who did not fit in the hall, she was broken. The once cosmopolitan woman, her head bowed, in prison garb, entered the hall amidst the contempt of the workers.⁴⁵

The charges were read, followed by the witness statements prepared in advance:

Ioan Rusu, Irén Barabás and others spoke of Emma Végh with the utmost hatred. They warned all those who are inclined to similar dishonest acts to beware, because they would not evade the severe judgment of the people. [...] Ilona Jakab is a slender tiny lady. But when she spoke, her words made her powerful. “We sweated in 40–50-degree heat so that our cooperative might flourish and be profitable, and then this good-for-nothing, who is not even worthy of the adjective human, stole the results of our work. It is not surprising that she has become so mean and vile.”⁴⁶

Other workers, however, not only humiliated the accused, but – almost certainly on orders from above – “criticized the former members of the board of the regional alliance of small artisan cooperatives as well.” The sentence “suited” the lynch-mob mood:

Emma Végh was sentenced to 13 years' forced labor, loss of civil rights for six years, and confiscation of her property. At the same time she was obligated to repay more than 33,700 lei for damage that she had caused the cooperative. According to the newspaper, "After the verdict was read those present cheered the People's Militia at length."⁴⁷ In the subsequent days and weeks "court news" now appeared almost daily in the *Vörös Zászló* and other Hungarian-language dailies.⁴⁸ In connection with the launch of the second wave of collectivization it was typically kulaks, more rarely middling peasants, who wound up in the dock. The trial held in Mezöbánd was reported on thus:

"The trial was in Tîrgu Mureş, and before pronouncing sentence the court went out to the scene in order to announce the verdict there and before announcing it give the workers a hearing as well. The workers filled the culture house in Mezöbánd to capacity."⁴⁹

Beginning in August, however, new, "high-ranking" figures also appeared in the judicial reports. József Egyed, chairman of the regional Sport Committee, was arrested on the charge of bureaucratic corruption and sentenced to nine years' imprisonment. Brought down with him was György Lungu, vice-chairman of the regional popular council, who was forced to resign and then expelled from the Party as well.⁵⁰ On August 16, the *Vörös Zászló* reported that together with director Teodor Schwartz several dozen workers and managers had been dismissed from the flax mill in Gheorgheni.⁵¹ After the "break" decreed in honor of the August 23 state holiday, when in addition the prominent figures of the HAR welcomed a sizeable Tatar delegation,⁵² the campaign gathered new momentum: the court in Gheorgheni declared sentence against five "plunderers of the people's assets," and sentenced Albert Rác, caught in the act of stealing bricks, to 23 years' forced labor.⁵³ In September, investigations and inspections commenced in Cristoru Secuiesc. According to the newspaper, one of the officials of the district popular council, whom a kulak had tried to bribe in order to get back his confiscated goods, was sentenced to several years' loss of liberty; naturally, the kulak was also convicted.⁵⁴ On September

28, correspondent Ervin Simon reported from Miercurea Ciuc on the case of Ildikó Sáfár. Sáfár was a “kulak girl,” who earlier had been dismissed because of her ancestry from the city people’s council and been hired at the Lottó-Pronosport, and had then embezzled several thousand lei. According to Simon, the immorality of “people of kulak origin” had not only political but also biological causes:

“Anyone who observes the exploiting elements can observe that the majority of them are drawn to where money or other valuables can be handled. And some even help them to obtain these. And then they wonder that they steal. There is nothing to wonder at. Such elements are infected.”⁵⁵

In those days in Reghin, too, a trial causing a great stir was held against a civil servant of Hungarian nationality, László Antal, former president of the city people’s council, who together with his ten companions was convicted on the charge of corruption; the chief defendant received 19 years’ forced labor.⁵⁶ The archival documents also testify to the mass trials of the summer and autumn of 1958, and they confirm the picture that emerges from analysis of the press: although the campaign had set the further weakening of the disadvantaged social groups as a primary goal, the aggressive press propaganda led to the terrorization of the whole of society. Party leaders, economic experts, bureaucrats and simple citizens alike trembled for fear that because of their small tricks, “frauds” and unreported incomes they would wind up in prison, their careers and lives broken in two. According to an October summary report, for example, in Reghin district several council chairmen and chief accountants were convicted, while others were unmasked according to the already outlined script at popular assemblies held in workplaces and houses of culture (in September alone 730 such gatherings were held in the HAR). It was thus that nearly 700 cadres and middle managers could be relieved of their posts.⁵⁷

In the factories, government bureaus and educational institutions a kind of “permanent revolution” occurred. Newly appointed managers, chief engineers, accountants, young workers and technicians at the start of their careers disappeared from one

day to the next. Others were dismissed: in August 1957 alone the regional Housing and Construction Trust parted with nearly 100 workers, exclusively because of their “negative” attitude discerned in the days of the 1956 Revolution (or subsequently reported). A good number of the dismissed were engineers with “bourgeois,” “kulak” or “clergy” family backgrounds, technicians and auditors. At the same time there were also exceptions: twenty-nine-year-old Pál Kóti, the team leader of the labor union, had earned a diploma in economics at Bolyai University, and belonged to that group of the new “popular” cadres whom the Communist system had previously protected; he earned 1,500 lei, twice the average salary. Kóti was dismissed because in front of a few workers he had shouted that the Communists ought to be chased off with pitchforks, as had happened in Hungary.⁵⁸ The Forestry Directorate, an agency of key importance in the largely forest-covered Székelyföld (Szekler Land), also systematically dismissed the “politically unreliable elements,” in whose criminal record extracts there often appeared deportation to the Danube-Black Sea Canal in the early 1950s, or a period of time spent in prison connected to some “political” crime.⁵⁹ The same occurred in the regional cooperative center (DRCC), where in the summer of 1958 a comprehensive investigation was launched: several workers were convicted on the charge of misappropriation and an additional fifty were dismissed.⁶⁰ In 1958 the “inspection” of the judiciary and the state security organs also commenced: forty officers and junior officers were dismissed from the Militia, as were fifteen judges, prosecutors and drafters from the regional Prosecutor’s Office and Court of Law.⁶¹

Summary

The ideological and internal offensive launched in 1957 meant much more than the ultimate victory of Gheorghiu-Dej and the power group tied to him over the “Muscovites.” Historiography until now has not succeeded in approaching the multiple functions of the 1956 trials adequately (and in Hungary, too, the methodical research of

the state security “cadres” of the early Kádár era commenced only a few years ago⁶²). It was not a “tragic episode”⁶³ and not only a series of anti-minority measures, but rather a process promoting structural changes and the establishment of a new nation-state framework. Between 1956 and 1959 – here the elimination of the Hungarian university in Kolozsvár may be interpreted as a symbolic moment – a long-term change commenced in the natural history of the Romanian Communist regime. It is sufficient to point to the attempts aimed at making the economy independent, the cautious rehabilitation of national culture, and the gradually distancing from Moscow. While observing ideological orthodoxy, Gheorghiu-Dej and his group (in which Nicolae Ceaușescu now played a leading role) laid the foundations of a new model, a national communist state. Within this framework, the Gheorghiu-Dej regime (first and foremost its state security organs and military elite) “reworked” the crimes committed by the Hungarians, real or imagined, based on an ideological construction. According to this it was Bishop Áron Márton, the head of Hungarian revisionism, who controlled nationalist discontent and the anti-Romanian mood. The conception naturally started from the premise that the representation of the Hungarian minority’s interests was to be interpreted as “an act against the Romanian nation.”⁶⁴ This thesis, formulated by the highest officers of the Securitate in 1958, is frequently put forward even after the change in 1989, in the memoirs of former Ministry of the Interior officials (the former general Ionel Gal) and Party men (Pavel Țugui), but it also crops up here and there in the specialist literature dealing with the post-1956 period, which is in any case scant (Cristian Troncotă).⁶⁵ What made the reprisals committed against the Hungarians unique was the expressly ethnically charged “excess” that flowed out of the state security organs to contaminate the Party apparatus. The old guard of bourgeoisie and landowning class marginalized after 1945, the Catholic and Protestant faithful, the students at university and secondary school raised under socialism and dissatisfied with Romanian Communism, and finally those protesting against collectivization, and people drinking in

pubs, sometimes singing irredentist songs and loudly criticizing the Communists: it was from this conglomeration that the concept of a unitary *nation-based* resistance that seriously threatened the territorial integrity of the Romanian state was hewn. What is more, the political-economic-social discontent was eloquent proof also that the Hungarians suffered from a lack of loyalty towards Romania.

Although most contemporary Western analysts dismissed the Romanian Communist regime as unpopular, Gheorghiu-Dej relied massively upon the support of ordinary citizens, particularly industrial workers. His calculation proved quite correct: the widespread fear of territorial claims by Hungarian “counter-revolutionaries,” fuelled by Party propaganda and the secret police, prevented any serious disturbance. Indeed, negative comments circulated among the population, yet unlike the ethnic Hungarians of Transylvania most ethnic Romanians reacted passively to the scattered news coming from neighboring Hungary. Moreover, 1956 stimulated a wave of Romanian patriotism and an instinct towards self-defense. In this regard, a parallel can be drawn with the Romanian reaction to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, when Ceaușescu’s support for the Prague Spring transformed his image from that of a gray apparatchik to that of a national hero. Analysis of the political exploitation of the post-1956 challenges is a worthwhile endeavor, one that can surely help us to locate the roots of Romania’s maverick, semi-independent policy during the Ceaușescu era.

Notes

- 1 The first documentary collection was published only in 1996: C. M. Lungu and M. Retegan, eds., *1956. Explozia. Percepții române, iugoslave și sovietice asupra evenimentelor din Polonia și Ungaria* [1956. Explosion. Romanian, Yugoslav and Soviet Perceptions of the Events in Poland and Hungary] (Bucharest, 1996). It was followed by first-hand accounts and documentary volumes: Ioana Boca, *1956. Un an de ruptură* [1956. A Year of Rupture] (Bucharest, 2001); A. Andreescu, L. Nastasă and A. Varga, eds., *Maghiarii din România (1956–1968)* [The Hungarians of Romania (1956–1968)] (Cluj-

- Napoca, 2003); Michaela Sitariu, *Oaza de libertate. Timișoara, 30 octombrie 1956* [Oasis of Liberty. Timișoara, October 30, 1956] (Iași, 2004).
- 2 On the Romanian Communist regime's interpretation of 1956, see further Johanna Granville, "Dej-a-Vu: Early Roots of Romania's Independence," *East European Quarterly* vol. XLII, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 365–404, Johanna Granville, "Temporary Triumph in Timișoara: Unrest among Romanian Students in 1956," *History* vol. 93, issue 309 (January 2008): 69–93, Johanna Granville, "Forewarned Is Forearmed: How the Hungarian Crisis of 1956 Helped the Romanian Leadership," *Europe-Asia Studies* vol. 62, no. 4 (2010): 615–645, and Johanna Granville, "Hungary, 101: Seven Ways to Avoid a Revolution and Soviet Invasion of Romania," *Cold War History* vol. 10, no. 1 (February 2010): 81–106. See also Dragoș Petrescu, "Fifty-Six as an Identity Shaping Experience: The Case of the Romanian Communists," in János M. Rainer and Katalin Somlai, eds., *The 1956 Revolution and the Soviet Bloc Countries: Reaction and Repercussions* (Budapest, 2007), pp. 48–68.
 - 3 Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons. A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley, CA, 2003). A similar position has been articulated by Stelian Tănase, *Elite și societate. Guvernarea Gheorghiu-Dej 1948–1965* [Elite and Society. Gheorghiu-Dej's Government 1948–1965] (Bucharest, 1998), and Dennis Deletant, *Teroarea comunistă în România. Gheorghiu-Dej și statul polițienesc 1948–1965* [Communist Terror in Romania. Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State 1948–1965] (Iași, 2001). The nationality policy aspects of the processes launched by the 1956 Revolution are presented in detail by Ádám Szesztay, *Nemzetiségi kérdés a Kárpát-medencében 1956–1962* [The Nationality Question in the Carpathian Basin 1956–1962] (Budapest, 2003), as well as Ildikó Lipcsey, *Magyar–román kapcsolatok 1956–1958. Dokumentumok* [Hungarian–Romanian Relations 1956–1958. Documents] (Budapest, 2004). The post-1956 changes are analyzed from a Soviet–Romanian–Hungarian perspective by Magdolna Baráth, "Két szovjet diplomáciai irat a magyar–román kapcsolatról" [Two Soviet Diplomatic Documents on Hungarian–Romanian Relations], *Múltunk* (2003) 3: 211–258.
 - 4 Tănase, *Elite și societate*, pp. 156–160.
 - 5 Arhiva Consiliului Național pentru Studiarea Arhivelor Securității [The National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives, henceforth ACNSAS], fond Documentar, dosar 53, vol. 2, ff. 2–14.

- 6 ACNSAS, fond Documentar, dosar 53, vol. 3, ff. 4–54.
- 7 ACNSAS, fond Documentar, dosar 53, vol. 21, ff. 76–79.
- 8 ACNSAS, fond Documentar, dosar 53, vol. 1, ff. 151–155.
- 9 ACNSAS, fond Documentar, dosar 53, vol. 3, ff. 67–68.
- 10 The data are published by Gheorghe Buzatu and Mircea Chirițoiu, eds., *Agresiunea comunismului în România 1944–1989* [The Communist Aggression in Romania 1944–1989] (Bucharest, 1998), vol. 1, pp. 44–45.
- 11 ACNSAS, fond Documentar, dosar 81, vol. 1. The data relating to the HAR are published by Stefano Bottoni, *Az 1956-os forradalom és a romániai magyarság 1956–1959* [The 1956 Revolution and the Hungarian Minority in Romania 1956–1959] (Csikszereda, 2006).
- 12 ACNSAS, fond Documentar, dosar 129, vol. 1, f. 3.
- 13 On the functioning of the Securitate and the processes of network-building, see Cristina Anisescu, “Dinamică și rol a rețelei informative în perioadă 1948–1989” [The Dynamics and Role of the Informational Network in the Period 1948–1989], in AAVV, *Arhivele Securității I* [The Archives of the Securitate I] (Bucharest, 2002), pp. 10–40. The most comprehensive compilation to appear to date is Florica Dobre, ed., *Securitatea. Structuri-cadre. Obiective și metode* [The Securitate. Structures and Cadres. Goals and Methods] (Bucharest, 2006), vols. 1–2.
- 14 ACNSAS, fond Documentar, dosar 53, vol. 2, f. 41.
- 15 ACNSAS, fond Documentar, dosar 53, vol. 1, f. 100.
- 16 During examination of the “share” of the HAR, I examined the following files: ACNSAS, fond Documentar, dosar 53, 105, 114, 202.
- 17 Following the reorganization of state security in April 1956 the Romanian Ministry of the Interior operated 11 Regional Directorates.
- 18 Sándor Pál-Antal’s data differ slightly from this (a total of 97 persons placed under criminal investigation in 1957): Sándor Pál-Antal, *Áldozatok – 1956. A forradalmat követő megtorlások a Magyar Autonóm Tartományban* [Victims of 1956. The Reprisals Following the Revolution in the Hungarian Autonomous Region] (Marosvásárhely, 2006), p. 33.
- 19 According to Pál-Antal, in 1958–1959 539 persons were placed under criminal investigation, and 447 persons were brought to trial (Pál-Antal, *Áldozatok – 1956*, p. 33). According to the data of the Ministry

- of the Interior, between January 1958 and May 31, 1959, countrywide 9,978 people were taken into custody; of these arrests 308 were carried out by the Ministry of the Interior's Directorate in the Hungarian Autonomous Region: ACNSAS, fond Documentar, dosar 53, vol. 3, f. 131. To this number there must be added those politically "prominent" cases that the central investigative authorities handled; about the outcome of these, however, we have no information.
- 20 Pál-Antal, *Áldozatok – 1956*, p. 33.
- 21 *Ibid.* A few years ago a former political convict reported figures much higher than this (approximately 2,500 sentences): *Háromszék*, October 23, 2000. According to the available data and based on the calculations of the specialist literature, I consider it to be out of the question that the figure given applies to the convictions. However, just how many people were directly affected by the nearly ten-year-long campaign could form the subject of further research.
- 22 ACNSAS, fond Documentar, vol. 3, ff. 101–114.
- 23 Pál-Antal, *Áldozatok – 1956*, p. 39.
- 24 The conception (political prejudice) of the state security forces and Party organs is clearly revealed by the documents printed in Pál-Antal's book (pp. 51–185), as well as the material in the volume edited by Gyula Dávid: *1956 Erdélyben. Politikai elítéltek életrajzi adattára 1956–1965* [1956 in Transylvania. Biographical Cards of Political Convicts] (Kolozsvár, 2006).
- 25 The repression had a disproportionately severe impact on Church figures: 16 Roman Catholics, ten Calvinists, seven Unitarians, two "unreturned" Greek Catholics, five Orthodox and one Lutheran: Pál-Antal, *Áldozatok – 1956*, p. 47.
- 26 See Pál-Antal's table: Pál-Antal, *Áldozatok – 1956*, p. 45.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- 28 See Richard Wurmbrand, *Mélyiségekben járatta őket* [In God's Underground] (Kolozsvár, 2003).
- 29 For more on this, see Cornelia Ghinea, "Un caz de revoltă anticomunistă în armată – decembrie 1956" [A Case of an Anti-Communist Revolt in the Romanian Army – December 1956], in Romulus Rusan, ed., *Analele Sighet 8. Anii 1954–1960. Fluxurile și refluxurile stalinismului* [Annals of Sighet 8. The Years 1954–1960] (Bucharest, 2000), pp. 714–722.
- 30 ACNSAS, fond Documentar, dosar 131, vol. 2, f. 14. (Noica), f. 31. (Crainic).

- 31 The case records of the Szoboszlai trial are printed in Zoltán Tófalvi, *1956 erdélyi mártírjai I. A Szoboszlai csoport* [The Transylvanian Martyrs of 1956 I. The Szoboszlai Group] (Marosvásárhely, 2007).
- 32 Dennis Deletant, *România sub regimul comunist* [Romania under the Communist Regime] (Bucharest, 2006), pp. 148–149.
- 33 The history of the SZVISZ has been reconstructed by Anna P. Sebők, *Szabadságra Vágyó Ifjak Szervezete 1956* [The Organization “Youth Yearning for Freedom” in 1956] (Budapest, 2003).
- 34 On the treatment of “anti-social” behavior in the Soviet Union, see Viktor A. Kozlov, *Mass Uprisings in the USSR: Protest and Rebellion in the Post-Stalin Years* (Armonk, NY, 2002), chapter VI.
- 35 The decree also appeared in the local press after several months’ delay: *Vörös Zászló* [Red Flag], July 5, 1957. On the legal regulation of hooliganism and “parasitism” in Romania, see László Mócsy’s study: “Reglementarea infracțiunii de huliganism în legislația penal a R.P.R.” [The Regulation of the Crime of Hooliganism in the Penal Code of the RPR], *Buletin Universităților Babeș și Bolyai, Seria Științe sociale* (1956): 121–132.
- 36 Report by the Office of the Chief Prosecutor on crimes against the common property between 1955 and 1957. Bucharest, April 14, 1958. ANIC (Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale – Romanian Central National Archives), fond CC PCR, Cancelarie, dosar 12/1958, ff. 37–66.
- 37 ANIC, fond CC PCR, Cancelarie, dosar 12/1958, ff. 54–56. In this same period the number of proceedings launched surpassed one million, in 565,000 cases because of damage to the forests.
- 38 ANDJM (*Arhivele Naționale Direcția Județeană Mureș* – Directorate of the Romanian National Archives for Mureș County), fond 1134, dosar 175/1957, ff. 61–73.
- 39 Report of the Regional Directorate of the Militia. Marosvásárhely, November 2, 1959. ANDJM, fond 1134, dosar 229/1959, ff. 10–26.
- 40 Report of the President of the Regional People’s Tribunal, Elemér Kincses. Marosvásárhely, November 25, 1958. ANDJM, fond 1134, dosar 196/1958, ff. 199–210.
- 41 ANDJM, fond 1134, dosar 192/1958, f. 48.
- 42 On this, see the data on occupation of the 1992 and 2002 Romanian population censuses worked up by Attila Z. Papp, Itala Erdei and Tamás Kiss (Transindex, Erdélyi Adatbank), at <http://nepszamlalas.adatbank.transindex.ro/>, accessed October 14, 2011.

- 43 “Csalás a közvagyon rovására” [Fraud at the Expense of the Public Assets], *Vörös Zászló*, March 12, 1958.
- 44 *Vörös Zászló*, July 24, 1958.
- 45 “A közvagyon fosztogatói elnyerik méltó büntetésüket” [The Plunderers of the Public Assets Earn Their Just Punishment], *Vörös Zászló*, July 26, 1958.
- 46 *Ibid.*
- 47 *Ibid.*
- 48 Writings in the Bucharest *Előre* [Forward] and the Kolozsvár *Igazság* [The Truth] reveal that similar such trials happened in other regions as well, although their number appears to have been much lower.
- 49 “Elnyerték méltó büntetését Szabó kulákék” [The Szabó Kulaks Earned Their Just Punishment], *Vörös Zászló*, August 6, 1958.
- 50 *Vörös Zászló*, August 3, 1958.
- 51 *Vörös Zászló*, August 16, 1958.
- 52 *Vörös Zászló*, August 27, 1958.
- 53 “Véget ért egy népvagyon fosztogató pályafutása” [The Career of a Plunderer of Public Assets Has Ended], *Vörös Zászló*, August 27, 1958.
- 54 “Nincs megalkuvás azokkal szemben, akik a közösségnek ártanak” [There Is No Compromise with Those Who Harm the Community], *Vörös Zászló*, September 13, 1958.
- 55 “Sikkasztó kuláklány fölött ítélkezett a csíkszeredai néptörvényszék” [The Public Tribunal in Csíkszereda Has Passed Sentence on an Embezzling Kulak Girl], *Vörös Zászló*, September 28, 1958.
- 56 *Vörös Zászló*, October 1, 1958.
- 57 Bulletin sent to the Central Leadership of the RWP, Marosvásárhely, October 14, 1958. ANDJM, fond 1134, dosar 198/1958, f. 186.
- 58 Report of the Building Trust to the Party Committee of the HAR. Marosvásárhely, August 29, 1957. ANDJM, fond 1134, dosar 181/1957, ff. 185–189.
- 59 ANDJM, fond 1134, dosar 181/1957, ff. 175–184.
- 60 ANDJM, fond 1134, dosar 194/1958, ff. 169–175.
- 61 ANDJM, fond 1134, dosar 196/1958, f. 212.
- 62 Gábor Tabajdi and Krisztián Ungváry, *Elhallgatott múlt. A pártállam és a belügy. A politikai rendőrség működése Magyarországon 1956–1990* [The Untold Past. The Party State and the Security Services. The Functioning of the Political Police in Hungary, 1956–1990] (Budapest, 2008).

- 63 Tismăneanu, *Stalinism*, p. 155.
- 64 Ionel Gal, *Rațiune și represiune la Ministerul de Interne 1965–1989* [Reason and Repression in the Ministry of the Interior 1965–1989] (Iași, 2001), p. 46.
- 65 Pavel Țugui, *Istoria și limba română în vremea lui Gheorghiu-Dej. Memoriile unui fost șef de Secție a CC al PMR* [History and the Romanian Language in the Gheorghiu-Dej Era. The Memoirs of a Former Chief of Section of the Central Committee of the RWP] (Bucharest, 1999); Gal, *Rațiune*; the concept returns in Lungu and Retegan, eds., *1956. Explozia*, as well as in Cristian Troncotă, *Istoria Securității regimului comunist din România, 1948–1964* [The History of the Romanian Political Police, the Securitate, 1948–1964] (Bucharest, 2003).



**TRANSYLVANIA
IN COMMUNIST ROMANIA,
1945–1989:
Public Sphere, Ambivalent Discourse,
Censorship and Propaganda**



Silviu Taraş

FESTIVALS AND COLLECTIVE MENTALITIES IN TRANSITION (1944–1948) IN COVASNA COUNTY

The construction, enforcement and consolidation of the new regime's festival calendar make up a dynamic process bearing multiple influences. The concept of "political festival" is employed in the following as meaning an official anniversary or commemorative moment that entails several aspects: that of commemoration (of events or heroes), that of celebration (rites and their meaning) and that of informal holiday. In the period of ideological competition and the rise of the Communist Party, in Háromszék (Covasna County), the time of the citizens was structured by four calendars in four different dimensions. In chronological order of their appearance, the first was the Christian calendar of the holy days, with slight differences for the existing four denominations. The second was the calendar of the Hungarian national holidays, concentrated around two major reference points of the national history: the 1848 Revolution and the founding of the Hungarian state by Saint Stephen. The third calendar, the one of the democratic Romanian state, was set up immediately after the First World War by the prefect's decree. This calendar also had two major thematic center points: the Monarchy and the State. The fourth calendar was a structuring of everyday life by the Power in three semantic fields: (1) international holidays, (2) commemorative festivals of the Soviet regime and (3) the commemorative festivals of recent events of the new political regime *in statu nascendi*. The abundance of holidays and festivals is characteristic of any period of power transition. In order to create, consolidate and reinforce the legitimacy of the ruling ideological discursive forces, the communists, in their pursuit to seize total control over the society, transformed public festivals into symbolic dimensions of conflicting forces. The aim of this study is not to propose a holistic description of the festival manifestations. It is, rather, to address public political rituals following the logic

of the three-dimensionality of the festivals (content, manifestation and symbols) in order to shed light on the aspects of collective mentalities in the proposed framework of time and space. Therefore the interpretative paradigm defines the structure of the study. The systemic framework of interpretation is constructed on the typology of calendars and the three-dimensionality of festivals.

The national dimension is irreducible to the celebration of different holidays of the Hungarian calendar, such as the celebration of March 15, reference to the national symbols being present also in the pageantry and symbolism of the international, communist and Soviet festivals. The issue of nationalism was addressed, either explicitly by the speakers and symbols, or implicitly by the same due to the logistic problems arising, and, last but not least, by the question of the reception. The ethnic structure of the county for the given period is an argument for the unavoidability of national challenge. According to the census from 1930, out of 136,122 inhabitants of the county, there were 16,748 (12 percent) Romanians and 117,868 (86.6 percent) Hungarians.¹

The emergence of Greater Romania after the First World War brought about an existential change in the lives of the Hungarians from Transylvania: they became a national minority. The burden of this status is attested by the general fever of excitement that preceded the entrance of the Hungarian army into Northern Transylvania in 1940. The festivities of entering the cities and villages were thoroughly organized, and the reentry of Northern Transylvania under Hungarian authority was overwhelmingly ritualized. By extending it to the whole of the territory and homogenizing the public rite, the image was created of belonging to a greater unity, inherently national and perceivable by means of the exteriorization of this essentially abstract entity. Thus territory became a concept subordinated to the “nation,” and the new governors were aware of the social power that festivals and public rituals bring into being. One of the central rituals was the erection of a flagpole in every locality and flying the national flag on it during the army parade. The importance of the discourse on nation was amplified by the

atrocities perpetrated during the authority transfers in 1940 and 1944, which amplified the tensions regarding the national issue.

This tension was also stimulated by the creation of two camps in which were gathered those who were accused of actions against the Romanians in the period 1940–1944. One of the camps was established just next to the main city of the county, Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfântu Gheorghe), and held mainly Hungarians who fled with the retreating German and Hungarian army and came back in 1945. The significant number of prisoners in Földvár (Feldioara) camp and the harsh conditions of detention there alarmed the local community.² Illustrative of the interpretative field of national discourse after the reentry of the Romanian authorities is the case of Private Sandu Dumitru.³

Festivals from this period present continuity and discontinuity alike. The authorities, in their pursuit of changing the topic of festivals, made omissions, deliberately alternated the signified of existing festivals and invented new contents by imposing brand new public rituals. One of the most important novelties in the content of the festival was its reference to a new set of values and norms introduced by the dominant ideological discourse. The ability of festivals to amplify and at the same time to suppress time can be observed from two distinct perspectives. On the *vertical* axis, the commemorated event establishes a restrictive paradigm over the past, creating continuity and causality between events that occurred with substantial time spans between them, overwhelming alternative interpretations with the logic of a Great Narrative. And on the *horizontal*, by covering the whole of the calendric cycle, it constructs a narrative that overlooks the possible festival days that do not harmonize with the imposed history course.

The interpretative paradigm of the festivals from the period 1944–1948 is on the one hand the teleology of a history of cooperation and brotherhood between Hungarians and Romanians, and between Hungarians and Russians, and on the other hand one of confrontations between Hungarians and Germans.⁴ This interpretation cannot be overlooked in the analysis of commemorative public

rituals of the 1848 Revolution and of the events additional to it. The vulgar Marxist method of interpretation, theorized later by Bányai, is (of course) very simple and is structured in three different parts, in order of their frequency: (1) the shared destiny of the Hungarians and Romanians, (2) the history of conflicts between Hungarians and Germans and (3) the shared history with the Russians. The generic topic of cooperation with the Russian people encountered some difficulties, but the key moment was “found” in the martyrdom of Russian officers who refused to fight against the Hungarian Revolution in 1848. This moment was exploited not only as the keystone of friendship between the two nations, but also as the basis for the myth of Russians’ deep democratic character, as well as an example of the worldwide cooperation of imperialism.⁵

The deliberate alternation of the signifier was another procedure of misappropriation of an already institutionalized ritual with popular resonance. Portraying the new mother in an article of the local newspaper *Szabadság* (Liberty) was just another exercise in applying the logic of revolutionary antagonism: *Up to now* there have been women staying the whole day long in coffee shops and pubs, but *from now on* the new society has other expectations.⁶ The dualism of old and new sends us to another mythos of the period: the utopia of new beginnings. However, the refusal of reality to comply with the expectations of the regime made the restructuring of the festive calendar more and more sophisticated. They organized other manifestations involving public attendance in the proximity of the undesirable festival, or even operated unsubstantiated shifts of meaning of the celebrated event. For example, with the occasion of the detailed planning of the 1848 commemorative festival, for the first time organized by the communists, as an equivalent, a series of events was staged celebrating “one hundred years from the issue of the Communist Manifesto.”⁷

The topic of “brotherhood” was not restricted to the commemoration of the 1848 Revolution. It was a constant of the festive speeches given in different contexts, from the inauguration of the Progressive Youth organization to the visit of state officials in

the county (during this period several members of the government came here, most frequently Vasile Luca⁸ and Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu). On every occasion the officials addressed the issue of cooperation in a highly ritualized and festive language, progressively dominating the public place. The festive character is attested by the number and variety of the public rituals alike. In the annual reports of different communist satellite organizations such as the Progressive Youth, Union Council of Covasna, Patriotic Defense, Workers' Unique Front, Social Democratic Party (henceforth SDP) and of the Romanian Communist Party (henceforth RCP) for 1946 the following festivals are marked:⁹

Date	Content
January 21	Commemoration of Lenin's death
February 15–16	Commemoration of the Grivita strike
February 23	Red Army Day
March 6	Anniversary of one year of Groza's government
March 8	Women's Day
March 15	Commemoration of the 1848 Revolution
May 1	Fighting for Democracy Day
May 10	National holiday, the demonstration of workers' unity
August 23	Soviet–Romanian armistice ¹⁰
September 1	Anniversary of two years of activity of the United Unions
September 8	Commemoration of the “manisti” (right-wing group) attack against the communists
October 20	ARLUS festival
November 7	Commemoration of the Soviet Revolution
December 13	The struggle of the typography workers, Ana Pauker's birthday ¹¹
December 21	Stalin's birthday

The table includes only the festivals with a public character, involving mass rallies and qualifying as official public rituals. The spectrum of festive manifestations was much wider, including the “tenth anniversary of the release of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the Soviet Union’s short history course,” set up by intense propaganda and reported as a real success: “We have mobilized for this celebration a great number of participants.”¹² Complementary to these highly political public rituals there were held religious processions, dance evenings, club meetings and not least, numerous sporting events, along with communist activists valuing and exploiting the mobilizing resources of these manifestations.

Festivals, as a means of cultural management, are influenced by the behavioral dimension of ideology, as a way to change deep-seated moral orientations, “fixed by habit, custom and, often, by an older form of the ritual.”¹³ Therefore the planning and the thorough organization of the rituals were largely described in the minutes of Party meetings. The importance of ritual can be quantified according to the following indicators: the number of days that the organizing committee had at its disposal (the importance of the event being proportional to the number of days), the status and position in the Party of the involved members, the elaborateness of the plan, and so on. However, as is clear from the minutes and newspaper articles, the most important indicator of success was the number of participants.

The attraction of the possibility of acceding to the sacred realm, a possibility granted by public rituals, was maintained by the new hegemonic force. The traditional structure of the festivals in this period was synchronized with the newly instituted message and symbolic order. Thus, as was the tradition, the ritual cycle of a festival was inaugurated by a fanfare in the early morning, followed by a religious service in one or more churches, a parade on the locality’s main street towards the central stage, speeches and the laying of wreaths on a monument. This official part was usually followed by the popular, joyful carnival, and dancing and sporting

events. The national holidays were not yet secularized, and thus the focus of ritual was on the religious service. The concept of festival was so deeply rooted in the moment of divine invocation in the collective mentalities that even the most secular festivals (such as May 1) were centered on religious rites conducted by a priest.¹⁴

“Democratic forces” restructured the festival’s scenario following the Soviet model. Accordingly, the religious processions metamorphosed into “workers’ demonstrations,” but without altering the functions integrating individuals into larger social units, setting up the framework in which individuals could connect themselves to new identity structures. The inherent standardization and conformism of the ritual act and the largely related intentionality of the organizers make any holistic presentation of the festivals futile and lacking in analytic gains. Therefore in the following we will focus our attention on the festivals’ “small deficiencies.” Katherine Verdery, in her seminal book on Romanian national communism, considers the regime’s legitimacy as resulting from “the non-organization of an effective counter-image.”¹⁵ This does not presuppose the consent of the whole population, but the assent of part of the population and the lack of any alternative image backed by social forces in the discursive competition characteristic of the late 1940s. This period offers the advantages of accessible documentation: in the minutes of the meetings the inconsistencies and organizational shortages were (still) also pointed out.

The concern of the organizers was not only to professionally plan the technical aspects of the festivals, but also to counteract possibly occurring manifestations deviating from the elaborated scenario.¹⁶ Since every official public ritual is a test of legitimacy, being considered as an epiphany of abstract entities, the *face* of the Power, the risk for the symbolic economy of the organizers was substantial. Consequently, the commemoration of the 1848 Hungarian Revolution, for the first time organized by the Romanian Workers’ Party in 1948, was a true test of organizational capacity: two delegates of the Central Committee and the secretary of the county organization were present at the planning workshop. The

meticulous delegation of responsibilities for each moment of the public ritual included people in charge of the mobilization of units from the territory, activists in charge of placards, those writing slogans, those writing the guests' names, those in charge of watching the stairs leading to the main stage, and those in charge of the children who were to give flowers.¹⁷ Organizational efforts paid off, the commemoration was held without major incidents, and the participation was "significant." Precisely how significant one cannot tell, because while the Propaganda Department reported 7,000 participants, the Organizational Department reported no more than 4,500.

Organizational efforts were not the sole guarantee of success of the public rituals in a society where social control was not consolidated, due to its unknown variable: the voluntarism of public attendance. A lesson in humility was given by the proletariat itself, the "catalytic agent" of changes. In 1946, the Local Committee of the Unions planned a mass rally to mark two years of its existence on September 1. The declared aim was to make use of the "primary demonstrative character" of the public ritual, in order to "symbolize the workers' willpower."¹⁸ However, at 10 o'clock there were 12 workers from the cigarette factory and 40 from the textile factory, when the number of union members in Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfântu Gheorghe) exceeded 2,000. The president of the Union Council of Covasna, Viktor Nagy, refused to march through the city with a handful of workers. Finally, the "festive" meeting was held in the Union's building. In their search for an explanation for the failure, the RCP was criticized for the promised but not delivered organizational support. Therefore there are two conclusions to be drawn from this failed festival. On the one hand, this sheds light on the real power that the RCP had in the county, and on the other hand, there are signs of tensions between the RCP and the Union, and between the Union and its members. The Union-workers conflict had many phases the leaders of the Union were constantly changed, and leaders complained because of maltreatment, mockery and verbal abuse, and refused the nomination for a new candidacy. Hobsbawm asserts

that if invented traditions lacked popular resonance then they failed to mobilize citizens to volunteer.¹⁹ In consonance with the imperative “new times – new heroes,” and giving a human face to the new set of ideological values, there were steps taken towards the construction of a myth-biography. The life and death of Mihály Lázár met the requirements for him to become the new hero, a mythological person with integrative effects on the newly constructed identity. Worker, communist, arrested for Party activity by the Hungarian authorities and beaten to death on June 23, 1941 – these were the foundational elements of the process of myth construction taken later on. On February 12, 1945, during the symbolic restructuring of public space in the city, a downtown street was named after the hero. On July 16, 1945, the local newspaper *Szabadság* narrated the commemoration of Mihály Lázár’s martyrdom, the local Communist Party started a fundraising campaign in order to erect a statue, and a poem was written on the topic. However, the cult of the new hero after this promising start progressively declined and vanished.

The local Party elite belonged to a small social network. The frequent changes of leadership in the local communist organization and in the affiliated organizations reflect the rotation of cadres belonging to the same ethnic community and sharing a sense of local solidarity. Accordingly, the local SDP leaders blamed the new secretary of the local RCP, who originated from a different county, for the misunderstandings and tensions between the two political parties.²⁰ This structure of the leadership, along with the role as a political leading force of the RCP in this structure, projected the new political culture *in statu nascendi*: that of elitism in the administration of society.

The language in which the speeches were given was a continuous preoccupation of the organizers. In some cases the orators reflected on this aspect of the festive act, for example during the celebration of administrative reunification of the territory of Hidvég (Hăghig) village, after the nullification of the second Vienna dictate on May 29, 1945. The president of the Union, Viktor Nagy, later on the prefect of the county, drew the attention of the participants to

the fact that, even though he was Hungarian, he would deliver his festive discourse in Romanian as a sign of his commitment to the idea of brotherhood and cooperation between the two nations.²¹ The language of minorities was a serious impediment to the process of organizing the local Party units (cells), as well as imposing uniformity and control over their activity. When local organizations had to delegate representatives to higher forums, the candidate's ability to speak Romanian was always an issue. If someone refused the candidacy because of the lack of language skills, a second delegate was nominated to interpret for him.²² Therefore courses for Party activists were organized, and after their return, the minutes of the meetings reflected not only their language improvement but also uniformity in ideas and expressions, reconfiguring language into the "wooden language" of the regime.²³

The language of discourses imposes a vision of a divided and irreconcilable world. This Manichaeian view is on the one hand an inexhaustible source of metaphors and stereotypes, while on the other hand, in the given historical context, it shape a complex field of interpretation and horizon of expectations. One of the most frequently used slogans in different channels of communication is "Hungarian brother! The People's Unity is fighting for You!"²⁴ The linguistic construction bears the marks of the "wooden language" identified by Françoise Thom, but arguably the semantic register is not exhausted by considering it to be nothing more than an ideological vehicle. The message has a double semantic realm. First, "brother" was the term used in the *frontist* period for constructing the identity of the "democratic forces," and thus appealed to a socio-political explanatory paradigm, transgressing the national-ethnic taxonomy. By means of this, it created a sense of solidarity and of belonging to an effectively imagined group of democratic forces. The "fight" was waged against the Other, identified most often with "reactionaries" but also with "chauvinists" and "fascists." Secondly, somehow paradoxically, the "brother" was also Hungarian, an *exclusive* category, non-Hungarians (which is to say Romanians) being excluded from this social group. But it was also

inclusive, by projecting a sense of social solidarity onto the entire ethnic community. This image of an inherently democratic ethnic community was a recurring topic of the discourses given by the leaders of the Hungarian People's Union, in their effort to negotiate the best possible status for the Hungarian minority, but also in the minutes of the RCP and other organizations. In a January 24, 1945, report sent to the Organizational Committee of the United Union Movement (*Mișcarea Sindicală Unită*) by the union organization from Kézdivásárhely (Târgu Secuiesc), the author describes the achievements of the democratic organization as being blocked by the entrance of the "chauvinist Romanian authorities" in the city. The democratic transformation was completed after the expulsion of the Romanian authorities by the Soviet Commandment, in just two weeks, because "Hungarians are democratic in nature."²⁵ In a few months, the proletariat of this small town reached communism – according to the image from the cited minutes, an example of assimilating the reality to the ideological projection.

"Brotherhood" and "cooperation" were two adjacent conceptions, parts of a polysemous construction with a fuzzy and general denotation. Accordingly, the role of justice was nothing but the "consolidation of cooperation between different nations."²⁶ Imposing the language clichés, as in the case of the use of "brother," took time. In the first year of "democracy" even in the minutes of the RCP the term "Mister" often appears.²⁷ The linguistic inventions were not automatically embraced; the linguistic *update* was made in the meetings and recorded in the minutes. Thus we know that with the transformation of the Progressive Youth into Communist Youth in Uzon (Ozun) village, they would not address each other as "brothers" but "comrades" from August 28, 1945, onwards.²⁸ In the same manner, comrade Lajcsák drew the attention of the participants at the meeting of the Workers' Unique Front that, in line with Party directives, the term "peasant" would no longer be used, but rather "agricultural worker" would be.²⁹ However, the one of the best illustration of the ritual function of language is the speech given by Colonel Saiev on the celebration of the national holiday in

1945. The discourse was cheered by the participants, even though Colonel Saiev spoke in Russian...

The symbolic activities of the rituals were situated in a limited semantic range. In addition to the aforementioned acts of public ritual, a symbolic battle was waged against the use of national symbols. At first, the use of national symbols was not perceived as a threat by the organizers. In the minutes of the work meeting dedicated to analyzing the causes of the August 23 commemoration fiasco in 1945, there was mentioned the "rumor" spread by reactionaries that the use of national flags was to be forbidden.³⁰ However, less than a year afterwards, those who placed the national flag on the railway carriage on May 1 were labeled as "provocateurs," "manists," and "chauvinists."³¹ The waving of national flags at the grand meeting where Petru Groza handed over the new propriety titles was evaluated by the organizers (more than 500!) as "lack of vigilance."³²

Apart from national symbols and the deeply rooted aspects of collective mentalities that they stand for, the variety of alternative competing images on society to those projected by the official public rituals is much wider. The counter-images were constructed and disseminated in public space in a way generally labeled as "rumors." Festivals concentrate the manifestations of rumors around them by creating a symbolic discursive framework. People's attention is focused on realms of communication separated from the quotidian, and thus, arguably, public rituals generate counter-images. In other words, the communicational patterns of festivals and of rumors are identical. The very existence of these symbolic disapprovals was perceived by the organizers as a real threat to the participants' adhesion to the rites. The values and norms projected by the festivals and the identification with these projections, as well as the mythological nature of the ritual communication, claim interpretative hegemony. The projection of the counter-images by rumors questions this hegemony. These images tend to have a powerful messianic and religious feature, to be a mythic projection rooted in the collective mentalities. One of the most powerful was

the “Americans are coming” myth, often influencing extreme social actions, as was the case with the armed anti-communist resistance.³³ These mythical projections, even though they sometimes had contradictory content, all had the same end: an alternative perception of reality. The offensive against rumors began in early 1945 with newspaper propaganda, interestingly enough, not by deconstructing them, but entering the logic imposed by these mythic projections and making reference to a traditional set of values, such as *good will* and *honesty*.

Rumors of “irredentism” were numerous and long-lasting, due to their mobilizing effect on collective mentalities. In 1948, the Propaganda Department reports the successful mission of annihilating the rumor of the break-up of Romania, the annexation of Transylvania to Hungary and of the rest of Romania to the Soviet Union. The force of these images is argued by the subsequent consequences: the peasants from Kézdivásárhely (Târgu Secuiesc) and Barót (Baraolt) delayed the harvest, while people from one village (Páva) started to stock petrol, because this product was hard to find in Hungary.³⁴ The fear of closing the churches generated mass psychosis in more than one case: people came out of the church crying because by the following Sunday the church was going to be destroyed. Unsurprisingly, the regime took severe measures against those who were identified as spreading rumors.

Consequently, the collective mentalities were structured by two dynamic vectors that were in discursive competition. On the one hand, there was a socially constructed image of reality and a horizon of expectation projected by the ritualized official festivals, with a polymorphous symbolic realm. On the other hand, there were the counter-images that were projected in the very same discursive system, but not as parts of the official discourse, which had subversive forms of manifestation for the enforced symbolic order. The huge number of festivals celebrated in the period 1944–1948 indicates the symbolic struggle characteristic of times of crisis. The lack of an order established by a set of values grounded by social practice generates dynamic representations and overvalue concepts

in a Manichaeic and messianic interpretative system. Thinking about legitimacy, social control and cultural management always presupposes a view that is inherently of those who are in charge. This paper argues that collective mentalities are not accessible from just one analytic direction. The paper is an analysis of festivals and celebration in a period when communism was the *agenda-setter* in different domains of society. Festivals are regarded as ritualized acts of political socialization often denoted in the scholarship by the term “calendric public ritual”. The concept of rite/ritual is employed as meaning a culturally standardized repetitive social activity, symbolic in nature and performed with an influence on human behavior. The interpretation of festivals is structured by the analysis of the content and forms of manifestation and of deployed symbols, and the systemic framework of interpretation is established by the typology of the festivals. We consider the meaning of a symbol, of a representation constructed by the festival, as an outcome of the relationship between a distinct representation and the full spectrum of the ritualized public representations of a society. Whereas most of the scholarship on collective memory and mentalities chooses to follow the facile mode of doing history by describing the symbolic apparatus and the constructed representations, thus ignoring the problem of reception, this research aims to address this issue by considering the intertwined nature of meaning structured by the semantic field of symbols.

Notes

- 1 *Recensământul General al Populaţiei României din 29 decembrie 1930* [The Census of Romania’s Population on December 29, 1930], (Bucharest, 1938), p. lx.
- 2 See the issues of the *Szabadság* [Liberty] newspaper from 1945.
- 3 The soldier of the Romanian Army who was accused of participating in the murders at Szárazajta (Aita Seacă) village, and twice brought in front of villagers who confirmed his innocence. ANJC [The National Archives of Covasna County], Comitetul Judeţean PCR Covasna

- [The Covasna County Committee of the Romanian Communist Party], 562, File No. 1/1945, p.44.
- 4 For a detailed presentation, see László Bányai *et al.* eds., *Calendarul UPM* [Hungarian People's Union Yearbook], (Cluj, 1946), and the book published by the same author László Bányai, *Közös sors – testvéri hagyományok* [Common Faith – Brotherly Tradition] (Bucharest, 1973).
 - 5 *Népi Egység* [People's Unity], Sfântu Gheorghe, March 15, 1947.
 - 6 *Szabadság*, Sfântu Gheorghe, June 11, 1945.
 - 7 ANJC, 562, File No. 4/1948, p. 18.
 - 8 Vasile Luca/László Luka was born in Covasna County.
 - 9 ANJC, 561, File No. 3/1947, p. 1.
 - 10 The armistice was signed on September 12, 1944.
 - 11 Even though Ana Pauker was born on February 13.
 - 12 ANJC, 561, File No. 4/1948, p. 79.
 - 13 Christel Lane, *The Rites of Rulers, Ritual in Industrial Society – The Soviet Case* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 2.
 - 14 See the scenario of the May 1 festival from Kőkös (Chichis). ANJC, 562, File No. 1/1946, p. 4.
 - 15 Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley, CA, Los Angeles, CA, and London, 1995), p. 10.
 - 16 ANJC, 562, File No. 4/1946, p. 1.
 - 17 ANJC, 562, File No. 1/1948, p. 58.
 - 18 ANJC, 561, File No. 2/1946, p. 19.
 - 19 Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870–1914," in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Rangers, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 263.
 - 20 ANJC, 552, File No. 5/1946, p. 10.
 - 21 *Szabadság*, June 3, 1945, p. 2.
 - 22 ANJC, 561, File nr 2/1946, p. 11.
 - 23 Francoise Thom, *Limba de lemn* [Wooden Language] (Bucharest, 2005), p. 85.
 - 24 *Népi Egység*, January 27, 1947.
 - 25 ANJC, 561, File No. 1/1945, p. 1.
 - 26 Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, in a speech given during his visit to the county.
 - 27 *Szabadság*, June 11, 1945.
 - 28 ANJC, 562, File No. 4/1946, p. 93.

- 29 ANJC, 552, File No. 3/1945, p. 4.
- 30 ANJC, 552, File No. 8/1947, p. 20.
- 31 ANJC, 562, File No. 1/1945, p. 74.
- 32 ANJC, 562, File No. 4/1946, p. 4.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 93.
- 34 For a thorough presentation, see Doru Radosav, “Rezistența anticomunistă armată din România între istorie și memorie” [Anticommunist Resistance in Romania between History and Memory], in Ruxandra Cesereanu, ed., *Comunism și represiune în România. Istoria tematică a unui fratricid național* [Communism and Repression in Romania. The Thematic History of a National Fratricide] (Iași, 2006), pp.82–99.

Gábor Győrffy

**THE ANATOMY OF CONVICTION.
THE STATE SOCIALIST PRESS PROPAGANDA
IN ROMANIA (1944–1953)**

Historical Background

The coup of August 23, 1944, against the pro-Nazi dictatorship of Ion Antonescu (1882–1946) changed the course of Romanian history. The actual consequence of the coup was unconditional surrender to the Soviet Union, which succeeded in incorporating the country into its sphere of influence and gaining control, in fact, over a European region that later came to be known as the Socialist Bloc. As for Transylvania, which was at that time divided between Hungary and Romania, the Armistice Agreement signed with the Allies on September 12, 1944, annulled the borders drawn according to the Second Vienna Award in August 1940, and stipulated that the whole of Transylvania – or at least the bulk of it – would be annexed to Romania, referring the delimitation of the frontiers to the competence of the peace treaty negotiations to be held in the post-war years. In this way, the provisional situation of Transylvania was a good opportunity for the Soviet Union to intervene in the internal power struggle in Romania. However, the rise of the Communist Party was facilitated by several other factors, such as the presence of Soviet troops in the country and violent propaganda against the interwar historical parties.¹

In Romania, as in most countries of the Socialist Bloc, the Communist forces seized absolute power through a gradual process that lasted up to 1948. The first Communist-dominated cabinet was installed on March 6, 1945, with Petru Groza (1884–1958) as prime minister. For a brief period the historical parties were represented in the government, but their presence was a major obstacle on the Romanian Communist Party's (RCP) road to absolute power. The

first victims were the influential National Peasant and National Liberal Parties, which were dissolved by decree in the summer of 1947. A couple of months later, the Romanian Social Democratic Party was forcibly unified with the RCP, forming the Romanian Workers' Party (RWP). The final act was the forced abdication of King Michael (b. 1921), under the threat of civil war, on December 30, 1947.²

After seizing political power, the RCP moved to obtain control over the economy, putting into action a plan to nationalize industrial, banking, insurance, mining and transport enterprises. The long-term aim of the Communists was to preserve power by transforming Romania according to the Soviet model and employing Stalinist norms and practices.

The Hungarian minority of Transylvania numbered about 1.5 million people, representing 7.5 percent of the entire population of Romania.³ As for its main political organization, the Hungarian Popular Union (MNSZ), established in October 1944 as the successor to the interwar organization, the National Union of Hungarian Workers in Romania (MADOSZ), it was controlled by Hungarian intellectuals loyal to the RCP. In this way, the Union failed to fulfill its task as the protector of the interests of Hungarians living in Romania.

The policy towards the Hungarian minority gradually changed in the period between 1944 and 1953. After signing the Paris Peace Treaty in 1947, which decreed the annexation of the whole of Transylvania to Romania, the Communist leaders were no longer interested in keeping their promises regarding the rights of Hungarians and started to take more and more aggressive steps towards assimilating the minority. After 1948, the MNSZ became wholly subordinated to the policy of the RWP, from both the political and the cultural point of view: in fact it became a "political jumping jack" that transmitted the Party ideology to the mass of workers.

The enforcement of Stalinist minority policy culminated in the creation of the Hungarian Autonomous Region in 1952, which incorporated approximately one third of the minority population,

in the Székelyföld (Szekler Land) region preponderantly inhabited by Hungarians. The measure was intended mainly to divide the Hungarian elites and was a means of politically and socially integrating the minority by concentrating the cultural and educational institutions inside the region.⁴ In the following year the Communist leaders decided to dissolve the MNSZ, which had become useless in fulfilling its role of integrating the Hungarian community.

The year 1953 can be regarded as a turning point in the history of Romanian Communism. Firstly, it is the year of Josif Vissarionovich Stalin's death (secretary-general of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union between 1922 and 1953), which can be considered – although destalinization was barely perceptible in the Romanian policy – to be a landmark from the point of view of coordination strategies used in the Socialist Bloc. Secondly, the period between 1944 and 1953 was the era when Stalinist methods of political and social control were implemented.⁵ At the end of the period, in 1953, the Romanian public sphere had already been transformed into a system that would endure, with certain modifications, until 1989. Thirdly, with regard to the Hungarian community in Transylvania, it was the end of the period of active minority policy, reflected also in the statement of the secretary-general of the RWP, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (1901–1965), announcing that the problem of nationalities had been definitely solved in Romania.⁶ The so-called “solution” was in fact the beginning of an aggressive policy of assimilation that would last up until to the end of the Communist era.

State Socialist Propaganda

The ideologists of the Communist regimes that were installed after the Second World War were aware that as an indispensable condition of consolidating power they had to modify the worldview of the masses. To this end they continuously honed the efficacy of Party propaganda and the methods of influencing individual and collective consciousness.⁷ The organs of propaganda unfolded along

the structure of the Party apparatus, determining the truths valid at the given time and the only correct ideological criteria.

The state socialist regimes based their right to exist and historical mission on Marxist-Leninist philosophy. The revolutionary nature of the theory could be seen in the fact that it strove not only to correctly explain the world but also to change it. As a result, the political forces acting in its name actively sought to participate in the formation of socialist society.⁸

According to Marx's theory, history is the realization of a large-scale metaphysical plan: after a series of class struggles, the dictatorship of the proletariat – that is, a transitional phase – necessarily follows along the path leading to Communist society. From this stemmed the belief that the socialist system in every area was superior to the capitalist system.

The Communist press in Romania that was reviving in the period after August 1944 presented the theses of Marxist-Leninist ideology as an unquestionable truth, which resulted in a new view of history as well. Accordingly, the Communist takeover of power was articulated as the will of the entire Romanian people, which could be realized through the decades-long heroic battle of the Party. Historical events gained new interpretations according to the regime's ideology and supported the necessity of the victory of socialism. The historical myths of the Romanian peoples were meant to prove the only possibility of development: the formation of Communist society.

In order to form the belief in socialism, the regime attempted to transform society's system of values and beliefs by violent means. The reeducation of the masses and the reshaping of consciousness, however, could still not take place unimpeded. The liquidation of private property, for example, raised scores of problems in Romania during the collectivization of agriculture. The anti-religious campaigns likewise caused numerous conflicts across the country, since the traditional denominational life and religious feeling remained a very strong spiritual support for people during the time of Communism as well. Since divine faith contradicted the

materialist foundations of the official ideology, and it prevented the complete control of society, the regime continuously attempted to reduce the influence of the Churches.⁹

In addition to rewriting the past, propaganda formed the image of the future as well. Communist society appeared as the “promised land,” where social inequality would cease to exist, and where all the injustices of history would be made right. The Party turned to society in the service of this mystic promise, formed loyalty towards itself and called the masses to battle in the interests of attaining the common goal. The fundamental truths spread by propaganda were freed from any rational control whatsoever precisely because these were articulated in the form of prophecies, and thus they evaded immediate validation. Faith was fed by the attractively illusory character of the pronouncements, and thus instead of rational persuasion propaganda was based rather on mystical-emotional influences similar to religious beliefs.

According to the theory of the cultural approach to communication, the media is not primarily the means of delivering information, but rather a medium where a worldview is presented or reinforced in us. The media in this sense is the means of event- and value-representation, a kind of common schema for reinterpreting the world. The communicative form of possessing power at the same time can be linked to the fact that the Communist regime expropriated the narrative about the interpretation of the world and supplied it with an integrative function while eliminating the right of the alternative narratives to exist.¹⁰

Ideology and the propaganda attached to it thus became an organic part of the functioning of the Communist system. The effectiveness of the normative messages, which could not be subjected to empirical control, ensured the model of public communication that from the viewpoint of power was indispensable for creating social cohesion. Social rituals appeared in secularized form and nurtured loyalty towards the Party. The communicative model at the same time ruled out rational debate and became the means of possessing the official articles of faith. The possibilities

of an objective interpretation of reality and truth thus ceased: the facts existed only in the form in which the regime allowed them to exist.¹¹

Following Jacques Ellul's categorization, within the Communist system, too, one may distinguish between agitation propaganda and integration propaganda. Agitation propaganda is characteristic of conflict situations, and its goal is to incite dissatisfaction, and thus prompt a community to action: then the community in turn moves against a given social group or system. Agitation propaganda in Romania was a characteristic of the first period of the takeover of power (1944–1948), and its role was the reduction in the influence, and ultimately the liquidation, of alternative power centers outside the Communist Party (political parties, social organizations, Churches, private economic enterprises, and so on). By contrast, integration propaganda follows the opposite purpose: the formation of loyalty towards the given – in our case the Communist – structure, and in the long term the complete homogenization of society. A frequent method of this is rationalization of the prevailing state of affairs: that is, its presentation as part of a historical process, which had evolved out of necessity, and the final result of which is historically determined.¹² Specifically, economic propaganda, through the continuously increasing indicators of the national economy, was intended to prove the validity of the doctrine.

The Means of Party Propaganda

In the years after the Second World War the written press filled one of the most important roles in the spread of Party propaganda. Following the multiplication of Communist-oriented papers and increase in their print runs the voice of the Party could reach a significant proportion of the population. The political programmatic articles published by the professional ideologues became compulsory study materials for the Party activists, who received guidance in their work through the press.

Following Romania's defection to the side of the Allied Powers in August 1944, the Communist publications banned in Romania between the two world wars could now appear under legal circumstances: first *România Liberă* on August 24, and then the central Party organ, *Scânteia*, on September 21. The Communist papers in Romania shaped their profile and content according to the traditions of the Bolshevik press. The example to be followed was the Soviet *Pravda*, the announced goal of which was to "guard the interests of labor," to become a true weapon in the hands of the Communist Party, and to spread revolutionary ideology in the broader and broader strata of society. Simultaneously with the consolidation of the Communist Party's power, the paper's circulation also increased continuously: it appeared in 60,000 copies in 1945, in half a million copies in 1948, and in 770,000 copies by 1950.¹³

At first, however, the editorial offices of the rural Communist papers struggled with a lack of professionals. At the conference of the RCP Department of Propaganda and Agitation in January 1945 the representatives of the publications present complained that the majority of trained journalists worked in the press of the Peasant and Liberal Parties, and in addition the "cadres" available to them were not politically knowledgeable, and nor did they know the methods of propaganda. For this reason they submitted the proposal that *Scânteia* should organize two-week or three-week courses for rural journalists.¹⁴

From the autumn of 1944 onwards, the direction of press propaganda was overseen by the RCP Department of Propaganda and Agitation, which within a couple of months became one of the crucial departments in the Party's structure. The Ministry of Propaganda set up within the framework of the Groza government in the spring of 1945 also undertook a significant role in the spread of official ideology.¹⁵

In the changed political situation the entire Transylvanian Hungarian press system went through a substantial transformation in the autumn of 1944. The majority of political publications left in

circulation by the Germans ceased, and in their place only papers supported by the left-wing parties as well as the Hungarian Popular Union (*Magyar Népi Szövetség*) that joined them could appear. It is a characteristic feature of the period between 1944 and 1947 that the newly launched papers, which appeared as independent publications but in reality fell under the authority of the Hungarian Popular Union, within a short time came to be owned nominally as well by the MNSZ, and in certain cases indirectly or directly by the Communist Party.

At the same time the Party also needed a Hungarian-language, easily controllable central organ to spread the official ideology according to the guidelines of *Scânteia* and to serve as a direct example for the local Hungarian-language papers. From the beginning the task of the *Romániai Magyar Szó* appearing on September 1, 1947, was to spread the Party propaganda published by *Scânteia* in the Hungarian language. For this reason, compared to the local newspapers it devoted greater space to printing Party documents, reporting on the Party's conferences and congresses, informing its readership "about the results of socialist building" countrywide, and mobilizing people to fulfill the current political and economic tasks. Its ideological fundamental articles in many cases were translations of writings that appeared in the Romanian central Party paper, while its political stances strictly followed the tone of *Scânteia*. Over time the central papers provided guidelines for the local press, too: in the 1950s concrete instructions now stipulated that when presenting significant national and international events the local papers had to follow, above all, the positions of *Scânteia* and *România Liberă*.¹⁶

Agitation Propaganda Campaigns

After the Communist Party had realized the political and economic transformations characteristic of the first stage of socialist construction (meaning that it had actually taken over political power), Marxism-Leninism became the ruling ideology of the new

regime, which expressed – so to speak – the interests and aspirations of not only the working class but also the entire nation.¹⁷ At the same time obtaining political and economic power was not enough – it was necessary to continuously hold on to it as well. For this reason groups taking a stance contrary to that of the Communist Party were featured in Communist propaganda not as the representatives of the political alternative but rather as the enemies of societal development, the spokesmen for the internal and external class enemy representing the spirit of Evil.

Agitation propaganda between 1944 and 1953 was characterized by a dual division of the world, which came into being according to the categories of Good and Evil, possessing mystical power: the political press campaigns depicted the battleground of progressive and reactionary forces, bourgeois and proletarians, people's democracies and imperialist powers, peace camp and warmongers. The corresponding depiction of society was canonized by the end of the 1940s – although, true, during subsequent political and ideological shifts those directing propaganda nuanced it somewhat.¹⁸

The acceptance of the given value system depends on the extent of participation and identification, in a narrative that portrays the arena of dramatic forces, and places this normative dimension in the center of the discourse.¹⁹ The myths of Good and Evil appeared as all-encompassing categories in Communist discourse. The goal of the propaganda was to present these categories with such convincing force that they would become transformed into unquestionable truths in the public's perception: that is to say that the rational assessment of them would cease. The function of creating a value system thus depended not on the truth value of the message, but rather the type of communication. In this sense, news became the medium not of communicating what was relevant but rather of shaping what was believable.

Because according to the theoreticians the victory of popular democracy is a necessity of historical development, anyone who did not join the new social order unconditionally could be charged with being a reactionary. Consequently, reaction acting against socialist

power, or against the people identified with the power, became a collective concept into which the Party filling the leading role merged all its opponents. In the period between 1945 and 1948, the attacks on the historical Romanian parties, the purge demanded in the traditional Hungarian institutions, and the anti-Church campaigns were conducted under the same slogan: the struggle against reaction.

Beginning in the spring of 1947, in the Communist press numerous oracular signs now indicated that the Hungarians must relinquish the hopes that they had placed in the people's democracy. Adapting to the Cold War mood *Scânteia* linked the aspirations of the Transylvanian Hungarians to the influence of international reaction: "The problem facing Romanian and Hungarian democracy is to liquidate the remnants of the fascist and reactionary cliques, those elements that continue to incite chauvinism and serve the interests of the international reactionary groups preparing for a new world conflagration."²⁰ The frontal assault directed against the Hungarians' institutions was launched by László Luka (1898–1963), a leading Party activist, on the pages of the Kolozsvár daily *Igazság*, with his article entitled "The Path of the Hungarians of Romania" ("A romániai magyarság útja").²¹ His tirade against the "unprincipled Hungarian unity" was directed against the autonomous Hungarian system of institutions, where according to the author "soul-poisoning intrigues" were underway in the interests of pitting the Hungarians against the Communist Party and democracy.

After the beginning of the period of the Cold War, with the Iron Curtain descending between the socialist and capitalist camps beginning in 1947, unmistakable modifications occurred in the official ideology. The image of the enemy became fixed in the masses during the campaigns against foreign reaction, imperialism, cosmopolitanism and Zionism. The concepts of reaction and imperialism were from the very beginning closely interconnected: American "expansionist policy" was connected to the retrograde forces preventing socialist development.

Communist propaganda employed unique methods for the sake of influencing the popular masses: the press condemns facts, but does not acquaint the reader with the precise content of these, and the reader has no opportunity to become informed from another source on the given topic. In such a way negative propaganda precedes and/or replaces reporting, while the stating of opinion replaces the objective reporting of facts. About the Marshall Plan for the economic assistance of Europe, for example, no concrete information appears, and all we can learn of it from the press is that it is a means to the economic subjugation of European countries, and so a further manifestation of American imperialism. In the Communist press only the voices serving the aims of the regime may speak. The position of *Pravda* or Radio Moscow appears in every case as a truth of general validity.²² In other cases the press no longer even names its sources but instead cites the voice of “democratic public opinion.”²³

The concept of Titoist deviation became part of the ideological discourse in the summer of 1948, as proof of the Yugoslav Communist Party’s “anti-Soviet policy.” The value judgments were buttressed by Marxist-Leninist ideology, which articulated conflicts that evolved out of necessity in the course of history, and proclaimed the triumph of the forces of Good. The prominent targets of the campaign were counties inhabited by a Serbian minority located along the Yugoslav border. The publishing house of the Romanian Workers’ Party published Serbian-language propaganda materials; likewise serving the anti-Tito campaign in this period were the Serbian-language edition of *The Agitator’s Pocket Guide* and the newspaper *Pravda*, appearing in Temesvár (Timișoara) in runs of 5,000 copies.²⁴

Under the battle fought against foreign reaction in alliance with imperialism from 1947 onwards the elimination of the influence of the “Vatican in the service of imperialism” served as a pretext for the campaigns fought against the Catholic Churches. The liquidation of political enemies was justified by the activity of international imperialism and the treasonous right-wing social democracy.

The contrastive presentation of the socialist and capitalist systems strengthened the favoring of socialism. From the elements of reality presented there implicitly followed certain ideological basic theses, which through constant repetition became fixed in the reader's subconscious. According to these, socialism provides a greater degree of welfare and freedom to the members of society than the capitalist system does. Moreover, socialism is the guarantee of peace, since it had established the new system of friendship and cooperation among the peoples, while the capitalist world was characterized by continuous conflicts, and therefore by its very essence provoked wars. It was the latter thesis that established the myth of the "peace struggle," which from the late 1940s onwards was built into the official propaganda, and remained a part of it right until the fall of the Communist system.

The establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1949 signaled that the antagonism between the socialist and capitalist blocs was heading towards military confrontation. In the area of the peace struggle, continuous agitation activity took place from the late 1940s onwards. The publishing house of the RWP printed 100,000 leaflets and prepared 60,000 envelopes containing various brochures in 1950 for the plants and the "socialist sector of agriculture." The role of the "peace committees" established in the plants, factories and institutions was in fact to provide an organized framework for agitation to unmask elements regarded as anti-regime and labeled as "warmongers."²⁵

The concretization of the enemy threatening socialist society and revolutionary transformation was depicted in the late 1940s by those show trials that through the inclusion of the public became veritable public events.²⁶ A recurring motif of the court trials depicted in the press was the conspiracy against the socialist system organized by the "imperialist" (or its variants: "Titoist" or "Zionist") circles. In the period of campaigns waged against the various ideological deviations the high-ranking persons placed in the dock personified the very ideal of the enemy. According to the press, the conspirators never acted out of their own convictions – they were

always misled or had been used for the purposes of the enemy. The unmasking of the enemy symbolized the victory of Good in a battle fought with Evil, as part of a narrative that depicted a sort of symbolic rite of purification and aroused a sense of security in the masses: the Party-led working class was capable of neutralizing the conspiracy, the enemies of socialism and the betrayers of the nation. At the same time the method of depiction symbolically divided the world, making the separation of the categories of Good and Evil tangible for society.²⁷

This was then followed by the moment when letters and reports demanding that an example be made of the imperialist henchmen appeared in the press. The assembling of articles reflecting the opinion of simple people aimed at homogenizing public opinion and prepared the final psychological moment: the pronouncement of the sentence, which likewise took place in the name of the people. With this, the propaganda exerted not only a cognitive but also a psychological effect, since it gave the impression that those who held a different position were against the whole of society.²⁸ The authenticity of the campaigns was supported solely by the premise of unmasking and the continuity of the story construed. At the same time the proclaimed slogan concentrated the ideal into a single slogan and articulated the message in a generally comprehensible manner.²⁹

The Guidelines of Integration Propaganda

Integration propaganda created a perfect harmony between ideology and reality, which naturally defined the image of the future. Taking into account the fact that the ideology was already given, to create the harmony reality had to be altered accordingly. Its distorted presentation was determined by the peculiar logic of the propaganda, which in every area proclaimed the superiority of the socialist system over the capitalist system. The press buttressed this fact, accepted as a fundamental truth, with information collected from the most varied areas and presented with bias. The mechanism

formed a false image of social, economic and political reality in the recipient, whose consciousness rejected this, yet through collective manipulation on the subconscious level nevertheless accepted it.

Integration propaganda attempted to engrain in the people's consciousness the image of the world derived from the theoretical system of socialist ideology, and with this it followed the goal of forming loyalty towards the system. During the spread of political and economic propaganda for this reason the Communist regime made its own terminology, criteria and interpretations compulsory, as the one and only possible mode of portraying the world.

The complete control of public communication provided the regime with an opportunity to launch the process of indoctrination, which designated a single possible path, a single valid reality for the masses: the reality of the system's consistency.³⁰ Propaganda unfolded along the unconditional faith in the historic mission of the Party, and thereby became the mouthpiece of the official ideology. Accordingly, it was the task of the Communist Party that had come to power to make right the injustices of history and establish the perfect society.

The spread of ideology in the period between 1944 and 1953 proceeded with increased planning, and assumed ever more aggressive forms. Beginning in the late 1940s the spread of Communist ideology extended to every area: loudspeakers were installed in the factories, the collective reading and debating of the lead articles in *Scânteia* were made compulsory, wall newspapers were established, and agitation brigades were set up in every industrial unit. In the factories and construction sites, and during the completion of agricultural work, culture brigades performing propaganda-type programs appeared on stage.

Guidelines regarding the duties of the press were determined by the Party's ideologists depending on the current political situation. For all press publications, the lead articles of *Scânteia*, which designated the role of the press in the process of socialist transformation, were to be followed.³¹ The Communist leadership stated the shortcomings of the domestic papers based on the

example of the Soviet press: “The relationship of paper and reader is not direct enough, not close enough. We are still very far from our newspapers [...] being born in the workshops, factories, bureaus and farmlands, as happens in the Soviet Union.”³²

Integration propaganda had its own strategies. These included presenting the facts as if the Communist Party took the measures ensuring the takeover of power in the name of and at the behest of the people. The liquidation of opposition political parties and the measures taken against various enemies of the people (reactionaries, kulaks and so on) and the Catholic Church were preceded by continuous press campaigns, which were intended to prove that all the people demanded that the enemies of the new regime be called to account. The multitude of supportive telegrams and readers’ letters printed in the press were likewise parts of the abovementioned strategy.³³ In crisis or conflict situations the number of supportive telegrams “arriving from all parts of the country,” with which the various social groups expressed their unanimous consent to the Party’s policy, grew spectacularly.

The minutes of the RWP Department of Propaganda and Agitation reveal that in 1950 propaganda activity was guided by specific tasks. In the villages the popularization of the collectivizing agriculture proceeded with renewed effort. The operation of reading circles also served the education of the village workers; within these the current issues of the Party papers were read aloud, and the contents of popularizing books and brochures were presented. Occupying a prominent place was the Danube–Black Sea Canal construction site, where 12-day agitator’s courses were organized with the help of suitable cadres in order to mobilize the laborers who had been forcibly removed from their place of residence and were working under very difficult circumstances. The aims of propaganda were served by the journal *Canalul Dunăre–Marea Neagră* (The Danube–Black Sea Canal), which first appeared in September 1949, at first every Saturday, and later two or three times a week.

The fulfillment of the tasks, however, was not always realized according to plan; in some cases the lack of cadres and at other

times the carelessness of the organization caused concerns. The material prepared for the celebration of December 30, 1949, the second anniversary of the proclamation of the People's Republic, for example, arrived in Teleorman County only on January 1; the material prepared for Stalin's birthday was also almost a week late and was received at the county propaganda department only by December 27.³⁴ At the same time the propaganda activity conducted within the army also becomes the target of criticism. The report of the army's Chief Political Directorate points out the shortcomings of the materials used: their texts were hackneyed and detached from everyday political reality, and did not support the activity of educating the rank and file with concrete data.³⁵

From the very beginning the news agency Agerpres, established in 1949 and possessing a monopoly on news, was granted a decisive role in the dissemination of propaganda. This is supported by the comments that the institution's director, Ion Popescu Puțuri, addressed to the assembly convoked by the Department of Propaganda and Agitation in 1950: "The news agency forwards for our Party, our government, the radio and the press news from the Soviet Union, the people's democracies and the socialist countries, as well as the home front, and at the same time it informs the outside world about successes achieved in the country."³⁶ The leadership, however, was not satisfied with the news agency only forwarding news favorable to the regime. According to the directives issued in the 1950s, the commentaries following the news items must directly serve Party propaganda. It was classified as an error if those factors that promoted the realization of the plans were not presented in news items about the results of the economy – that is to say, if the role of the Party's economic policy and valuable guidance were not highlighted.³⁷

The tasks of the Communist press are summarized in a booklet appearing in 1950 in an edition of the Romanian Workers' Party.³⁸ Having established that the international situation is characterized by an ever-intensifying battle between the democratic and imperialist camps, the publication moves on to a presentation of

current tasks: “The press of the Communist and workers’ parties in the popular democratic countries sees its task as studying and sharing the experiences of socialist construction work in the given country with the public, so that it incessantly links economic successes and achievements with the prospects of the building of socialism.”

In January the following year appeared the resolution of the Politburo of the RWP Central Committee concerning the activity of the daily *Scântea*, which may be regarded as a document of extraordinary significance for the operation of the entire press in Romania.³⁹ The resolution illuminates the results of the Communist press and designates its long-term tasks. It determines that as the Party’s faithful spokesman the daily had won the trust of the working people and earned its affection; in 1950 the paper devoted considerable space to the questions of the peace struggle, keeping in view in particular the internationalist, patriotic and anti-imperialist education of the popular masses. Its primary goal was to strengthen love for and loyalty towards the Soviet Union and Comrade Stalin. For this reason it continuously popularized the successes of Soviet Communism, the peace strivings of the Soviet Union, highlighting the significance of the help that Romania received from its great eastern neighbor, and fighting for the sake of implanting Soviet experiences at home.

Following this, the resolution discusses the deficiencies and the concrete tasks of the coming period. The paper received criticism for not having dealt with the question of class warfare profoundly enough, not having popularized the methods of socialist farming and planning, and not having dealt with the timely issues of Party life, as well as with problems arising in the area of culture, first and foremost literature and art.

The theoretical guidelines of the resolution on the daily *Scântea* can be found in the reports of the RWP Kolozs Regional Committee as well, which touch upon to the methods of directing and controlling the local press. Within the framework of political direction, the editorial boards were obliged to present monthly

plans at the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Regional Party Committee. They likewise had to present the plan for issues connected to major events in advance in the Party Committee. A separate work plan was prepared, for example, on the occasion of the January 22 Lenin issue.⁴⁰ Besides this, the editorial boards also drafted various thematic plans as well, which on account of their integrative character were meant to buttress the results of socialism.

The effective dissemination of propaganda, however, could only be realized with proper guidance. For the sake of precisely interpreting the guidelines, the paper editors had to take part in the assemblies of the Party Committee, as well as in the deliberations of the Department of Propaganda and Agitation. Great emphasis was laid on the papers shaping their profile according to the Soviet press. Therefore in the editorial offices Russian language courses were held, in which all colleagues obligatorily took part. The report of the Kolozs County Party Committee acknowledged with satisfaction that in the editorial office of *Igazság* five “comrades” had already reached the level where they were reading *Pravda* with the help of a dictionary.⁴¹

The tasks of propaganda were expanded in 1952 with the popularization of the new draft constitution. Aside from the central and regional press, in the course of the year agitation groups and wall newspapers made the draft known throughout the country. On the wall newspaper of the Medical and Pharmacological Institute in Marosvásárhely, for example, photographs presented the right of the workers to study and rest. The newspapers reported how in the December 30 Factory in Arad a new agitation center was opened in honor of the introduction of the draft constitution, and in numerous villages agitator collectives were established, which moving from house to house enlightened the working peasants about the significance of the constitution.⁴²

Propaganda oversaw special tasks following the establishment of the Hungarian Autonomous Region as well. The “autonomy,” formed under Soviet pressure, in reality was by no means of a

higher level than the autonomy of the other administrative units, despite the fact that Romanian nationalism saw in it an enclave on Romania's territory.⁴³ The official propaganda therefore consciously depicted the region as not exclusively Hungarian in nature, but rather an integrative structure, where every nationality could feel at home. With this it attempted on the one hand to convince the Romanian population that the establishment of the HAR was "in accordance with the fundamental interests of the working Romanian people," and on the other to warn the Hungarians that autonomy was not independence but rather "the most tangible form of unity."⁴⁴

The Representation of Ritual Events in the Press

The task of propaganda was on the one hand to depict and continuously support the tenets of the common faith, and on the other to mobilize the members of society to take part in the ritual events turning the possession of faith into a collective experience, which ensured that the myths were kept alive and renewed. The presentation of the events created the appearance of voluntary participation, within the framework of a world order hypothesized as one where the idea established its own rites in a natural way. Although participation took place under pressure applied at various levels, through socialization in school or the workplace the regularly reoccurring events in time were built into people's subconscious, and with this the artificially established rites to a certain degree became actual rites.

The worldview depicted in Communist propaganda recombined the elements of objective reality and formed its own interpretations following the inner logic of the ideology.

Becoming important elements of the created reality were the planned events that supported the ideology, and with this the message to be transmitted was provided with a structure that could be experienced through participation, and at the same time described in the press. The symbolic nature and ideological content of events

organized from above resulted in a kind of ritual communication from the regime, which the press then forwarded to the popular masses. On occasion tens and hundreds of thousands took part in popular rallies organized to support the cause, which were later widely presented in the press. In such a way ideas and ideals turned into ritual events became easier to receive and attracted greater attention as news items.⁴⁵

The goals of integration propaganda were thus served by the popular rallies organized to support the Communist regime. In this sense press reports changed into a narrative manner of speech that established the common patterns of consciousness of ingrainig. It was in this public space generated by the interpretive and ingrainig schemata that the individual became socialized,⁴⁶ the effect of which grew ever stronger because of the drastic control of the private sphere. Historical moments received interpretation based on the determined values, the slogans supporting the mutually possessed faith.

The proclamation of the republic and nationalization, the anti-popular and anti-democratic activity of the opposition parties or the warmongering policy of the imperialist powers thereby became fixed in the consciousness of the masses according to defined positive and negative values. From the Party's viewpoint practically every political question appeared as a task of agitation. Loyalty rituals involving the masses were intended to express occasions when society was exposed to danger, overcame a dangerous situation or simply celebrated the prevailing power structure.⁴⁷ The planned media events at the same time through mechanical integration strengthened societal control.⁴⁸ The press depiction of the various demonstrations did not explicitly serve communication and transmission, but rather participation, sharing and the possession of a common faith.⁴⁹

The mass celebrations organized on the occasion of various anniversaries can be identified with Durkheimian positive rites.⁵⁰ Irrespective of whether it commemorated Lenin's birthday, the country's liberation or the October Revolution, the regime left

nothing to chance, and thus it determined in advance the order of chanting the slogans, the proportion of red and national flags, and even the dimensions of the posters portraying the Party leaders. In connection with the compulsory holidays and Party events the Romanian press of the 1950s continuously proved that the entire working people were struggling to realize the Party's resolutions. The criteria of mobilization unfolded along the structure of the compulsory holidays of the calendar year, as cyclical rites that occur in a predetermined and familiar manner with specified regularity.

The structure of the holidays of the given period can be precisely traced in the press of the early 1950s. In January the papers began with pledges to outdo the work results of the past year; the anniversary of the death of the Soviet Communist Party's founder, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1871–1924), on January 21 encouraged following the example of the Soviet Union based on the tenets of Marxism-Leninism. In early March, in connection with the anniversary of Stalin's death, once again historical commemoration came to the forefront, while on the occasion of the "holiday of working women" on March 8 the mobilization of the female labor force began for participation in the socialist work competition. According to the propaganda, the enormous creative force inherent in the working women and girls was manifested during work performed in the various areas of production: in the factories, plants, arable lands and culture houses alike.

In April the celebration of Lenin's birthday was a further occasion for the press to show to the readers the example of the victorious Soviet people, and in the meantime mobilization connected to May 1, during which "workers and peasants greeted with outstanding results" the holiday of labor, proceeded at full steam. Production propaganda aimed at a continuous reactualization of the socialist labor myth, according to which in socialism labor was a fundamental human necessity, and accordingly a fundamental right, which socialist society provided for its members, and therefore was superior to work performed in capitalism, which was based on exploitation.⁵¹ The continuously appearing economic propaganda was intended,

through the increasing statistical indicators, to prove the correctness of the ideology. Appeals to achieve the Five-Year Plan likewise brought about a cyclically repeating temporal structure, which on a longer temporal plane contributed to the mobilization of society. On the one hand the propaganda contributed to the mobilization with the slogan “Let us celebrate May 1 with labor,” and on the other it regularly popularized work competitions, at the same time mythologizing the figures of the heroes of labor, the winners of the various state decorations.

Preparation for the August 23 Liberation holiday had begun months before the anniversary. The declarations of loyalty appearing in the press expressed unconditional faith. The labor slogans of August 23 separately addressed the working peasants, the laborers working in the various branches or industry and the intellectuals.⁵²

The parades organized on May 1 and August 23 made the experience of the communal loyalty ritual experiential. Preparing for and carrying out the events presumed coordinated activity, which in itself also contributed to the exercise of societal control. The behavioral norms influenced the participants on the subconscious level: the parade, the greeting of the Party leaders, the chanting of slogans and the compulsory applause promoted the instinctive acceptance of the faith disseminated by the ideology. The ritual experience was brought into existence by the mimetic reactions, the collective gestures repeating according to the determined order.⁵³

The month of Soviet–Romanian friendship announced for October prepared the celebration of the Great October Socialist Revolution, which actualized the origin myth. The press illustrated the organic unity of the Socialist Bloc with a slogan invoking the spirit of proletarian internationalism: “Long live and flourish the unbreakable friendship and cooperation of the People’s Democracies and the Soviet Union!”

The year was closed with mobilization for fulfilling the work plans ahead of time and slogans of economic propaganda: the workers of the plants and the factories, the economic units, one by one reported that by following the Party’s instructions they had

fulfilled the annual plan on time, and were already producing for the following year.

The socialist holidays created a kind of sacral time, which from year to year recreated the reality of the myth.⁵⁴ The celebration of the designated dates throughout the year in practice actualized the event of one year previous in the present, and with this it evoked the image of reversible time. The goal of the propaganda was to put the holidays sacralized by the regime in the place of the traditional religious holidays, together with the functions of the latter, thus transforming the religiously charged traditional rites, and establishing the new structure of these, which in the same way interwove everyday life and possessed the same moral force.

Conclusions

We may state that through the spread of the worldview articulated by ideology, propaganda played a significant role in the formation of cohesion of Communist societies. The continuously repeating normative messages were built into the public sphere, after censorship had purged this of elements carrying the opposite meaning; the official discourse fed off the elements of the current ideology and precisely followed the latter.

For the sake of the propaganda's efficacy, the Communist regime in Romania made use of all channels of communication so that the messages to be transmitted reached their destination. At the same time Communist propaganda presented its truths, articulated as fundamental propositions, in such a way that they evaded any possibility of their being rationally verifiable. The pronouncements presented were intended merely to buttress the ideology of the regime. The propaganda in the Communist press filled the continuously depicted ideological themes with transcendental content, and it thereby fueled in the masses a faith tantamount to religious experience.

The ideological elements became truths of symbolic force through ritual communication. Participation in ritual

demonstrations formed the image of pseudo-reality based on myths in the individual, whose consciousness rejected this, yet through collective manipulation on the subconscious level nevertheless identified with it to a certain degree. Through this procedure propaganda attempted in fact to induce the masses, on the basis of a transcendental experience, to accept the ideological tenets as true and make the instinctive decisions that this entailed.

Notes

- 1 Regarding the Communist takeover of power, see Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons. A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley, CA, 2003), pp. 85–106.
- 2 Dennis Deletant, *Romania under Communist Rule* (Bucharest, 1998), pp. 41–82.
- 3 Estimation for the date of December 31, 1939; S. Manuilă, *Studiu etnografic asupra populației României* [Ethnographic Study on the Population of Romania] (Bucharest, 1940), p. 97.
- 4 See Stefano Bottoni, *Sztálin a Székelyeknél. A Magyar Autonóm Tartomány története (1952–1960)* [Stalin among the Székely. The History of the Hungarian Autonomous Region (1952–1960)] (Csíkszereda, 2008).
- 5 Vladimir Tismăneanu calls the period 1948–1953 the “mature incarnation of the political content of ideological dictatorship.” See Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Reinventing Politics. Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel* (New York, 1993), p. 35.
- 6 Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej, “A népi demokratikus rendszer további erősödése a RNK-ban” [The Continued Strengthening of the Popular Democratic System in the Romanian People’s Republic], *Igazság*, January 29, 1953.
- 7 Bogdan Ficeac, *Tehnici de manipulare* [Techniques of Manipulation] (Bucharest, 2001), p. 63.
- 8 A. Septulin, *A marxizmus–leninizmus filozófiája* [The Philosophy of Marxism-Leninism] (Budapest, 1978), p. 59.
- 9 Stefano Bottoni, ed., *Az 1956-os forradalom és az erdélyi magyarság (1956–1959)* [The 1956 Revolution and the Transylvanian Hungarians (1956–1959)] (Csíkszereda, 2006), pp. 376–381.

- 10 On the expropriation of narrative see Petra Aczél, “A hír mint értékrend-reprezentáció” [News as Representation of Value System], in Andok Mónika, ed., *Tanulmányok a médiatudományok köréből. A médiahír mint rítus* [Studies from the Field of Media Sciences. The Media News as Rite] (Eger, 2007).
- 11 Tomas Goban-Klas, *The Orchestration of the Media. The Politics of Mass Communication in Communist Poland and the Aftermath* (Boulder, CO, and London, 1994).
- 12 See Jacques Ellul, *Propagandes* (Paris, 1962), quoted in Balázs Kiss, “Missziótól marketingig. Fejezetek a propaganda elmélet-történetéből” [From Mission to Marketing. Chapters from the History of Propaganda Theory], *Médiakutató* (Spring 2006).
- 13 See “*Hotărârea Biroulului Politic al Comitetului Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Român privitoare la activitatea ziarului Scânteia adoptată la ședința din 26 ianuarie 1951*” [Resolution of the Politburo of the Romanian Workers’ Party Central Committee Concerning the Activity of the Daily *Scânteia*, Adopted at the Session of January 26, 1951], in Eugen Denize and Cezar Mata, *România comunistă. Statul și propaganda (1948–1953)* [Communist Romania. The State and Propaganda (1948–1953)] (Târgoviște, 2005), p. 370. See also Marian Petcu, *Puterea și cultura. O istorie a cenzurii* [Power and Culture. A History of Censorship] (Iași, 1999), p. 169.
- 14 Florica Vrânceanu, *Un secol de agenții de presă românești (1889–1989)* [A Century of the Romanian Press Agency (1889–1989)] (Pitești, 2000), p. 103.
- 15 Tiberiu Troncotă, *România comunistă. Propagandă și cenzură* [Communist Romania. Propaganda and Censorship] (Bucharest, 2006), p. 59.
- 16 Bogdan Ficeac, *Cenzura comunistă și formarea omului nou* [Communist Censorship and the Shaping of the New Man] (Bucharest, 1999), p. 99.
- 17 Ferenc Fehér, Ágnes Heller and György Márkus, *Diktatúra a szükségletek felett* [Dictatorship over Needs] (Budapest, 1991), p. 291.
- 18 See József Gagyi, “A magyar kisebbségi elit társadalomképének változása Erdélyben az ötvenes-hatvanas években” [The Change in the Hungarian Minority Elite’s Image of Society in Transylvania in the 1950s and 1960s], *Látó* 5 (2005).

- 19 See James W. Carey, “A kommunikáció kulturális megközelítése” [A Cultural Approach to Communication], in Zsuzsanna Kondor and György Fábri, eds., *Az információs társadalom és kommunikációtechnológia elméletei és kulcsfogalmai* [The Theories and Key Concepts of the Information Society and Communication Technology] (Budapest, 2003).
- 20 Silviu Brucan, “Ardealul” [Transylvania], *Scântea*, March 10, 1947.
- 21 *Igazság*, May 22, 1947.
- 22 “A Pravda szerint feladták függetlenségük nagyrészét a Marshall-tervhez hozzájáruló kisállamok” [According to *Pravda*, the Small States Consenting to the Marshall Plan Have Surrendered Most of Their Independence], *Világosság*, July 23, 1947; “A moszkvai rádió szerint Románia népe önerejéből építi újjá az ország gazdasági életét” [According to Radio Moscow, the People of Romania Are Rebuilding the Country’s Economic Life on Their Own], *Erdély*, July 11, 1947.
- 23 “A demokratikus közvélemény élesen bírálja Truman elnök kongresszusi beszédét” [Democratic Public Opinion Sharply Criticizes President Truman’s Speech in Congress], *Erdély*, March 15, 1947.
- 24 “Raport al Biroului Informativ al PCR privind rezultatul acțiunilor organizate de partid împotriva bandeii de spioni și asasini care își desfășoară activitatea în RPR și măsurile luate la frontiera româno-iugoslavă” [Report of the Informative Bureau of the RCP Regarding the Results of Actions Organized by the Party against the Bands of Spies and Assassins that Carry out Activities in the RPR and the Measures Taken on the Romanian–Yugoslav Border], in Ioana Alexandra Negreanu, ed., *România. Viața politică în documente. 1950* [Romania. Political Life in Documents. 1950] (Bucharest, 2002), pp. 359–366.
- 25 “Stenograma ședinței cu responsabilii de propagandă și agitație privind intensificarea muncii politico-educative la sate” [Stenogram of the Session with Responsibility for Propaganda and Agitation Regarding the Intensification of Politico-Educational Work in the Village], in Negreanu, ed., *România. Viața politică în documente. 1950*, p. 11.
- 26 In Romania high-ranking Communist leaders Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, Ana Pauker, László Luka and Teohari Georgescu were put on trial. In 1954 Pătrășcanu was in fact executed.

- 27 Lajos Császi, *A média rítusai: A kommunikáció neodurkheimi elmélete* [The Rites of the Media. The Neo-Durkheimian Theory of Communication] (Budapest, 2002), p. 70.
- 28 Lavinia Beta, *Psihologie politică. Individ, lider, mulțime în regimul comunist* [Political Psychology. Individual, Leader and Crowd in the Communist Regime] (Iași, 2001), pp. 161–175.
- 29 See, for example, “To arms against bloodthirsty American and British imperialism inciting the new world war!”
- 30 Hannah Arendt, *A totalitarizmus gyökerei* [The Origins of Totalitarianism] (Budapest, 1992), pp. 425–446.
- 31 See “A párt legélesebb fegyvere” [The Party’s Sharpest Weapon], *Romániai Magyar Szó*, May 8, 1948. The article is a Hungarian translation of Leonte Răutu’s contribution to the May 6 issue of *Scânteia*.
- 32 Jakab Antal, “Tegyük szorosabbá a lapok és újságolvasók közötti viszonyt” [Let Us Make the Relationship between the Papers and the Newspaper Readers Closer], *Romániai Magyar Szó*, May 9, 1948.
- 33 Guy Lázár, “A szocialista nyilvánosság történetének alapvonala” [Outline of the History of the Socialist Public Sphere], *Médiakutató* (Spring 2006).
- 34 See “Proces verbal privind activitatea sectorului de agitație desfășurată în centrele industriale, pe șantierul Canalul Dunăre-Marea Neagră și la sate, având drept țintă lupta împotriva chiaburilor și demascarea imperialiștilor” [Minutes Regarding the Activity of the Agitation Sector Carried out in the Industrial Centers, on the Danube–Black Sea Canal Building Site and in the Village, Directly Targeting the Struggle against Kulaks and the Unmasking of Imperialists], in Negreanu, ed., *România. Viața politică în documente. 1950*, pp. 96–99.
- 35 See “Raport al Direcției Superioare Politice a Armatei privind munca politică și de partid în armată” [Report of the Supreme Directorate of the Army Concerning Political and Party Work in the Army], in Negreanu, ed., *România. Viața politică în documente. 1950*, pp. 347–355.
- 36 See “Stenograma ședinței Secției de propagandă și agitație a CC cu participarea conducerii Agerpres și a reprezentanților presei din capitală” [Stenogram of the Session of the CC Propaganda and Agitation Section with the Participation of the Management of Agerpres and the Representatives of the Press from the Capital], in

- Negreanu, ed., *România. Viața politică în documente. 1950*, p. 28.
- 37 Vrânceanu, *Un secol de agenții de presă românești*, p. 140.
- 38 *A kommunista sajtó jelenlegi feladatai* [The Current Tasks of the Communist Press] (Bucharest, 1950).
- 39 Denize and Mata, *România comunistă*, pp. 369–379.
- 40 Arhivele Naționale Direcția Județeană Cluj (National Archives Kolozs/Cluj County Directorate), Fond Comitetul Regional PMR Cluj (Kolozs/Cluj County Party Committee collection), fond no. 13, file no. 180. pp. 67–82.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 “Agitációs csoportok, faliújságok népszerűsítik szerte az országban Alkotmánytervezetünket” [Agitation Groups, Wall Newspapers Popularize Our Draft Constitution throughout the Country], *Romániai Magyar Szó*, August 13, 1952.
- 43 Gábor Vincze, *Illúziók és csalódások. (Fejezetek a romániai magyarság második világháború utáni történetéből)* [Illusions and Disappointments. (Chapters from the History of the Hungarians of Romania after the Second World War)] (Csíkszereda, 1999), p. 80.
- 44 In connection with the ideological considerations of the establishment of the HAR, see Stefano Bottoni, “A sztálini ‘Kis Magyarország’ megalakítása, 1952” [The Formation of the Stalinist “Little Hungary”], *Regio 3* (2003): 89–125. See also “Crearea RAM – un nou succes al politicii naționale leninist-staliniste a partidului” [The Creation of the HAR – a New Success of the Party’s Leninist-Stalinist National Policy], *Scântea*, July 30, 1952.
- 45 Daniel Boorstin calls demonstrations of this nature, created expressly for propaganda purposes, pseudo-events, the goal of which is to provide a favorable mass-communication background to a given idea; see Kiss, “Missziótól marketingig.”
- 46 Aczél, “A hír mint értékrend-reprezentáció”, p. 35.
- 47 Mihai Coman, *Mass-media, mit și ritual. O perspectivă antropologică* [Mass Media, Myth and Ritual. An Anthropological Perspective] (Iași, 2003), p. 68.
- 48 See Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, *Media Events* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), quoted in András Istvánffy, “A terrorizmus mint rituális kommunikáció” [Terrorism as Ritual Communication], *Beszélő 8* (2005).
- 49 See James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture* (London, 1989), quoted in Istvánffy, “A terrorizmus mint rituális kommunikáció.”

- 50 Császi, *A média rítusai*, pp. 69–70.
- 51 Lucian Boia, *Mitologia științifică a comunismului* [The Scientific Mythology of Communism] (Bucharest. 2005), p. 123.
- 52 Examples: “Working peasants! Gather in the harvest as soon as possible and under the best conditions possible!”; “Mine workers! Greet August 23rd with new successes!”; “Workers and technicians of the petroleum industry! Increase the pace of drilling wells, make new sources of petroleum explorable!”; “Scholars, artists and writers! Fight for the flowering of science and culture in our homeland! Place your working capacity and creative ability in the service of peace and socialism!”
- 53 On the connection between rite and mimesis, see Császi, *A média rítusai*, p. 73.
- 54 On the temporal structure of the sacred and profane, see Mircea Eliade, *A szent és a profán* [The Sacred and the Profane] (Budapest, 1987).

Klára Lázok

BOOK PUBLISHING AND CENSORSHIP IN THE ROMANIA OF THE 1950S

According to Piotr Wierzbicki, in a totalitarian system the main guideline for informing the public is what people need to know and what they do not need to know. The achievement of the first is ensured by propaganda; however, as long as people have access to other sources of information besides this, its effect remains weak. For this reason this surplus information is simply eliminated.¹ In the foreword written for the edited volume of documents on Eastern European censorship,² György Schöpflin designates as one of the traits of Soviet-type political systems the fact that in these systems the regime attributes much greater importance to control over information than to control provided by the army or the police.

In Romania the subject of censorship has in recent years received greater emphasis among research topics. We will not present here the relevant works, since the other study in this volume dealing with censorship has discussed this in detail. In our opinion one cannot fully comprehend either the mentality of the era or the official ideology without some knowledge of the relevant archival materials. We chose as the subject of our inquiry the files of the General Directorate of the Press and Publications (*Direcția Generală a Presei și Tipăriturilor*) relating to censorship for the years 1958 and 1968. The detailed reports of the censorship apparatus list, by item, what those problems of content and form were because of which the publication in question could not be circulated.

The choice fell on 1958 and 1968, since both years meant a turning point in Romania, both from a political and from a cultural policy point of view. The mass accusation and imprisonment of persons in any way implicated in the 1956 Hungarian Revolution or its aftershocks in Transylvania commenced in Romania in

1958. And in terms of cultural policy, it was in the year 1958 that restructuring began, which closed the loopholes that had opened in the ideologically uncertain years of 1956–1957 for both Romanian culture and minority Hungarian culture. It was in 1958 that the infamous textbook scandal burst open in connection with the Hungarian language and literature textbooks. The year 1958 may also be associated with the campaign against the editor-in-chief of the Kolozsvár journal *Utunk*, László Földes.³ In 1958 the campaign to merge the Bolyai and Babeş universities began, while by the year's end the General Directorate for National Minorities (*Direcția Generală a Minorităților*), founded in the upheaval of 1956 and operating alongside the Ministry of Culture and Education, was eliminated. And the year 1968 is the year that the county system was established, on the basis of which the Hungarian Autonomous Region was abolished, but at the same time 1968 also signals the start of a new line in minority policy.

In the study we discuss how censorship, which was closely connected to book publishing, functioned and how it changed over time. First of all, on the basis of the documents produced by the Censor's Office (censors' reports, the list of banned books, the explanatory summary attached to this, mutual correspondence among censors) we review which were those major problem categories that the General Directorate of the Press and Publications deemed to be dangerous in 1958, we examine just what was meant by the various subjects, and with what frequency the various problem categories occurred, and based on all of this we try to draw a few major conclusions about the censorship and cultural output of the era.

Later, taking the Censor's Office's material for 1968 as a basis, we carry out this same inquiry: classifying the taboo topics, we examine what those problem categories were that in this changed set of circumstances also remained prohibited.

The Mechanism of the Structure.

How did a Manuscript Get from the Author to the Reader's Table?⁴

First of all the publisher's editors read the manuscript submitted to the publisher; rewriting it was also one of an editor's tasks. In an interview given in the 1990s, Sándor Fodor, an employee at the Literary Publishing House, explained how much the hands of the editors at the publishing house were tied; it was actually they who carried out the first censoring of the manuscript. When both the editor and the supervising editor had read the work, after they had rendered a positive opinion (*bun de cules*), the manuscript was inserted into the publisher's plan, which had to be forwarded to the General Directorate for authorization. If the General Directorate approved of the manuscript's inclusion in the publisher's annual plan, the contract was signed with the author. If it was a rural publisher, the manuscript was first sent up to the Hungarian section of the publisher's ethnic minority editorial offices, where the section head, Ferenc Szemlér, ran through it and consulted with the local editorial offices if he thought that a problem at any level could arise. After this consultation the manuscript continued on to the Censor's Office, where, after internal proofreaders and external reviewers had rendered an opinion, it received (or did not) the classification "printable" (*bun de tipar*) for submission to the press. These reviewers generally were politically reliable cadres with a secondary school education, who, although they lacked the appropriate professional background, nevertheless knew precisely – or at least were expected to know – politically what could and could not be classified as acceptable in a given period. The definition given by Solzhenitsyn can be applied to conditions in Romania as well:

Under the obfuscating label of GLAVLIT, this censorship – which is not provided for in the Constitution and is therefore illegal, and which is nowhere publicly labeled as such – imposes a yoke on our literature and gives people unversed in literature arbitrary control over writers... Of fleeting significance, it attempts to appropriate to itself the role of unfleeting time – of separating good books from bad...⁵

The printing press could accept a manuscript only with an authorization sheet bearing the stamp “approved,” and the letter “B” had to appear on every page of the manuscript. After printing, the first copy had to be sent up to the Ministry, and a permit to distribute (*bun de difuzat*) had to be requested, and only in possession of this was it possible to proceed to disseminate the publication. At the same time, it happened on numerous occasions that a publication printed in several thousands of copies was withdrawn in this phase. The more typical examples of this are the Romanian literary history textbook or the Hungarian literature anthology published in 1958 and shredded in 1959, but we may mention here Sándor Kányádi’s volume *Sirálytánc* (Seagull Dance) as well. In cases such as these those responsible faced reprimands involving grave consequences, the most serious cases of which are known from the late 1950s.

The Problem Categories in the 1950s

a. The most frequently occurring classification was *nationalist in content*: 14 of the 74 publications censored in 1958 were labeled as such. But what did the censor mean by “nationalist”? We have examined those items where the designation “nationalist” explicitly appears from the censor’s pen, as well as those where the characteristics deemed to be such had appeared on earlier occasions. The cases may be grouped around four larger themes: the Transylvanian problem, the blurring of the borders of political nation and cultural nation, the issue of the purity of the language (Romanian/Hungarian), and reference to traditions and religion.

In the first place, every work that dealt with the *Transylvanian problem* and disclosed research analyzing the Hungarian aspects of Transylvania’s history was classified as nationalist. These include, for example, Sándor Huszár’s volume of studies *A romokon túl* (Beyond the Ruins), which discussed the history and significance of the Transylvanian castles.⁶ In the same way Lajos Kelemen’s volume, entitled *Művelődéstörténeti tanulmányok* (Studies in Cultural History),⁷ was also placed on the index of banned books,

since it presented Hungarian aspects of Transylvania's history, did not speak of the Romanian population at all and because of this "would not contribute to a deepening of fraternal ties between the two peoples."⁸ In the summary report the fact that "the work in its entirety allows one to conclude that Transylvania had been part of Hungary from the earliest times"⁹ was indicated as the justification for censoring it. But not only Hungarian authors ended up on the index on these grounds: the volume of Saxon legends and tales edited by Liebhardt and Roth¹⁰ was stripped of all legends classified as "nationalist" that "approached from a chauvinistic point of view" the foundation of various Transylvanian castles, towns and churches, and certain historical events: that is, they "present the Szeklers as autochthonous on the territory of Transylvania" or "they do not depict the Romanian population."¹¹ In the case of the tenth-grade Hungarian text anthology igniting the infamous textbook scandal, too, the censor indicated as one of the main charges the fact that it quoted from the Hungarian classics only excerpts that supported the idea of Transylvania's belonging to Hungary: "it cannot be published because it would arouse revisionist sentiments."¹²

But the prohibition was consistent, and was enforced not only in the case of Hungarian works: the study *Vrem Ardealul* (We Want Transylvania), from the works of the Romanian poet Alexandru Vlahuța,¹³ similarly wound up on the index of banned publications.¹⁴

Also receiving the nationalist classification were those publications that, when presenting Hungarian culture/literature/language/scholarship, did not discuss Transylvania and Hungary as separate units, blurring the boundaries of the concepts of *political nation* and *cultural nation*. The prohibition was independent of genre. Ernő Lőrincz's specialist work dealing with Transylvanian labor law before 1918, the *Reglementarea raporturilor de muncă în Transilvania între 1840–1918* (The Regulation of Labor Relations in Transylvania between 1840 and 1918) wound up on the index on the grounds that it discussed legal conditions in Hungary and "would cause confusion."¹⁵ But the justification "would cause confusion"

was likewise raised for the previously mentioned tenth-grade text anthology as well, where it was in connection with the patriotic verses of the Hungarian classics that the problem arose that “one cannot know which homeland they refer to.”¹⁶

But nor did the Censor’s Office treat this problem category as a function of ethnicity either: those works that dealt with the Romanian diaspora located outside the current borders of Romania likewise could not appear. Here two linguistic specialist works can be mentioned. One is Nicolae Grămadă’s volume of studies treating the toponymy of Bukovina, which demonstrated the primacy of the Romanians in a territory that at that time did not belong to Romania (Bukovina), and according to the censor “in this form it exceeds its function and serves other purposes.”¹⁷ The other work is the volume *Pronunciation* of Sextil Pușcariu’s classic work *Limba română* (The Romanian Language), which in its presentation of Romanian dialects discussed those spoken in the territories beyond the borders as well,¹⁸ treating the provinces belonging to Greater Romania as a unit.

Linguistic specialist works *promoting the proper use of the Romanian and Hungarian languages and the preservation of their purity* also received the qualifier “nationalist,” albeit with various justifications. Mózes Gálffy’s volume of essays, *A mi anyanyelvünk* (Our Mother Tongue), was not given the classification “printable,” because it judged the effect of the Romanian language on the Hungarian language of Romania to be harmful, it “took a hostile attitude” towards the nativization of certain words of Romanian origin linked to the new social reality, and it called attention to all those linguistic phenomena that as a result of cohabitation had appeared in the Hungarian language of Romania.¹⁹ The censor judged this work to be very dangerous, mainly because, since it addressed the general public, he would have considered its appearance to be a grave political error; he asked for strict sanctions to be applied against the collaborating editors, listing those responsible by name.²⁰ And the chapter of the Romanian linguist Ovid Densusianu’s language history discussing Slavic influences

was cut out because it “approached the question from a reactionary, nationalist position.”²¹

The label “nationalist” also appears in the case of those works that deal with *folk or religious traditions*. Thus, for example, Eusebiu Camilar’s²² volume of dramas entitled *Căderea zeilor* (The Fall of the Gods) could not see the light of day, since according to the censor’s office “it exaggerates the significance of faith and ancient traditions,” and thereby “transmits a nationalist and mystical mood.”²³ The collection of Jewish folksongs by Emil Săculeț already printed at the music publishing house, *Cântece populare evreiești* (Jewish Folksongs), at the same time could not reach the bookstores, since the “majority of songs are religious songs, their content from a political standpoint is erroneous and nationalist.”²⁴ Besides that, in the introductory study to the collection the author did not highlight “the circumstances that the Party ensures for the co-inhabiting nationalities.”²⁵

b. Another distinguishable category in general use was the “*erroneous approach*” to political events, or, to put it another way, the all-applicable classification “offers the possibility of erroneous approaches.” Here two of the seven cases were connected to the reception of the Hungarian Revolution. Mária Tamás’s fairytale play in verse *Erdőtűz* (Forest Fire) was not allowed to be printed, on the grounds that “certain of its details symbolize the moments of the counterrevolution in Hungary, providing an opportunity for hostile interpretations.”²⁶ The other work, István Tompa’s novel *Ébredés* (Awakening), is the story of a factory manager who cannot keep up with the modernization of the factory, becomes isolated, and recovers his senses only under the shock of the counterrevolution. According to the censor’s comments, such a thing cannot be depicted, since “a true Communist does not behave thus in the event of difficulties.” Besides that, according to the justification the author did not sufficiently emphasize the negative reception of the Hungarian counterrevolution in Romania either.²⁷

c. Close to this in content was the likewise frequently occurring justification according to which the work *depicted the work of the Party, Party members, and/or “socialist achievements” in a negative light*. It is this classification that the above-mentioned *Ébredés* received for the portrayal of the manager, but one of the reports in György Beke’s collection of such was also struck from the volume, because it presented the chairman of one village’s collective farm in a satirical fashion.²⁸

d. The following problem category in general is typical of monographs: the censor objected to these works’ prefaces when the author/editor/translator *did not assume a suitably “critical, scholarly” attitude* towards certain public personalities of the nineteenth century or the interwar period “bearing petit-bourgeois ideals,” whose studies, poems or biographies were being published, or when the explanatory preface written in a critical spirit happened to be missing from the monograph. For example, the reviewer of the Censor’s Office reproached the author of the preface to the selected poems of the nineteenth-century Csángó poet István Zajzoni Rab, for failing both to analyze the poems according to Marxist aesthetics and to emphasize the poet’s ideologically defined position.²⁹

e. Often connected to this were the use of *inappropriate terminology*, the occurrence of “bourgeois historiographical concepts,” and any approach to culture, nation, art and aesthetics according to non-Marxist notions, or bourgeois, perhaps even Western, ideologies. Perhaps the best example of this is the censoring of Alexandru Piru’s study: although in its subject – the literary portrayal of the working class before 1944 – it corresponded to the “scientific” requirements of the era, it analyzed all this from an “objective standpoint,” besides which it “does not highlight the fact that within ‘bourgeois’ society there had actually existed a distinct worker culture as well.”³⁰ Or an eloquent example is the censoring of another academic publication on literary history, one of the studies of which was excised because it analyzed only the

artistic value of La Fontaine's fables, and did not devote attention to their role in critiquing society.³¹

f. In addition to the nationalist and the various politically or ideologically unsuitable subject matters, the qualifier "pessimistic" was the most frequently occurring classification: this was raised mainly as a justification for censoring volumes of poetry; in this context the classifications "hermetic" or "apolitical" occur many times as well. This was used to characterize the poems cut from Pál Bodor's collected volume,³² or Sándor Kányádi's verses in the volume *Sirálytánc* that was withdrawn from the bookshops.³³ As far as the interpretation of the classification is concerned, in the case of the poems the researcher has a much easier time than in the case of prose, since the disputed poems were generally attached to the report. Based on this it may be established that poems fell into this category when they did not meet the requirements of socialist realist poetry, contained abstract artistic images and "did not reflect socialist reality."

g. Likewise not meeting the artistic criteria of socialist realism were verses, prose or scholarly works treating religion and transcendent reality: these were given the classification "mystical." As an example here we may mention some poems of Rainer Maria Rilke, which because of their "decadent and mystical" content were cut from a selection of world literature,³⁴ or even the volume of essays of Paul Stahl, a sociologist belonging to the school of Dimitrie Gusti, on the beginnings of literacy among Romanian peasants.³⁵

h. Miscellaneous

An objection to the author's person (because of the political role assumed) could also be grounds,³⁶ as could bibliographical references to works under prohibition,³⁷ but so could cases where only the first volume of a multi-volume novel was ready (since its conclusion was unpredictable, and thus it might even take politically unacceptable turns).³⁸

One of the characteristics, therefore, of the publishing policy of the 1950s is that the principles of publishing policy were not ethnically based, but rather certain subjects were banned, such as writing about territories beyond the borders, referring to religion or writing in the spirit of various alternative ideological currents. This ban was consistently applied in the case of both Romanian and Hungarian publications, although the application of sanctions, on the other hand, was requested mainly against the editors of the Hungarian items, such as the editors of the previously mentioned linguistic textbook of Mózes Gálffy. In addition to the content-related objections listed above, at the same time there were also certain minor problems of form that appeared as the reason for prohibition – for instance, the fact that the poems did not follow one another in the proper order (*sic!*), or that the conflict was not sufficiently argued.

Based on the prohibitions, the ideological profile that characterized the final years of this tumultuous decade takes shape. As is revealed from the list of banned works, the ideologically more permissive years of the period 1955–1956 created a cultural milieu that gave rise to significant works in the area of both Romanian and Hungarian literature and specialist literature. Romanian and Hungarian specialist works of linguistics, ethnography, history, art history and law were written, and anthologies and monographs outlining Romanian literary life between the two world wars were written.

At the same time literary works were written that tried to depict the happenings of the Stalinist recent past objectively. These presented the human dramas ensuing from the transformation of economic structures, the abuses occurring on the collective farms, the contradictions of forced industrialization or the difficulties of the village population migrating to the city,³⁹ the incompetence of the worker-managers,⁴⁰ and the bureaucratic Party organization in the Soviet Union.⁴¹

Specifically, analysis of the list of books placed on the index of the Censor's Office provides an opportunity for us to trace the hitherto unknown efforts of Romanian Hungarian literature and

scholarship of the 1950s that were judged to be dangerous by the Censor's Office. As far as the specialist works are concerned, these are the results mainly of research in history (Huszár, Lőrincz), art history (Kelemen) and linguistics (Gálffy), which nevertheless were classified as having nationalist content according to the criteria of the Censor's Office.

The banned Hungarian literary works indicate three main creative areas.

In their great majority the works tried to discuss the absurdities of the past years, such as György Beke's already mentioned report about the abuses of the collective chairman, or Tompa's *Ébredés*: although in its topic it met the requirements of socialist realism, since it discussed the scenes in the life of a factory, it struck a tone excessively critical of the regime by presenting the vacillations of the Communist factory manager, and did not depict his reception of the Revolution in Hungary in a properly negative light.

Another trend is the world of fantasy literature (futuristic novels, tales), works from which were placed on the list of banned works because behind them the Censor's Office believed that it detected veiled criticism of the regime. Here we may mention György Méhes's futuristic novel *Bölcsesség köve* (The Stone of Wisdom), which presented the professional bickering between two groups of scholars of the Romania of the 1980s, and according to the censor did not depict the development that occurred in socialist society. The other work belonging here is Mária Tamás's previously mentioned fairytale play, *Erdőtűz*, in which behind the animal characters' various actions the Censor's Office believed that it detected the allegorical portrayal of certain groups in the Hungarian Revolution.

The arrival on the scene of the new generation of poets in Romanian Hungarian literature, the appearance of new forms and themes, for example, in the poems of Sándor Kányádi and Pál Bodor, is the third main trend, which would gain legitimacy only from the 1960s onwards, and in 1958 was still branded as dangerous, incomprehensible and not publishable.

The Contradictions of Book Publishing in the 1960s

Beginning in the 1960s, on the one hand, under the effect of the ideological change typical of Romanian society as a whole, an ambition for a qualitative renewal began to be perceptible, while on the other the intellectual confinement in the area of Romanian Hungarian book publishing typical of the 1950s continued.⁴²

The qualitative renewal appears in the form of series of diverse themes. First, in 1961 the series *Romániai Magyar Írók* (Hungarian Writers of Romania) was launched, with the goal of republishing Hungarian literature of the interwar period, as was the series *Magyar Klasszikusok* (Hungarian Classics), which made classic works of Hungarian literature accessible. Openness to world literature and the classics is signaled by the *Horizont* series, which replaced the series *Kincses Könyvtár* (Library of Treasures) (1965), and later the series *Drámák* (Dramas) and *Legszebb versek* (The Loveliest Poems).⁴³

About the launch of the *Forrás* (Source) series, Aladár Lászlóffy, one of the writers later christened the *Forrás* Generation,⁴⁴ explains: “And when the Literary Publishing House launched the *Lucafarul* series for debuting authors, Géza Domokos and Ferenc Szemlér along with Majtényi somehow saw to it that the Hungarian debuting authors were also allowed to appear.”⁴⁵ From the point of view of literary history the role of the series was to promote the appearance of works by new talents, while calling the public’s attention to the fact that something new was in the works.⁴⁶ For this new generation of writers the 1960s signified real opportunities to break out, as Aladár Lászlóffy recalled later: “Something must have been going on, because matters were managed liberally in a lot of things. Among other things it was permitted to put on *avant-garde* plays, or the domesticated *avant-garde* that was accepted by the Directorate of the Press – which was not called censorship.”⁴⁷

But what did the DGPT not authorize? What we knew based on the analyses up till now was the gradual reduction of specialist works printed in the Hungarian language. The Agricultural and

Forestry Publishing House published 72 works in 1954 and only eight in 1969, and at the Technical Publishing House the number of published books declined from 12 in 1954 to three in 1969, while at the Scientific Publishing House only four books appeared in Hungarian in 1969 as opposed to 18 in 1954. This phenomenon, coupled with the lack of Hungarian-language technical training, would later on contribute to the “literature-centrism debate” appearing in the late 1960s.⁴⁸

The Problematic Subject Matter of the 1960s

The taboo topics of the 1960s, which faithfully reflect the political trends of the era, emerge from a study of the contemporary archival materials of the DGPT.

a. The *Transylvanian question*, classified in 1958 as nationalist in content, would remain a sensitive issue in the future too. For example, the repertory of the interwar Marosvásárhely journal *Zord Idő* was not allowed to be published because it contained a number of titles that might possibly have referred to the general mood of the Hungarians of Romania at the time: *Ardealul este al ardelenilor* (Transylvania Belongs to the Transylvanians), *Secuiul e pe moarte* (The Dying Szekler), *Vremuri de coșmar* (Nightmarish Times), *Viața în urma morții* (Life after Death).⁴⁹ The error of Tolnai’s novel *Polgármester úr* (Mr. Mayor) in turn was that it depicted Transylvania as part of Hungary.⁵⁰ But likewise withdrawn was Lucian Blaga’s volume of plays, from which the “interweaving of the two peoples living side by side” was not apparent.⁵¹ In comparison to the 1950s this subject matter was supplemented further by the appearance of novels with Saxon themes, which attributed to the Saxon population an outstanding role in Transylvania’s economic and intellectual development. Such a novel, for example, is Adolf Meschendörfer’s *Die Büffelbrunnen* (The Buffalo Well), in connection with which the main reservation of the censor was that the work buttressed the enforcement of Saxon interests by the ethnic group’s cultural

superiority, while it depicted Romanian society as a rural society that had hardly started down the path to civilization.⁵² Another important new element was a prohibition on focusing greater interest on Transylvania in comparison to other Romanian regions in Romanian works. An example of this is *Ideologia generației române de la 1848 din Transilvania* (The Ideology of the Romanian Generation of 1848 in Transylvania), which discussed the ideological system of the Romanian revolutionary generation.⁵³

The blurring of the concepts of *political nation* and *cultural nation* likewise remained punishable. In the year examined, 1968, three works censored on this basis were penned by Hungarian authors. An anthology, *Virágének* (Flower Song), is a collection of Hungarian-language love poems from the beginnings of Hungarian literature, which discussed Hungarian literature as a whole, irrespective of the current state borders.⁵⁴ However strange it may appear, the other two works are about speleology. One is Ernő Balogh's work *A földalatti világ csodái* (The Wonders of the Underground World), which, on the grounds that it was based only on a Hungarian bibliography, was then withdrawn once and for all.⁵⁵ The other is János Xantusz's book *Az óceántól a csillagokig* (From the Ocean to the Stars), two chapters of which had to be rewritten according to the censor's recommendations, since, on the one hand, when presenting the history of the Speleological Institute in Kolozsvár (Cluj), it mentioned mainly Hungarian speleologists, and on the other it listed as examples caves in both Hungary and Romania collectively, without specifying territorial borders, and it conveyed the conclusions of speleologists from Hungary referring to caves in Romania.⁵⁶

But this same prohibition remains valid for Romanian publications as well. Thus the censors of the DGPT sent back for rewriting all material that when presenting Romanian culture/literature/language/scholarship treated the territories of Greater Romania left outside the borders as one unit with Romania. Such, for example, was the *Presa literară română* (The Romanian Literary Press), which collected the program articles of journals important

from the viewpoint of Romanian culture and would have liked to include those presently outside the borders as well,⁵⁷ but one may also mention the case of the repertory of the interwar periodical *Revista Fundațiilor Regale*, which among other things was banned on the grounds that some of the articles included made reference to Bessarabia.⁵⁸

Yet we must emphasize the point that although these subject matters that were labeled nationalist in 1958 lived on during the circumstances of the late 1960s as well, their classification appeared only in the rarest case (once out of 62 cases). At this time the appellation was probably already considered to be politically incorrect. Moreover, whereas in 1958 studies and literary works dealing with folk traditions, language, (Romanian) national history and religion were still classified as nationalist in content, in 1968 these kinds of works could appear freely.

b. Writings criticizing or parodying the country's domestic, foreign and economic policy measures formed another category of taboo subjects. It was for this reason, for example, that Stelian Gruia's novella *Reportaj despre seceris* (Report on the Harvest), capturing the protests against collectivization, was cut from the author's omnibus volume.⁵⁹ Or it was for this reason that the censors had the contemporary author Ștefan Haralamb's comedy *Viceversa* rewritten in its entirety because "although it moves in the realm of the absurd, the work's component elements and the concepts it uses are chosen in such a way that it appears that they make fun of every aspect of our social reality... it is as if the work at the linguistic and plot level refers to certain measures aimed at perfecting our economic and social life."⁶⁰ In the same way silence had to surround Romania's participation in the war on the German side as well, but nor could reference to the works or activities of anti-Communist thinkers and leaders appear – the inclusion of the previously mentioned repertory of the *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* was justified on, among others, these grounds. When it came to the republication of Dániel Nagy's allegorical novel written between the two world wars, *Cirkusz*, one

of the characters, the tightrope walker Dine, had to be deleted from the novel on instructions from the censor, because the personality of the latter symbolized the Romanian political elite.⁶¹

The Censor's Office had prefaces and epilogues attempting to reveal the absurdities of Romanian cultural policy, and works referring to this, likewise removed. In this way did it reject, for instance, the epilogue to József Méliusz's novel *Város a ködben* (City in the Fog), *Város a ködben története* (The History of "City in the Fog"), in which the author testifies to the nearly 30 years of tribulations surrounding its publication.⁶² But the trouble was the same with the preface to the novel *Fragmentarium*, by the later infamous Ion Lăcrănjă, in which the author called attention to the absurdities of literary life.⁶³

c. A recurring theme is the description of the clash between *decadent society and the alienated individual*, and the cuts and possibly permanent withdrawals because of it. An example of this is János Szász's *Mamaia by Night*, which portrays a society that is corrupt and at a low point morally.⁶⁴ We may mention also István Szöcs's Hungarian-language detective novel *Rovarcsapda*, which was likewise placed on the index of banned books because of the image of society that was depicted too vulgarly ("it presents a depraved and cynical intellectual world").⁶⁵ Marin Sorescu's volume of verse, *Tinerețea lui Don Quijote* (Don Quixote's Youth), was sent back to be reedited, since "most verses are tragic in tone... It is characterized by a feeling of alienation that deepens until the loss of the ego."⁶⁶

d. But it could also happen that because of the author's departure from the country reference to him/her could not appear in the bibliographies and encyclopedias. Here the best example is the cutting of personalities in the *Dicționar de pseudonime, anagrame, asteronime, criptonime și alonime ale scriitorilor, publiciștilor, ziariștilor români* (Dictionary of Pseudonyms, Anagrams, Asteronyms, Cryptonyms and Allonyms of Romanian Writers, Publicists and Journalists), edited by M. Straje, on the pretext that the publicists in question were no longer in the country.⁶⁷

In 1968 it was now also typical that the Censor's Office *requested additions taking into account the latest Party directives concerning the topic of the work*. For example, it asked that in the specialist work *Geologie minieră* (Mineral Geology) Romania's aluminum production also be mentioned alongside the most important aluminum-producing countries.⁶⁸ The demand raised *vis-à-vis* Alexandru Pescaru's demographic specialist work was that it should discuss the processes also from the perspective of the 1966 abortion law.⁶⁹ At the same time, the Censor's Office called on the University of Bucharest to "update its analytical programs in accordance with the guidelines of the most recent Party resolutions... since its materials up to then have relied mainly on Soviet materials written in the 1950s."⁷⁰ The signs of the distancing from the Soviet Union are perceptible in the critique attached to the volume by P. Hanaș, *Studii de istorie literară* (Studies in Literary History), which had the passages about the Romanian people's traditional bonds with the Russians cut out of the study on Mihail Kogălniceanu.⁷¹

A Few Thoughts to Sum up

Based on our data we have supplemented and restructured the typology set up by Adrian Marino regarding the outward forms of censorship. Marino distinguishes seven typical cases of censorship, demonstrating each case through several heavily cut examples of Romanian literary output. Thus according to the Marino-type categorization any of the following could happen: 1) only a certain part, a verse or a chapter must be removed from a volume, although the volume may appear; naturally the censor is no longer interested in the fact that in certain cases the volume will be structurally mutilated and incomprehensible as a consequence;⁷² 2) the censor lifts certain parts of the material out of moral considerations;⁷³ 3) after appearing, the material is withdrawn, because the Censor's Office is warned after the fact from above that the publication is unsuitable from some standpoint;⁷⁴ 4) the author has departed for abroad, and therefore his/her work cannot be published;⁷⁵ 5) censorship criteria have become stricter since the first edition;⁷⁶

6) after a text is deemed to be dangerous, further publications of the author in question are banned;⁷⁷ 7) the previous works of an author rejected in Romania who tries to publish abroad in secret are all withdrawn from the market and his/her right to publish in Romania is withdrawn for good.⁷⁸

On the one hand Marino was unfamiliar with the mechanism of the process at the institutional level, and categorized only on the basis of the outwardly perceivable outcome, and on the other he confused the outward forms that censorship assumed with the formal reasons for the prohibition.

Based on the archival material, however, we may establish that in practice the Censor's Office distinguished three different cases that called for censorship in the 1950s and 1960s: those works to which the inspectors of the General Directorate did not grant the classification "printable" (*bun de tipar*) because out of some consideration of content or form they did not conform to the directives that happened to be in effect; those works that passed through the filter of the Censor's Office by virtue of the censor's inattention or ignorance, while the Censor's Office noticed the errors only in the first copy sent up for inspection after printing and did not grant the classification "distributable" (*bun de difuzat*); finally, those that had already been distributed, although upon subsequent warning the Censor's Office judged them to be dangerous and withdrew them from circulation.

As far as the form-related part of the prohibitions was concerned, in the 1950s in most cases the General Directorate ordered the excision of some parts (certain chapters, some poems, paragraphs); or it requested the attachment of an explanatory preface or a more critical tone, but in many cases a complete ban on publishing the work also occurred. In the 1960s banned material was now rarer, and works only ended up on the banned list when in the censor's judgment not even cuts or additions would help them. What occurred much more often was that the employees of the Censor's Office demanded additions, such as mention of certain Party resolutions at the appropriate passages or insertion of the appropriate ideological phrases.

The subject of our examination was also how the changing political circumstances influenced the development of content labeled as nationalist by the Censor's Office.

In Romanian politics a gradual reevaluation of internationalism and the concept of nation can be perceived from 1958 onwards. This policy of a separate path, reinforced by the withdrawal of Soviet troops, was made completely official with the so-called Declaration of Independence in 1964, and in the first years of Ceaușescu's ascension to power it would become obvious that a new era had commenced from both the political and the ideological point of view.

The impact of this ideological change on the functioning of the Censor's Office can be measured mostly through the change in subject matters branded as nationalist in 1958. The 1958 list discussed above labeled as nationalist every work that dealt with aspects of the Transylvanian question, which on some level blurred the concepts of political nation and cultural nation, analyzed the issue of the purity of the language (Romanian/Hungarian) or referred to traditions and religion. By 1968, in contrast, the interpretation of the concept had narrowed and was transformed considerably, the ban on referring to traditions and the purity of language was dropped, and what remained was the Transylvanian question, and moreover the problems deriving from the blurring of the concepts of political nation and cultural nation. This change may be attributed to the coming of national ideology to the forefront; from the mid-1960s onwards, but mainly after the Ninth Congress, dealing with folk traditions and language became once again canonized, while national history was integrated into socialist culture. Obviously this change is characteristic of Romanian culture; towards the ethnic minority cultures (Saxon and Hungarian) the turnabout resulted in antithetical measures. The inspectors of works and writings discussing and presenting the history and culture of the minorities in 1968 now concentrated on the formation of the "socialist, homogeneous nation" in view, and this would guide the reports of the censors in the two decades to follow as well.

Notes

- 1 Bogdan Ficeac, *Tehnici de manipulare* [Techniques of Manipulation] (Bucharest, 1998), p. 67.
- 2 George Schöpflin, “Introduction,” in George Schöpflin, ed., *Censorship and Political Communication in Eastern Europe* (New York, 1983), p. 1.
- 3 For more on this see Stefano Bottoni, “A hatalom értelmisége – az értelmiség hatalma. A Földes László-ügy” [The Intelligentsia of the Regime – the Power of the Intelligentsia. The László Földes Affair], in Nándor Bárdi, ed., *Autonóm magyarok? Székelyföld változása az “ötvenes” években* [Autonomous Hungarians? The Change of the Székelyföld in the 1950s] (Csíkszereda, 2005), pp. 572–614.
- 4 I owe thanks to Gyula Dávid, who supplemented the conclusions that I drew from the archival data related to this process with his verbal communications.
- 5 Mátyás Domokos, *Leletmentés. Könyvek sorsa a “nemlétező” cenzúra korában 1948–1989* [Salvage Excavation. The Fate of Books in the Era of “Non-Existent” Censorship 1948–1989] (Budapest, 1996), p. 9.
- 6 Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (National Central Historical Archives, hereafter ANIC), fond CC al PMR, *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* dos. 9/1958, f. 2.
- 7 The work was finally published after the author’s death, in 1977 (volume 1) and 1982 (volume 2).
- 8 ANIC, fond CC al PMR, *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* dos. 4/1958, f. 53.
- 9 ANIC, fond CC al PMR, *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* dos. 9/1958, f. 10.
- 10 It would be published in 1962: Hans Liebhardt and Dieter Roth, eds., *Der Eisenhans: siebenbürgisch-sächsische Märchen* (Bucharest, 1962).
- 11 ANIC, fond CC al PMR, *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* dos. 9/1958, f. 52.
- 12 *Ibid.*, f. 101.
- 13 Alexandru Vlahuța (1858–1919): Romanian poet and publicist.
- 14 ANIC, fond CC al PMR, *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* dos. 9/1958, f. 13.
- 15 *Ibid.*, f. 16.

- 16 *Ibid.*, f. 101.
- 17 *Ibid.*, f. 67.
- 18 *Ibid.*, f. 9.
- 19 *Ibid.*, f. 68.
- 20 ANIC, fond CC al PMR, *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* dos. 4/1958, f.
- 21 ANIC, fond CC al PMR, *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* dos. 9/1958, f. 10.
- 22 Eusebiu Camilar (1910–1965): Romanian writer and translator.
- 23 ANIC, fond CC al PMR, *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* dos. 9/1958, f. 3.
- 24 *Ibid.*, f. 16.
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 ANIC, fond CC al PMR, *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* dos. 9/1958, f. 56.
- 27 ANIC, fond CC al PMR, *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* dos. 4/1958, ff. 135–136.
- 28 ANIC, fond CC al PMR, *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* dos. 9/1958, f. 11.
- 29 *Ibid.*, f. 7.
- 30 *Ibid.*, f. 15.
- 31 The reference here is to a publication by the Romanian Academy of Sciences, a study in the volume of linguistic studies published in honor of the Romanian linguist Iorgu Iordan; ANIC, fond CC al PMR, *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* dos. 9/1958, f. 9.
- 32 ANIC, fond CC al PMR, *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* dos. 9/1958, f. 2.
- 33 *Ibid.*, f. 15.
- 34 *Ibid.*, f. 5.
- 35 *Ibid.*, f. 10.
- 36 This was the justification for cutting, for example, the poems of Jules Romains, who collaborated with the Germans during the war, from the selection of lyrics from world literature edited by Zoltán Franyó, *Évezredek húrjain* [On the Strings of Millennia]; ANIC, fond CC al PMR, *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* dos. 9/1958, f. 5.
- 37 The reference here is to a few items contained in the bibliography included with the monograph by the nineteenth-century Romanian language reformer Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu, which at the given

- point in time appeared on the index; ANIC, fond CC al PMR, *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* dos. 9/1958, f. 13.
- 38 This is a reference to Pál Sőni's novel, which describes a petit-bourgeois family's process of adaptation to the new circumstances.
- 39 These, for instance, are the topics provoking a ban found in a volume of short stories by the today unknown Ștefan Luca; ANIC, fond CC al PMR, *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* dos. 9/1958, f. 1.
- 40 A reference to one of the novellas in A. Breitenhofer's volume of short stories *Aus unseren Tagen* [From Our Days], in which the author pillories the behavior of a worker-manager; ANIC, fond CC al PMR, *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* dos. 9/1958, f. 4.
- 41 This is a reference to a novella by a Soviet author, Chakovskii, which realistically describes conditions prior to the Twentieth Congress; ANIC, fond CC al PMR, *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* dos. 9/1958, f. 6.
- 42 Gyula Dávid, "A romániai magyar könyvkiadás két évtizede" [Two Decades of Hungarian Book Publishing in Romania], *Alföld* 2 (1991): 92.
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 The first *Forrás* generation: born mostly between 1936 and 1939, it is "a generational shift, as well as a shift in trends and taste, a shift in 'aesthetic norms,' a kind of shift in 'canon'... as opposed to the then dominant-compulsory (binding creating power hand and foot) socialist realist themes and forms, it testifies to the troubles and emotions of private life. In addition, it reached back to such forerunners and traditions, and chose such modes of expression that explicitly or tacitly overstep forbidden boundaries." Klára Széles, "Az első Forrás-nemzedék – egy jellegzetes képviselőjük indulása" [The First Forrás Generation – the Start of One of Their Typical Representatives], *Árgus* 7–8 (2002). Its representatives included Zoltán Veress, Aladár Lászlóffy, Domokos Szilágyi, Tibor Bálint, Lajos Kántor, Pál Jancsik, Lajos Páll, Csaba Lászlóffy, Mária Tamás, Gizella Hervay, István Tóth and Júlia Szilágyi.
- 45 "Vissza a Forrásokhoz. Beszélgetés Lászlóffy Aladárral" [Back to the Source. A Conversation with Aladár Lászlóffy], *Tiszatáj* 7 (1998): 47–54.
- 46 Lajos Kántor and Gusztáv Láng, *Romániai magyar irodalom 1945–1970* [Hungarian Literature of Romania 1945–1970] (Bucharest, 1973), p. 39.

- 47 “Vissza a Forrásokhoz. Beszélgetés Lászlóffy Aladárral” [Back to the Source. A Conversation with Aladár Lászlóffy], *Tiszatáj* 7 (1998): 51.
- 48 Dávid, “A romániai magyar könyvkiadás két évtizede,” p. 92.
- 49 DJM, Direcția generală ale Presei și Tipăriturilor Împuternicitul Tg-Mureș. Set de note cuprinzând intervenții efectuate la DGPT București pe materiale prezentate spre publicare dos. 6/1967, f. 247.
- 50 *Ibid.*, f. 324.
- 51 *Ibid.*, f. 356.
- 52 *Ibid.*, f. 180.
- 53 *Ibid.*, f. 295.
- 54 *Ibid.*, f. 81.
- 55 *Ibid.*, f. 111.
- 56 *Ibid.*, f. 183.
- 57 *Ibid.*, ff. 82–83.
- 58 *Ibid.*, f. 248.
- 59 *Ibid.*, f. 150.
- 60 *Ibid.*, f. 291.
- 61 *Ibid.*, f. 43.
- 62 *Ibid.*, f. 362.
- 63 *Ibid.*, f. 363.
- 64 *Ibid.*, f. 281.
- 65 *Ibid.*, f. 7–8.
- 66 *Ibid.*, ff. 112–125.
- 67 *Ibid.*, f. 317.
- 68 *Ibid.*, f. 48.
- 69 *Ibid.*, f. 78.
- 70 *Ibid.*, f. 299.
- 71 *Ibid.*, f. 205.
- 72 Adrian Marino, *Cenzura în România* [Censorship in Romania] (Craiova, 2000), p. 71.
- 73 *Ibid.*
- 74 *Ibid.*
- 75 *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- 76 *Ibid.*, p. 74.
- 77 *Ibid.*
- 78 *Ibid.*, p. 76.

Ágnes Kiss

**FORMAL COORDINATION
AND CONTROL MECHANISMS
WITHIN THE CENSORS' OFFICE IN ROMANIA
(1949–1965)**

Introduction

This paper is about the organizational aspects of Romanian Communist censorship, more specifically about the functioning of the censors' office (called the General Directorate of Press and Printing, henceforth the GDPP). A large amount of valuable research has already been done on Romanian Communist censorship, most of it pointing at its devastating effects on cultural life. Studies based on archival research and collections of documents describe the institutional set-up at large and the basic process of censorship, as well as its manifestation in different cultural domains, by dealing prominently with identifying censored contents.¹ These institutional narratives are further nuanced by testimonies of persons involved in the media process (authors, journalists, editors, and so on), and interviews and diaries that reveal aspects of self-censorship, as well as tricks applied by authors to circumvent formal rules.² Considering the fairly great interest in this topic, it is rather surprising that references to the internal functioning of the organizations involved in censorship – the media through which rules were communicated and enforced – appear only rarely. The neglect of these organizational aspects applies not only to the Romanian case, but to the cases of other Soviet-style Communist censorship systems too.³ Yet accounting for the effects of censorship also implies identifying the internal mechanisms that could contribute to the effective implementation of censorship norms.

The puzzle guiding this research was spawned precisely by this gap in the literature. It is reasonable to expect that a policy succeeds

if ends and means are clearly defined and execution is unequivocally regulated through clear operational rules. However, this does not seem to be the case with censorship, where the goals and norms for interventions could not be comprehensively operationalized. This is due to the totalitarian scope of control, which resulted, on the one hand, in a vast domain of possible “ideological and political errors” that was not feasible to cover with precise and exhaustive instructions, and on the other, in a considerable variety of materials to be censored. So the question arises: what were the internal mechanisms that could ensure the effective operation of the censors’ office despite the shortcomings at the level of policy formulation?

A tempting answer would be that “properly socialized” and devoted censors simply knew what to filter out, and could categorically spot all inappropriate issues. Yet, according to GDPP statistics regarding the activity of its employees from the provinces, we gain a different picture. Censors were far from being certain of what they were supposed to do: between June 1954 and February 1955, there were 750 “good interventions” but also 265 “mistakes,” consisting of “missed” problematic content and “unjustified interventions.”²⁴

If not the censor’s commitment or “sixth sense,” what could ensure the coherence of the censoring process? In this paper I will attempt to give an answer rooted in organizational sociology. According to theories of organizational behavior that deal with some lack of information related to actual task execution, the negative effects of “task uncertainty” can be attenuated by special means of coordination and control employed within the organization.⁵ In what follows I will focus on precisely these organizational means. “Means of coordination” will refer to all tools employed in order to provide information to censors concerning the norms of censorship, or, to put it simply, instructions regarding what to filter out, whereas “means of control” will stand for all tools that ensure compliance and induce censors to meet requirements.

This research differs from previous studies based on archival materials in that the focus here is not on the content defined in the internal working documents of the GDPP as requiring being

censored (such as concrete lists of forbidden topics, and blacklisted authors or works), but on the function of these documents in the operation of the censorship machinery. In presenting the specific techniques, I start with the recruitment of appropriate personnel for this work, which is probably the most basic mechanism of control in any organization. After this, I turn to a specific means of coordination, namely the written materials provided by the center in the forms of *Circulars* and *Notes*, documents which contained the operationalized forms of censorship norms. Next, I present various tools that combine the functions of coordination and control: censors' reports and their superiors' feedback, control and instruction in the workplace, and symposia. Finally, I deal with the system of rewards and sanctions employed.

Before starting the analysis, some specifications need to be made regarding the object of the study. First, the focus is narrowed down from two perspectives. On the one hand, the analysis only covers a limited time period (1949–1965), but the endpoint does not mark a change in the internal functioning of the GDPP. Rather, this choice was dictated by the coherence of the collected and processed archive materials. On the other hand, I only study the coordination and control of censors working in the provinces. This focus does not limit the possibility of arriving at general conclusions concerning the internal functioning of the GDPP, because similar methods were applied for the whole operative staff. Moreover, it can be regarded as a least likely setting for successful operation of the censorship machinery, because censors' offices from the provinces were set geographically far from the center, and hence coordination and control through immediate and direct discussions could have not been employed as a rule. Second, by focusing on the GDPP I do not intend to suggest that it represented the linchpin of the whole censorship system, or that it was the only agency responsible for the effectiveness of censorship. It is well known that before landing on the censor's desk, the texts and other cultural products passed through a multitude of checkpoints, including local and/or central Party offices, as well as the hierarchy of editorial offices, publishing

houses and different cultural institutions. Furthermore, for a comprehensive analysis of censorship mechanisms, the informal means of coordination and control within the GDPP, as well as within and among the different institutions involved in the censorship process, should be accounted for too. This paper, however, cannot undertake to analyze all these aspects. Nevertheless, the analysis of the internal working of the GDPP seems to be useful, because the appropriate formal organizational design is undeniably a crucial factor in effective policy implementation.

The General Set-up of the Censors' Office

Histories of Romanian Communist censorship customarily begin with August 1944, when Romania changed sides in World War II and joined the Allies, and as a consequence, Soviet-type censorship was almost immediately installed. The story continues with the Paris Peace Treaty of 1947, which obliged Romania to outlaw the “fascists” and “all other bodies engaged in anti-Soviet propaganda,” a requirement that was met by setting up the Directorate of Press and Printing within the Ministry of Arts and Information. In 1949, this was upgraded to the status of General Directorate (GDPP), directly responsible to the Council of Ministers.⁶ This institutional set-up was reorganized only in 1975, when the censors' office, now called the Committee of Press and Printing (CPP), became formally responsible to the Romanian Communist Party too. Shortly afterwards, in 1977, censorship was officially (although not in practice) abolished and the CPP was closed down.

The main targets of the censors' office were laid down in 1949; nevertheless, more and more new objects came into its focus during the early 1950s.⁷ According to the legislation, the role of the GDPP was to exercise state control “for protecting state secrets,” on the one hand, and “on the political content of all printed matter and other materials with a character of propaganda and agitation,” on the other. More specific tasks were laid down in 18 points, stipulating control over the content of all kinds of printed matter, the printing houses and all means of replication, the news agency (*Agerpres*),

the content of radio and TV productions, museums and exhibitions, cinemas, all forms of visual agitation, and theatrical performances, as well as over the classification, usage, circulation and distribution of all printed matter. Besides these, the GDPP authorized the import and export of all materials in its sphere of control, had to inform the authorities about the offenses, and organized the professional training of its employees.

In parallel with the widening of the GDPP's scope of duties, one can witness the mushrooming of specialized departments and the growth in the size of personnel. Whereas in 1949 there were only six specialized departments, their number grew to 12 in 1962 (Science and Technology, Literature, Libraries–Museums–Secondhand bookshops, Radio–TV, Arts, Central Press, and so on).⁸ The staff transferred in 1949 from the Ministry of Arts and Information involved about 100 persons, but in four years' time only the operative staff numbered more than 300, this remaining the rough average over the studied period.⁹

From the very first moment the organization included local branches. Apart from checking books and licensing new periodicals (duties that were performed by central offices), censors from the provinces, called delegates (*delegat*), had to accomplish all the tasks of the GDPP at the local level. The whole organization was structured in a strictly centralized hierarchy, the delegates being subordinated to a department called the Directorate of Instruction and Control (DIC). Members of the DIC were called “instructors” (*instructor*), and each of them was responsible for several “collectives” (*colectivă*): that is, groups of delegates working in a locality under the guidance of the collective's chief (*șef colectivă*). The size of these collectives varied from one to eight persons, depending on the amount of tasks to be carried out: that is, the number of newspapers, theaters, typographers, and so on operating in each county. Although at the beginning of 1950 there were only 12 censors working in ten cities, in 1951, they already numbered 79 persons working in 58 localities, and this figure remained the approximate average for the rest of the studied period.¹⁰

As already mentioned, the basic task of GDPP employees was to protect state secrets and to examine the political content of cultural products. But what does this mean in practice? According to the basic working document entitled *Instructions Concerning the Activity of the Censorship Bureaus from the Province*, all “manifestations of the class enemy” had to be erased, as well as any content that was “meant to instigate against State organs [or] the USSR, [...] or to defame people’s democracies,” information that “would contribute to the weakening and undermining of the alliance between the working class and the working peasantry, and to the repression of class struggle, or would propagate racial hatred against the nationalities living together,” “would advocate or popularize imperialist scientific and artistic manifestations,” or “advocated maleficent religious principles of the class enemy and imperialists, principles that would harm the legal norms in force.” Censors also had to prevent the publication of “military secrets [...] regarding the national defense strategies [...], information related to the economy, administrative organization, technical details of factories, industrial installations, hospitals,” or of information “that would induce panic: about epidemics, fire disasters, floods, droughts, calamities of great proportions, railway accidents, crimes, thefts, and so on.” Likewise, the reproduction of news “from “imperialist sources” also had to be prevented.¹¹

Based on these quotations, one can see that the guidelines provided for the censors were formulated in rather broad and vague terms. Yet the smooth operation of the system required that each GDPP employee be able to employ these guidelines in the most precise manner. This challenge was partially foreseen by the designers of the organization too, who put much effort into trying to eliminate the *ad hoc* application of the guidelines.

Means of Coordination and Control Regarding the Delegates' Activity

Recruitment

To establish and maintain authority over the bureaucratic organization of the Party and other state organs, recruitment of reliable personnel was considered to be of paramount importance. Summarizing the GDPP's activity in this sense, a report written by the DIC in 1957 stated that the aim was "the recruitment of young cadres with satisfactory professional backgrounds, showing an adequate political-ideological level, with healthy origins, people who understand and are able to put into practice the political line of our Party."¹²

There were two main sources of recruitment: Party cadres and fresh university graduates. The regional or local Party Committees were asked to propose reliable persons, check their "files" and send a characterization to the Central Committee of the Party. After this approval, GDPP instructors examined the candidate's proficiency. The procedure for recruiting fresh graduates was easier, because they were assigned by the Ministries of Education and of Workforces to a specific workplace. Trying to take advantage of this possibility, the GDPP requested students, specifying the number of persons that they needed and their specialization.¹³

As early as 1954, the GDPP had realized that "the orientation in the recruitment was wrong" and professional competence might be more important than other qualifications.¹⁴ The DIC pinpointed the fact that the most adequate source for recruitment was the universities, and proposed checking professional competence first and the cadre files only afterwards.¹⁵ Nevertheless, despite several attempts to change the recruitment strategy, the practice remained the same, delegates being recruited preponderantly through Party channels in the 1960s too.¹⁶

People recruited to the local censors' offices were indeed young, but generally older and less educated than censors from the center.

In 1951, half of the delegates were under 35 (three quarters in the capital), and at the end of 1965, about 62 percent of the delegates were still younger than 40 (80 percent in the capital).¹⁷ However, the educational gap diminished over the 15 years. In 1953, half of the delegates held high-school diplomas or a higher degree, whereas in Bucharest this range was 71 percent. Towards the end of 1965, this increased to 83 percent among the delegates, whereas in Bucharest it was already 97 percent, but still about 10 percent of the delegates had finished only elementary school.¹⁸ The university graduates mostly held degrees in the humanities, such as philology, history, pedagogy, philosophy, journalism, law, economics, and so on.¹⁹ Although regarding age and education delegates lagged behind the staff from the center, they seemed to “compensate” on the dimension of “healthy origins.” About half of them came from workers’ families, and this category accounted for far fewer in Bucharest; however, the “unhealthy” category of intellectual background was kept extremely low in both groups, at about 3 percent.²⁰

Although nowhere mentioned among the selection criteria, language proficiency and hence ethnicity had to be of core importance in the recruitment process due to the need for monitoring the cultural production in minority languages. According to internal statistics, during the studied period about 40 percent of the delegates belonged to a national minority group, meaning that ethnic minorities were grossly overrepresented among censors. The peak was in 1958 with 46 percent, out of which 26 percent were Hungarians, while the lowest figure was 31 percent in 1960, with 17 percent Hungarians.²¹

As a final remark regarding the profile of the recruited delegates, one should note that a relatively large proportion of them were just part-time employees of the GDPP: for instance, in 1955, this amounted to 64 percent. Most of these people held offices at the local Party organization or the local government (*Sfat Popular*), but some were teachers and even newspaper editors.²²

Means of Coordination: Circulars and Notes

Circulars (*Circulare*) and Notes (*Note*) were documents addressed to all censors in order to guarantee coherence across the censors' work. The difference between them is that Circulars contained lists of issues that were forbidden or allowed to appear, while the Notes consisted of compilations of censored materials, meant as models to be imitated by censors in similar cases. These means of coordination correspond to the two basic types of issues that had to be erased: the Circulars concerned state secrets and other clearly definable information, while the Notes were meant to highlight "political-ideological deviations."

The Circulars contained "the state secrets and working dispositions" and an attachment comprising instructions related to the everyday work of censors.²³ The specific data for the list of secrets were issued by different ministries and centralized by the GDPP.

A newly issued Circular did not represent the updated version of the previous ones; rather, each issue added new items or revoked some earlier dispositions; consequently, they had to be handled as one corpus. Between 1951 and 1963, the delegates got at least 159 Circulars (each of 1 to 13 pages), which amounted to a total of 378 pages, and at least 76 pages were added in 1965.²⁴ The Circulars had a rather unsystematic content, comprising forbidden items from the most diverse domains listed more or less randomly, but also exceptions (permitted items); furthermore, issues that were allowed to appear could bear different qualifiers, such as "only with data mentioned in the central press," "without editorial comments," "placed on a peripheral place on the page and with a moderate title," and so on. The delegates asked repeatedly that the Circulars be systematized or completely updated from time to time, but this never happened over the studied period.²⁵

In the attachments of the Circulars the focus was on the technical details of control, rules that did not really change over time, yet for some reason the DIC felt that it had to be occasionally

retraced. Besides these, through the Circulars the DIC occasionally requested special reports about the situation of libraries, secondhand bookshops, markets from the provinces, and so on. The Circulars also contained a list of recommended readings (books and articles of Soviet authors, official Party documents), reminders to the censors to read the central press, and specified topics for individual or group study.

Unlike issues considered to be state secrets, political-ideological mistakes could not be thoroughly defined, and given the vagueness of the guidelines in this sense, the best method to ensure coherence seemed to be to provide examples of correct interventions. The Notes were collections of the best interventions on texts with “improper” political-ideological content. It must be emphasized that this idea did not originate from the instructors or higher GDPP forums, but was demanded by the delegates, who simply could not apply the existing abstract guidelines, yet could face harsh criticism for missed interventions. On their insistence, this technique of instruction, which represents an ingenious tool for coordination, was introduced in 1958.²⁶

The interventions compiled in the Notes were chosen from the works of the delegates and censors working in Bucharest. The account of an intervention usually contained a short summary of the examined text, a quotation from the incriminating sentence, paragraph or verse, the reasons for considering it to be mistaken, and the solution deemed correct by the DIC, namely, deleting or modifying: in the latter case the changed version was also provided. There are not enough data to estimate the size of this material for the studied period; nevertheless, it seems that in the 1970s the Notes already amounted to 600–700 pages a year.²⁷

Combined Means of Control and Coordination: Reports and Feedback, Control and Instruction in the Workplace, Symposia

The most evident means of control are the regular activity reports and controls on the files executed by instructors. A rather surprising element, however, is the fact that local collectives received detailed

feedback on their reports. However, this practice had a rather evident twofold purpose: on the one hand, the message was that “you are closely watched,” being meant to stimulate the censor into doing more thorough work; on the other, the feedback provided further guidance by pinpointing and correcting mistakes. So the control and guidance functions were closely intertwined. This phenomenon was also present in the instructors’ fieldwork, which besides control was also aimed at instructing delegates in their workplace. It is worth emphasizing that, contrary to our stereotypes regarding the style and language of “the Communist report,” these reports, and especially the feedback, were far from being written exclusively in a dry Communist jargon with stock phrases; on the contrary, they contained a considerable amount of useful information, frequently written in a very personal tone.

Delegates had to submit two types of regular activity reports, monthly and trimestral.²⁸ These were compiled by the chief of the collective and signed by the other delegates, and each type had to be prepared after a well-specified model. The monthly report was a detailed overview of all press interventions, containing the following data: quotation from the paper and the related reference material, justification for the intervention, solution (deletion or modification), the modified text, the name of the censor who executed the intervention, and cuts from the publication with the place of intervention. The interventions were grouped in two categories: “political-ideological” and “interventions according to the dispositions,” the latter referring to specific issues mentioned in the Circulars. The trimestral report was more comprehensive, covering all domains of activity, but also more analytical in the sense that the interventions were rated as “good,” “unjustified” and “missed,” following the structure indicated in the case of monthly reports (citation, motivation, name of the censor, and so on). The “good” interventions were those that the censors were most proud of or the ones that were highlighted as such by the instructors. The other two categories were compiled based on the post-circulation control (the feedback coming from the instructors and the local Party organs), but also those noticed by delegates themselves.

Based on the data required by the DIC it is clear that collectives were requested to keep a record of each censor's work separately. Furthermore, the motivations attached to interventions were meant to filter out *ad hoc* interpretations, the possibility that censors might act "out of instinct." By asking to explain their interventions, censors were pressed to reiterate, learn and consciously apply the Party line. Thus one can safely argue that this was an attempt at coordinating the censors' mindset.

Each report sent by local collectives was answered in about a month.²⁹ The instructors collated the reports and the published materials (and thus the post-circulation censorship of printed matters represented the control of the delegates too), and counted and rated the interventions, and even if they agreed with the actual intervention, it was mentioned if the motivation was wrong. When noticing missed interventions, instructors explained what should have been the reason for intervention, and in this way they provided further guidelines. The final version of the feedback contained personalized remarks about the delegates' work, and criticism could occasionally be very harsh.³⁰ Besides evaluating their activity, the feedback contained lists of reference materials for individual study, tips for controlling, and other issues mentioned in the Circulars.

With more or less regularity, local collectives were visited by their instructors for a few days. According to the original plans, this should have occurred once every two months; but in fact the visits were much more irregular.³¹ On the one hand, the task was to make exercises on printed matter, examining in parallel the local periodicals, to test the censors' knowledge concerning the dispositions, to discuss current political matters and to verify whether the delegates were reading the central press and other recommended materials. On the other, the instructors inspected the typographers, paper recyclers, museums, and so on, to see whether the received reports matched the real situation. Occasionally the instructors discussed matters with the editors and collected information about the delegates from the local Party organs. Upon returning to Bucharest, the instructors wrote detailed reports that

contained information ranging from observations concerning the delegates' work to comments regarding their personal life and attitudes. Later all important observations were discussed at DIC meetings.³²

Unlike the previously presented personalized techniques, the symposia were instances that implied a form of guidance and control applied to and in the presence of all delegates. The symposia provided occasions for theoretical and practical instructions and represented an opportunity for a larger-scale information exchange that fostered coherent application of the censorship norms. Furthermore, the symposium was an occasion for a demonstration of the power and knowledge of the GDPP leaders in front of the delegates, which was aimed at stimulating censors into doing harder work by means of honorable mentions and by public embarrassment.

Starting from 1952, the DIC organized three-day-long symposia of a "guiding and educational character"³³ for the GDPP delegates, almost on a yearly basis.³⁴ Attendance was mandatory, and the presentations and discussions were generally organized in plenary sessions. A symposium usually contained the following blocks: lectures, activity reports of certain collectives, activity reports of the DIC, discussions, and finally announcements of notices coming from the military censorship or the accounting and administrative offices of the GDPP. I present here some aspects of the lectures, the DIC reports and the discussions.

The lectures were given by members of the board of directors, leaders of different GDPP directorates or "guest lecturers" from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to their topic, the lectures either presented the international situation and Romania's stance on various issues, or they were focused on the "imperialist attacks on the ideological front." Examples for this latter topic were taken either from the work of the delegates or from the work of other GDPP departments, and the names of the censors involved or the locality were always specified. On the whole, the technique employed here is the very same as in the case of the Notes: as the domain of political-ideological mistakes cannot be precisely defined, not even

when trying to subsume them under “scientifically definable tendencies” (such as “imperialism,” “cosmopolitanism,” “nationalism,” “isolationism,” “revisionism,” “dogmatism,” “hermeticism,” “symbolism,” “aestheticism,” “formalism,” “naturalism,” “intimism,” “pessimism,” “objectivism,” “negativism,” “apoliticism,” “obscurantism,” “mysticism,” and so on), superiors selected and presented a huge number of examples, hoping that censors would learn from them and apply the rules in similar cases. The difference, however, is that at the symposia the missed interventions were mentioned too, accompanied by ironic remarks.

Let us turn now to the second block of the symposia, the activity reports of the DIC. Here the main points of the previously held lectures were reiterated; however, this time they were attached to a thorough analysis of the delegates’ interventions in general for the last couple of months, followed by the examination of the collectives one by one. The praiseworthy interventions were highlighted; nevertheless, the attention was focused primarily on the weaknesses, unjustified and missed interventions. Much emphasis was put on unjustified interventions, which were considered to be “the most sinful forms of the lack of responsibility.”³⁵ The problem with these mistakes, according to the instructors, was that they either “harm the propaganda by hindering the popularization of some great achievements” or “lead to the distortion of the Party line by leaving the impression that our [the censors’] demands actually coincide with the Party’s stance.”³⁶ Furthermore, “unjustified interventions lead to the deterioration of the collaboration with editorial offices, and undermine the prestige of the institution [the GDPP].”³⁷ Besides identifying concrete mistakes, the instructors sketched general “unhealthy tendencies” too. For instance, they remarked that the amount of unjustified interventions showed a tendency on the part of the censors to decide to cut out every piece of “suspicious” data, specifically figures, “due to fear of sanctions or of taking responsibility for their decisions.” Another problematic tendency identified by DIC instructors was the fact that delegates relied too much on the DIC’s help in solving individual cases; furthermore,

censors let themselves be convinced by editors or even intervened on behalf of the editors.³⁸

At the end of the day, a “black sheep” could hear his or her name several times: during the lecture, the activity report of his or her collective, and the DIC’s activity report, both in general comments and in the analysis of the work of the collective to which he or she belonged. The ironic comments addressed personally to the culpable delegates in front of 80–100 persons abounded, up to a detailed examination of how the censor had become an accomplice of the class enemy.³⁹

The block of questions and answers of the symposia provided further opportunities for exchange of information, but also for making proposals. Although the repeated request to systematize the Circulars was never met, the Notes are definitely the result of the delegates’ pressure in this sense. Furthermore, the most active delegates constantly pinpointed domains where censorship did not work properly or at all. For instance, they indicated that there was no proper regulation regarding the control of amateur theater groups playing on the stages of Culture Houses, or that delegates had no executive power regarding banned books sold at flea-markets, and so on. Attention was drawn also to the “unhealthy manifestation of certain authors,” who, being refused publication in one locality, tried their luck in other places, until they got published. This feedback was an important element of the gradual expansion and development of censorship, because in most cases the DIC took steps to eliminate these shortcomings. For instance, from the late 1950s onwards, collectives working with literary journals exchanged their lists of rejected writings.⁴⁰

Rewards and Sanctions

Compliance with the norms of censorship was enforced with positive and negative inducements, rewards and sanctions applied to the operative staff of the GDPP.⁴¹ These implied both symbolic and material measures.

The symbolic rewards were represented, for instance, by “being pointed out” in larger-scale reports, whereas the sanctions implied written admonishments. In the long run, appearing frequently among the laureates or on the blacklist could have material consequences too, because censors could be promoted or demoted on the status hierarchy, which implied an increase or reduction in salary. These measures, however, were not based solely on the accumulation of credits, as sometimes a single “exceptionally good intervention” or “extremely big mistake” sufficed for being displaced. Moreover, “in order to mobilize” or “to stimulate the collective,” whole local staffs were promoted out of the blue. Another version of material reward was the “exceptional bonus” that could amount to half of one month’s salary. But just as in the case of promotion, censors without any special merits could receive bonuses for stimulation and mobilization. Moreover, the difference between the value of bonuses as rewards and bonuses for stimulation was almost negligible, about 15 percent.

There are not enough data about the actual application of rewards and sanctions for a comprehensive analysis; however, documents show that this system was applied from the earliest years of the GDPP, and one can observe an increase in relying on these measures as a means of control over the censors’ activity, in the sense that more and more people were affected. Data from 1961 show that at least 40 percent of the delegates (33 persons) were promoted and there were 49 cases of rewards. Besides those cases, four censors were demoted and there were 20 cases of written admonishment.⁴²

Now let us see what types of interventions were qualified as “exceptionally good,” worthy of an exceptional reward. First, all rewarded interventions were related to expressly political matters: that is, news concerning both internal affairs and external affairs (especially those involving the Soviet Union), the activity of or references to Party officials, and so on. The second type of rewarded interventions concerned materials that had already been checked elsewhere: consequently, the censors were tempted to handle them in a more superficial way (for instance, texts that had already

received the “good for distribution” qualifier, reprints, materials received from the news agency or taken from the central press, and so on). Third, instead of rewarding interventions that implied a more “sophisticated” analysis, all these censored materials simply contained typographical errors that changed the meaning of the word, the absence or presence of the prefix “anti-” – which bore a special importance when considering the strictly polarized worldview of the Communist propaganda (anti-capitalism, anti-Nazism, anti-cosmopolitanism, and so on) – or the “improper” succession of titles or paragraphs (for example, one paragraph ended with a sentence about squealers, followed by a paragraph that started with the name of the president of the state, Gheorghiu-Dej).⁴³

Turning to the sanctions, one can remark that on the one hand censors were sanctioned for “indiscipline” (repeatedly missing the deadlines for sending the reports, or failing to perform some checks), and also for regularly being late at the office, while on the other, as is to be expected, they were punished for missed interventions, both those of a political-ideological nature and those related to state secrets. Concerning the content of missed interventions of a political nature, the same can be stated as in the case of rewarded interventions: namely, they were directly related to political events and Party leaders, and appeared in the form of typographical errors with serious consequences for the meaning, the usage of the prefix “anti-,” and “suspicious” successions of different ideas. Again, there is nothing related to the more challenging aspects of censoring. Furthermore, censors were never sanctioned for unnecessary interventions. These two facts are fairly surprising when taking into account the importance attached to filtering out texts with possibilities for ambivalent interpretation and other tricky forms of the “manifestations of the class enemy,” or minuscule slippages on the margins of the Party line, and the endless lectures about the problem of unjustified interventions.

Regarding the harshness of the punishment, two aggravating conditions can be observed. First, the fault implied material loss

(for example, if it had already been put into circulation and had to be withdrawn, or it was already printed, although not released), and second, the fault was noticed not by the GDPP, but by somebody from the Party organs. The latter cases always ended up with downgrading, preceded by special examinations, extraordinary visits of the instructors, some sort of written “plea bargaining” by the culpable censor, and so forth.⁴⁴

Conclusion

By analyzing the documents circulated within the GDPP from an organizational perspective, one can conclude that a whole arsenal of organizational means was employed by the censors’ office in order to ensure the coherence across the individual work of its employees, as well as their discipline. These mechanisms ultimately could have served the effectiveness of censorship despite the vaguely defined censorship norms. It is worth emphasizing that these tools built into the system were persistently present throughout the existence of the GDPP,⁴⁵ and some of them were introduced to correct problematic points in the system.

Unlike the case of other policy domains, where central planning and the hierarchical organizational principle proved to be disastrous (for instance, the economy), one can state that this organizational form fitted the needs of an effective censorship perfectly, because it increased the information-processing capabilities of the organization: information regarding forbidden topics was centralized and then distributed through channels adjusted to the requirements of the tasks to be executed. Routine tasks of the censors and clearly definable issues such as state secrets were set down in regular dispositions and communicated preponderantly through Circular letters, whereas in the more problematic domain of “political and ideological mistakes” the main tool to ensure coherence was to provide examples and urge censors to imitate them. These coordination mechanisms took the form of Notes circulated among different GDPP departments and sent to local collectives, but a similar method was

applied in the framework of symposia too. Furthermore, the GDPP also operated a fairly sophisticated control system. Although, according to the analysis, the two specific control mechanisms, namely the recruitment process and system of rewards and sanctions, were not flawless, the instructors' feedback and the controls in the workplace show that on the formal level serious attempts were made to ensure the close monitoring of individual censors.

To conclude, one must add that for a satisfactory understanding of the economy of censorship all agencies involved in this process should be analyzed, and this endeavor should not be limited to the formal level, but should also consider the informal mechanisms working within and among them. This would imply a radical shift regarding the sources of information, from archives to interviews with people involved in the censoring process. Yet a sociological assessment of the formal institutions of censorship is certainly a necessary step for the proper understanding of this institution, which is often regarded as mystifying.

Notes

- 1 One can selectively mention the following: Cristina Diac, "Instituția cenzurii în România 'obsedantului deceniu', 1949–1958" [The Institution of Censorship in Romania's "Obsessing Decade," 1949–1958], *Arhivele Totalitarismului* 1–2 (2006): 96–114; Bogdan Ficeac, *Cenzura comunistă și formarea "omului nou"* [Communist Censorship and the Formation of the "New Man"] (Bucharest, 1999); Gábor Zsolt Györffy, *Cenzúra és propaganda a kommunista Romániában* [Censorship and Propaganda in Communist Romania] (Cluj, 2009); Klára Lázok, "Könyvkiadás és cenzúra Romániában az 1950–1960-as években" [Publishing and Censorship in Romania in the 1950s and 1960s], *Regio* 3 (2007): 117–145; Ioana Macra-Toma, "Cenzura instituționalizată și încorporată. Regimul publicațiilor în România comunistă" [Institutionalized and Incorporated Censorship. The System of Publications in Communist Romania], in Ruxandra Cesereanu, ed., *Comunism și represiune în România. Istoria tematică a unui fratricid național* [Communism and Repression in Romania. The

- Thematic History of a National Fratricide] (Iași, 2006), pp. 216–233; Liviu Malița, ed., *Cenzura în teatru. Documente. 1948–1989* [Censorship in the Theater. Documents. 1948–1989] (Cluj, 2006); Adrian Marino, *Cenzura în România. Schiță istoric introductivă* [Censorship in Romania. Introductory Historical Sketch] (Craiova, 2000); Marin Radu Mocanu, *Literatura română și cenzura comunistă (1960–1971)* [Romanian Literature and Communist Censorship (1960–1971)] (Bucharest, 2003); Attila Papp Z., “Româniai magyar sajtóvilág a második világháború végétől 1989-ig” [The Hungarian Press in Romania from the End of World War II to 1989], *Regio 1* (2004): 45–63; Marian Petcu, “Cenzura în România” [Censorship in Romania], in Marian Petcu, ed., *Cenzura în spațiul cultural românesc* [Censorship in the Romanian Cultural Space] (Bucharest, 2005), pp. 15–114.
- 2 Éva Bányai, *Sikertörténet kudarcokkal. Bukaresti életutak. Beszélgetések bukaresti magyar értelmiségiekkel* [Success Story with Failures. Conversations with Hungarian Intellectuals from Bucharest] (Cluj, 2006); Lidia Vianu, *Censorship in Romania* (Budapest, 1998); Dennis Deletant, “Cheating the Censor: Romanian Writers under Communism,” *Central Europe 2* (2008): 122–171; József Lőrincz D., “Ambivalent Discourse in Eastern Europe,” *Regio 1* (2004): 148–171.
 - 3 An exception for the Romanian case is Ion Zainea, “Cenzura, cenzori și cenzurați. Din activitatea colectivului D.G.P.T. Oradea (1966–1977)” [Censorship, the Censors and the Censored. The Activity of the General Directorate for Press and Printing Oradea (1966–1977)], in Petcu, ed., *Cenzura în spațiul cultural românesc*, pp. 209–246.
 - 4 *Central Historical National Archives*, Bucharest, Fond of Press and Printing Committee (henceforth ANIC F. CPT), Dossier no. 10/1955, ff. 86–109.
 - 5 Jay R. Galbraith, “Organization Design: An Information Processing View,” *Interfaces 3* (1974): 28–36. Andrew H. Van De Ven, Andre L. Delbecq and Richard Koenig, “Determinants of Coordination Modes within Organizations,” *American Sociological Review 2* (1976): 322–338.
 - 6 For a detailed history of the installation of Communist censorship in Romania see, for instance, Diac, “Instituția cenzurii în România.”
 - 7 Decree No. 214/1949; Decree No. 218/1949; Decree No. 612/1949; Order (of the Council of Ministers) No. 461/1951; Order (CM) No.

- 462/1951; Order (CM) No. 340/1952; Order (CM) No. 343/1952.
 ANIC F. CPT; D. 10/1949; Order (CM) No. 267/1954.
- 8 D. 10/1949, ff. 6–8; D. 12/1962, ff. 63–65.
 - 9 D. 9/1949, ff. 2–11, 42–44; D. 12/1951, ff. 73–81; D. 14/1960, ff. 1–10; D. 13/1966, f. 1.
 - 10 D. 1/1950, ff. 87–90; D. 1/1950, f. 196; D. 14/1951, ff. 4–6; D. 14/1960, ff. 1–10; D. 13/1966, f. 1.
 - 11 D. 17/1952, ff. 1–7.
 - 12 D. 10/1953, ff. 12–15.
 - 13 D. 11/1956, ff. 8, 13–17 and 92–93.
 - 14 D. 12/1955, f. 128.
 - 15 D. 10/1953, f. 61; D. 32/1961, f. 6.
 - 16 D. 32/1961, ff. 2–6.
 - 17 D. 14/1951, ff. 37–39; D. 10/1952, ff. 1–3; D. 13/1966, f. 1.
 - 18 D. 14/1960 ff. 8, 10; D. 13/1966, f. 1.
 - 19 It is worth mentioning that just a small number of censors had their basic degree from Party schools. D. 13/1966, ff. 169–173.
 - 20 D. 14/1960, ff. 1–10.
 - 21 The other registered categories were Jews, Germans and Other. D. 14/1960, ff. 1–10; D. 13/1966, f. 1.
 - 22 D. 10/1952, f. 19; D. 9/1952, ff. 7–9.
 - 23 D. 14/1949, ff. 1–165; D. 16/1951, ff. 7–9, 12–68, 71, 74–76, 88–98, 117–118, 140–195; D. 13/1953, ff. 1–54, 59, 135–263; D. 14/1953, ff. 1–39, 41–144; D. 11/1955, ff. 2–11, 13–25; D. 32/1965, ff. 1–76: representing Circulars.
 - 24 D. 14/1949, ff. 1–5; D. 32/1965: representing the records of handing the Circulars to a new censor and individual Circulars.
 - 25 D. 14/1958, f. 31.
 - 26 D. 9/1959, f. 37.
 - 27 *National Archives – Mureş County Branch (ANDJM)*, Târgu Mureş, F. 403, D. 17A/1971, 17B/1971, 17C/1971.
 - 28 ANIC, F. CPT, D. 13/1953; D. 60/1963, ff. 1–6, 9–10, 13–15, 19–20, 24–26, 28–30, 32–35, 37–40, 42–45, 47–50, 53–57, 59–62, 65–74, 77–97, 100–119, 123–136, 140–154, 157–165, 169–174, 177–179, 182–184, 187–190, 193–197, 201–215, 217–231, 235–253, 257–270 and 274–283: representing reports sent by delegates to the DIC.
 - 29 D. 16/1951, ff. 69–195; D. 60/1963, ff. 7–287: representing the feedback issued by the DIC to the reports of the delegates.
 - 30 See, for instance, D. 60/1963, ff. 191–192.

- 31 D. 12/1955, ff. 39–111; D. 36/1959, ff. 1–349; D. 31/1965: representing plans of control on the field and reports concerning these controls.
- 32 D. 12/1955, ff. 39–47.
- 33 D. 12/1955, f. 90.
- 34 D. 10/1953, ff. 37–49; D. 9/1955, ff. 1–96; D. 10/1955, ff. 1–151; D. 13/1956, ff. 1–71; D. 13/1957, ff. 1–57; D. 14/1958, ff. 1–131; D. 9/1959, ff. 1–83; D. 21/1960, ff. 1–152; D. 18/1962, ff. 1–172: representing the minutes of symposia and other types of documents (plans, programs, attendance sheets, and so on).
- 35 D. 9/1959, f. 93.
- 36 D. 9/1959, f. 82.
- 37 *Ibid.*
- 38 D. 9/1959, ff. 9 and 43.
- 39 D. 10/1955, f. 108, 9/1959, ff. 69–74.
- 40 D. 13/1957, ff. 37–38.
- 41 D. 14/1951, ff. 41–42, 70–79; D. 9/1952, ff. 23–24, 28–31; D. 10/1953, ff. 22, 51, 85; D. 11/1955, ff. 1, 12; D. 32/1961, ff. 10, 11, 12, 30, 31, 32, 42, 50–68, 74, 99–102, 107–111, 113–114, 116, 127, 132–146, 151, 155, 160, 166–167, 171–175, 182–186, 189, 191–195, 204–206; D. 12/1962, ff. 4, 11–12, 21–22, 30, 39, 62, 145, 185, 194, 215–217, 236, 237, 249–250, 253 and 263–264: representing documents containing the proposals and approvals of bonuses and sanctions, individual cases and tables of promotions and demotions, and notices sent to the censors concerned.
- 42 D. 32/1961.
- 43 See examples of these cases in D. 32/1961, ff. 42, 50, 74 and 107–108.
- 44 D. 32/1961, ff. 111 and 113–114.
- 45 See ANDJM, Fond No. 403, D. 1, ff. 1–124, containing the records of incoming and outgoing materials of the GDPP Târgu Mureş for 1962–1977.

József D. Lőrincz

AMBIVALENT DISCOURSE IN EASTERN EUROPE BEFORE 1989

“Self-actualization in socialist Romania seems to me [...] to have been much more situationally determined than North Americans find acceptable, such that people could say one thing in one context and another in another context and not be judged deceitful or forgetful or mad.”

*Katherine Verdery*¹

Introduction

Dictatorship corrupts not only the rulers, but the subjects as well. But if it is true that absolute power corrupts absolutely, does this apply only to rulers, or to subjects as well? In such a system it is a common experience of everyday life that one is often obliged to speak or to act against one's deepest convictions and beliefs. To an external observer, these people seem to be either immoral, or deeply cynical, or cowardly. For decades, Western literature took it for granted that voices of dissent in Eastern Europe were rare because most people considered those regimes to be legitimate, while those who did not were either cynical, driven by private interest, or were too frightened to speak, to stand up, to rebel for a better cause. They were afraid to tell the truth in public, and often even in private. And sometimes they uttered public statements that went against their deepest convictions. Clarity of vision, uncompromising moral standing and civil courage were exhibited only by a handful of people. What are the conditions of the possibility of truth-telling (*parrhesia*)?

“Getting by” in a dictatorship often presupposes conflicts, oppositions and options that are not easy to solve, morally and/or practically. The official version of “reality” is often difficult to

reject, to accept, and even more to approve in public. Good and bad (evil), merit and need, private enterprise and public fairness, or ideals and pragmatism, as well as many other oppositions, make up choices that everybody has to make. The pragmatic dissolution of conflicts usually requires that the individual or community in question transform the system of values and norms that was until then perceived as valid and coherent. This involves a considerable effort, but also a discomfort, since such changes endanger the real or assumed coherence of our image of the world and of ourselves. The question is the following: what happens, if – due to different causes – the reconciliation of the various polarities is hindered over a long period of time² by the lack of legitimate institutional forms that could promote such a compromise? How does such a situation affect the values of everyday life, or the conduct of individuals? Do subjects try to dissolve the tension of conflicts, and if/when this is the case, how?

As a first approach, Katherine Verdery's theory will be discussed, concerning the Eastern European subject's split identity, which led, according to her, to an incoherence in values and norms of behavior. It will be shown that in Eastern Europe, in everyday life, such a polarized identity does not always result in chaos, or in moral double standards, but often in a coherent, pragmatic lifestyle that is validated by the everyday social milieu. This will be demonstrated with the analysis of the (quasi-)oppositional discourse developed in Transylvanian Hungarian circles. Two examples will be given: the activity of the Party's County Committee for Supervising Theatrical and Musical Performances for Supervising Performances, and an artistic performance "in honor" of the Romanian Communist Party's 60th anniversary. The conclusion will try to connect the problem of ambivalent discourse to that of parrhesia.

According to the most interesting interpretation of the ethnic conflicts that erupted after 1989 in Eastern Europe, their roots can be traced back to the bipolar personality structure characteristic of communism. According to Katherine Verdery,³ communism dichotomized the moral, political and social world, by constructing

a totally antagonistic enemy for itself (the enemy of the state, of the people, of the regime, and so on). Even if this worldview was not accepted by everybody, this dichotomization also came to be the mechanism by means of which the subjects' identities were formed and reproduced. However, quite apart from the expectations of the regime, the "others" from whom they differentiated themselves in everyday life were not "capitalists," "the West," or "internal enemies," but the official elite itself, its rhetoric, its culture, and so on. The "us" developed precisely in opposition to these. Values were turned upside down in the private sphere, and the positive values of the power became evil, and vice versa. This self could not be affirmed in public, so the identity of Eastern European subjects was characterized also by a certain duplicity: there was a "public self" that presented itself according to the requirements formulated by the power, and there was a "real self," usually secluded in private life. But the real self, since it was built up in opposition to the public self, depended for its coherence on the official self. Bipolarity became constitutive of a social person. The end of the previous regime provoked a crisis of self-conception, since the "them" against whom the subjects' self had been constituted disappeared. Nevertheless, Verdery says, the bipolar mechanism of identity construction continued to work, since it had become part of the social person, and after 1989 new dichotomies were created. The real self already needed a new "them" against whom to maintain itself. This new "other" – according to Verdery – came to be the stranger, and especially the different ethnic groups. This is the real cause of post-1989 nationalism.

Bipolarity can certainly explain nationalism, the ongoing creation of borders, and many other self-constituting practices. But this statement should be qualified in several respects.⁴ First of all, the private/public dichotomy was not so polarized. For Verdery the two spheres are sealed off from each other, and there is only antagonism. Such a position – labeled "liberal" by Benn and Gaus⁵ – can be attacked in several ways: first, from a somewhat historical relativist point of view, it can be shown that

the boundaries between public and private change over time; second, they can interpenetrate (or maybe even become identical); third, there are cultures that do not have these spheres, or in which they have different meanings. Moreover, the extreme variety of viewpoints also suggests that the distinctions used in the academic disciplines are themselves equivocal.⁶

As far as our case is concerned, two observations are needed. On the one hand, it is hardly debatable that in this region the two spheres have existed, or that they are recognized in everyday life as more or less separate entities. But the point is not their interpenetration (as if the communists penetrated and governed every part of the private world), but the fact that the values of the private sphere were frequently used in the public one, and vice versa. The frame of reference of one sphere could be used to interpret situations in the other one. Hence, from an external point of view, there is ambiguity and/or ambivalence. On the other hand, further investigations should take it into consideration that the borders between the two have changed a great deal in the last period.⁷

Without a proper description of the way in which the public sphere worked, and the way in which it was linked to the private, one is stuck in a Manichaeic world not resembling the real one. It is impossible to give here an overarching presentation of the (Romanian or Transylvanian) public and private sphere, and of their relationship, or to show how “time” solved the problems caused by polarizations. Our question is linked only to their problematic nature, to the way in which this complex connection was resolved, since the dichotomy of their moral world was not perfect. It seems that, in spite of polarization, many actions and situations could not be included and/or rationalized according to a strict bipolar value system. Everyday actions and situations were much more inconsistent. In many cases the aim of rationalization was to evade bipolar evaluations, or to play them off against each other. Many issues were rationalized indeed, but rationalized away. Strangely enough, it was precisely this logical inconsistency that helped people to develop a personality that was *valid and consistent* from their own

point of view, which strove to correlate the private and the public into a more or less unitary whole (in spite of logical inconsistencies), a personality that was *both morally and pragmatically* acceptable and made sense to themselves. Consequently, the development and reproduction of an acceptable personality demanded that the tension between public and private be somehow resolved.

The most important consequence of this mechanism is that values and frames of interpretation became extremely context-bound. Due to this situation, from the point of view of the external observer the behavior or the mentality of “Eastern Europeans” is in many cases incoherent, hard to understand, or often outside common morality. This is actually a major point in Katherine Verdery’s argument, but she considers that this is a result of “socialist identity structure.”⁸ However, while we both note the same phenomenon, the conclusions that we draw diverge. Verdery thinks that this is a sign of a divided self, while in the following it will be argued that often (but not always!) efforts are made in everyday life at reuniting these selves somehow and creating an acceptable whole – even if unsuccessfully, from an external point of view.

In everyday life a whole array of events, actions and situations could not (and cannot) be rationalized according to a coherent bipolar system of values. Roles and frames of interpretation were not stiffly pinned down. Ambivalence could mean, for example, the procedures by means of which one could distance oneself from the official role. The roles of “us” and “them” – that of the “bureaucrat” and of the “common person,” a petitioner for example – actually offered remarkable space for free maneuvers. Minimal gestures, winks, or one or two seemingly negligent, “unorthodox” expressions helped one to exhibit a different image of oneself. Or take, for example, a Hungarian Party official who helped a co-national to acquire a flat. This was not considered by him/her just as an official procedure in which he/she took part as an anonymous bureaucrat, but often as a personal act, implying that it was help offered on the basis of national solidarity (even if a bribe was accepted). This or similar acts became very important constitutive elements of one’s

self-image. They were told, and repeated again and again, in private circles. In this case, role-distancing took place not only within the institution itself, but outside it too.⁹ In many situations, they tried to assign their role within the institution a meaning that was part of another system of values. In that case, he/she was not only an apparatchik, but a Hungarian, or just a “decent human being” (“rendes ember”) as well. It should be stressed that there was a whole array of frames aiming at making the two compatible. And thus such a system of double (or even multiple) standards in evaluating actions involved no cognitive dissonance.

In the following, some elements of the practice of trespassing between official and unofficial, or permitted and forbidden talk that were developed during state socialism will be presented.

Ambivalent Discourse: Official, Dominant, Oppositional

The Silence of the Intellectuals and the Silence of Power

In his essays written on the social history of silence, Peter Burke considers it to be just as important as speech, since knowing when and how to keep silent is just as relevant as knowing when to speak and what to say.¹⁰ The issue at hand is neither silence as a rhetorical device – so much used in literary or argumentative works¹¹ – nor silence resulting from a personal free decision, but institutionally defined silence. Its meaning may vary according to place, time and speaker, but from the point of view of our problem the public space is the most important.

The silence of the intellectuals before 1989 was often at least as visible as their public activity. It was salient, and it was frequently discussed in private circles. The activity of the intellectuals under an official aegis was doubled by lack of criticism and by silence concerning the regime. Expression and silence were both notorious, part of the pre-1989 social world. Actually, before 1989 in Eastern Europe one has to differentiate among at least three types of “silence.” The first was the one taken for granted, concerning the

public space, the unspoken common background of knowledge that is the basis of any communication.¹² Moreover, in Eastern Europe this also made possible the transmission of certain information behind the censorship. This was rather difficult to control, although the cultural bureaucrats did their best. The second was a voluntary silence, which had reasons that require no particular analysis here. The third type consisted of an involuntary silence. This could not be broken even in the most hidden spheres of private life, because it was due not to interdiction, but to the lack of intellectual, conceptual means and/or tools necessary for a properly argued critical account of society. The gestures of power, aimed at securing its own validity – i. e. ensuring that it was willy-nilly accepted, even if it was not considered to be legitimate! – also received gestures in response, even while it was contested. In this case, “gestures” had to replace analysis.

It is a common mistake – probably due to the theories of totalitarianism – that the *motivation* of the Eastern European power’s rhetoric in the 1970s and 1980s is identified with that of the 1950s. The two phases were totally different. In the first period of communist rule, at least part of the political elite hoped that they could slowly convince the population that their cause was just, and best suited for everybody. But in the last 15–20 years (more or less), the apparatus lost its confidence in the just character (and the viability) of its ideological program. Consequently, the function of the rhetoric changed radically: it was no longer to convince, to “enlighten,” to explain, to mobilize.¹³ The very fact that official propaganda could communicate whatever it wanted, without being obliged to pay attention to the possibility of being refuted (by “reality,” or by a generally hostile public opinion) demonstrated that the position of power was strong, it could not have been challenged, and (almost) nobody had the courage to contradict it. But those resorting to this type of discourse knew very well that nobody believed them. And *this* was a major characteristic of their power: they could say anything, without anybody believing it, and also without anybody having the power to challenge it. They could allow

themselves a unique luxury: they did not care what people thought or believed. Word was not manipulation, but a rubber truncheon waved at everybody: a gesture.

Talk about “reality,” which is to say experience (i. e. what was seen or experienced as reality in everyday life), was prohibited – not only for the subjects, but even for the power. But the type of discourse that had no connection with reality was not typical only of the “official” elite. The “opposition” was also free of the obligation to demonstrate its standpoint, to mediate towards the world of *practicalities*: the *gesture* was important, not the ideas, arguments or concrete proposals. As a result, after a period of triumph, practically all the widespread pre-1989 oppositional topics disappeared from the public sphere.

Tricks Used to Avoid Silence

Totalitarian society seems to be the ideal terrain where the Gramscian concept of hegemony, that is to say the division between dominant and popular culture, can be successfully used. In the following, it will be shown that the distinction polarizing these two cultural spheres is not valid in the context discussed here.

First of all, power – including the power of the “socialist” period – never *creates* culture, but only proposes or tries to enforce a cultural *model*, since it does *not* produce culture as such. Accordingly, before 1989 power did not produce any “socialist culture.” The question is how the elite reacted to the demands of the power. On the whole, one can say that the reactions were complex. The elite accepted it, adapted it, gave it form, mediated it and reproduced it – but only partly, in some (more or less numerous and important) of its aspects. Socialist culture was created by the intellectuals (first of all the humanistic elite) who gave form to certain ideas, plans and values formulated by the power elite. But definitely, the public sphere was not completely molded by the official ideal even in the darkest years. A thorough interpretation of the whole social reality (including the private sphere) according to the official model was

never achieved in the whole public sphere.¹⁴ If one considers topics from the point of view of permission, three variants can be distinguished. Besides elements that were usually neutral (love,¹⁵ nature, and so on), there were others that in certain periods, for certain reasons, were more or less tolerated for different reasons. And there was a third category of topics, ideas that were completely forbidden. The boundary between these realms was often arbitrary, usually not fixed, and liable to change, for different reasons (which are not of interest here).¹⁶ The discourse and the issues that are really important are those in the intermediate, “tolerated” category, because this can help one to distinguish between official and dominant culture. The former is just the model proposed by the power, and its eventual “perfect” presentations and adaptations. The latter is much more than that: it tries to raise and circulate issues that are, even if not encouraged, at least tolerated.¹⁷ Part of this category is discourse that tries to present forbidden issues by encrypting the text, by demanding that the public read between the lines.

This type of ambivalent discourse – probably commonly used in most regimes without the freedom of speech by authors with unorthodox views – is one of the major examples of the difference between official and dominant culture.¹⁸ It may vary in form, the most common techniques being the following: a) the presentation of the issue as a tolerated one; b) the opinion of the ideological “opponent” being presented accurately, objectively, maybe even sympathetically, but then being “refuted,” as an “inimical” view; c) brutal insertions of orthodox passages into a non-orthodox work;¹⁹ d) perfect self-encryptions where the piece is a unitary whole.²⁰

A whole range of tricks used in order to avoid censorship is presented by Sándor Tóth in his work on Gábor Gaál, a Hungarian leftist philosopher from Transylvania. While the official ideologists, the agents of censorship, wanted to monopolize and distort his message, his disciples and friends did their best to prevent this. During the 1950s, he says, it was common to introduce references to the “Soviet example,” especially after 1953. This was possible, even if the Romanian Party apparatus did not want to

de-Stalinize.²¹ Another possibility – when proposing the publication of a book – was to hail it as a work putting into practice Zhdanov’s theories involving criteria about “good literature,” although the real goal was just to publish a good book that probably had nothing in common with the aforementioned criteria.²² Usually the papers and reviews had to introduce texts showing their loyalty to the Party and its program. However, it was possible to make such texts so distinct – by printing them separately, at the beginning, on different paper, with different characters, or even with a distinct pagination – that the readers knew and understood that those texts were not addressed to them, but were a necessary tribute offered to the censorship.²³ It happened that such texts were not even included in the summary. A similar technique was the usage of the so-called “locomotive” in reviews and newspapers: texts that could have problems were preceded by citations from the works of Ceaușescu. The tougher the text, the longer the “locomotive.” Often there was no connection between the two, but the engine managed to pull the carriages after it. In exchange, they could also publish some good texts. Especially when editing texts from the interwar period (or earlier), one had to face the fact of the existence of certain taboo topics or expressions. In such cases one possibility was to simply delete the expression, and thus one could hope that at least the rest of the text would be saved (as otherwise the censorship could have deleted the whole phrase, paragraph or even text).²⁴ The other alternative was to put all such texts and expressions into the endnotes, since they were not seriously checked.²⁵

Besides this arsenal of tricks, the book also shows some of the – curiously similar – counter-methods deployed by the power in manipulating the work and the opinions of personalities (first of all classical authors) that were, for some reason or other, considered to be important for the regime. Among them one of the most important was the drastic, false reinterpretation of their opinions by publishing so-called “selected” works that presented a biased image, since they usually omitted major texts; leaving out certain phrases and/or paragraphs without mentioning it.²⁶

A Special Case: Critique Aiming at Education

As these examples show, the investigation of structural silence is not so easy methodologically. In their efforts to make sense of what was going on in regimes with restrictions on free speech, the attention of scholars has been mostly attracted by the official discourse, although – on the basis of the hypothesis proposed – its analysis is less fruitful than it seems. The reason for this lies on the one hand in a debatable view that equals political events with visible, so-called “major” events, leaders, politicians, and so on, and on the other hand in an epistemological double standard. Leo Strauss has shown that according to philological rules that are the mainstream in certain periods, one should not read between the lines, but confine oneself to the explicit side of the text.²⁷ It should be added that usually this respect towards the text is not granted precisely to the dominant political rhetoric. On the contrary, the latter is often expected to hide at least as much as it shows. The result is that in neither case is the author’s wish respected: the unorthodox would like to convey his/her message, but the interpreters do not find the methodological arguments to take it according to his/her wish; the writers of orthodox rhetoric would like the interpreters to take the message *prima facie*, but the latter have good reasons for not doing so. Obviously, this difference is due to the fact that there can be no general standards for deciding whether a philosopher’s work, for example, is encrypted. Lessing’s view that all the philosophers of Antiquity had an exoteric and an esoteric teaching, to be found in the same works, has lost its appeal. Nowadays, this presupposition – once a philological standard – is marginal.

And nevertheless, continues Strauss, there are periods in which one knows that texts were written and read with a general common background and clues in mind. This is not the case in the modern period, due to a fundamental change in the social role of men of letters that took place around the middle of the seventeenth century.²⁸ Until then, it was considered that the gap between “wise men” and the “masses,” as a basic element of human nature, could

not be bridged with education. Consequently, wisdom could be handed over only to disciples, while hiding it from others. The moderns seem to have had a more optimistic view of human nature, considering that education is possible. Publication thus did not mean only a simple presentation of one's views to the readers, but also education aiming at the elimination of persecution. Writing and/or publishing with an educational purpose was seen as a contribution to the enfranchisement of people.²⁹ A thorough description of this type of critique, its context and its results is given by Reinhart Koselleck.³⁰

His hypothesis is that the structure of Absolutism, rooted in the dichotomy of sovereign and subject, meaning a dichotomy between public and private morality respectively, prevented the Enlightenment and the emancipation movement from seeing itself as a political phenomenon. Consequently, the Enlightenment became utopian and even hypocritical because it saw itself excluded from political power-sharing. And it succumbed to utopian contradictions that could not be resolved in practice and prepared the way for the Terror and for dictatorship. He refines the argument by stating that it was only in certain countries (Central Europe, Germany, Spain, France and Italy) that a type of Absolutism appeared that created a special type of Enlightenment: this, while trying to evade censorship and other chicaneries, was directed against the Absolutist claims of the sovereign ruler. This could be done only by inventing "ways of camouflage and mystification as well as other indirectly operative modes of behavior."³¹

This had two consequences, of which only one was foreseen. On the one hand, it obliged the Absolutist State to respond to these new pressures, and to try to legitimate itself. This was only partly successful, since critical arguments remained outside the cabinets where actual political decisions were taken. As compensation, a progressive philosophy of history was elaborated, "which promised victory to the intellectual elite, but one gained without struggle and civil war."³² The unforeseen consequence was that camouflage and mystification pervaded the ideas of the Enlightenment themselves.

The Absolutist State did emancipate the individuals morally, but also denied them public responsibility by restricting them to the private sphere. This inevitably led to a conflict with a State that subordinated morality to politics. Consequently, the State had to stand continuous moral trial. As a result of the Enlightenment, after the dissolution of *ständische* societies, there was a pressure to justify politics and morals, but without any hope of reconciling the two.

What was the connection between the critique of the Absolutist State and its crisis?³³ The major problem was caused by the fact that while the Enlightenment did create the crisis, it did not realize the political significance of its action: its activity was never grasped politically. The reason for this lies precisely in the type of “mystificatory” critique practiced, which “caused the day’s events to pale,” due to the utopian images of the future. Consequently, critique provoked a crisis of which it did not know.³⁴

The last element of the Enlightenment critique is the importance that it confers on the planning of history: it becomes as important as mastering nature. This misconception is furthered by the technicist Absolutist State, which makes the alienation of morality from politics inevitable. However, in the planning of history, moral man, “a stranger to reality,” considers the political domain as something that can only stand in his way, something that should be eliminated. Politics is dissolved into utopian constructs of the future.

Consequently, one can say that the major elements of the Enlightenment’s critique and the Absolutist State’s crisis were the divorce of morality from politics and the individual’s lack of power in the public sphere; these led to a philosophy of history that contained the moral, utopian critique of both State and politics, the importance of technocratic thinking, which proposed an end to politics, and a change of individuals into “useful collaborators” of the new social order.³⁵ One can add to these another characteristic: a peculiar interest in *creating* a public suited to their utopian educational ideals.

This is not important in itself. The challenges that the Enlightenment faced produced mentalities, attitudes and behavioral

patterns that have survived the special circumstances of their appearance.

Hungarian Ambivalent Discourse in Romania

In the Hungarian-language public sphere of the previous regime, ambivalent discourse was used at large as well, even if explicit utopias were not formulated. One can only deduce them from the critiques. The most common trick was to use certain keywords or symbols, to mention issues that by analogy could provoke certain reactions in the reader. Usually they did not have to be explicated, since they were based on the common knowledge of the author and his/her presupposed public, concerning the problems of democracy, freedom and the minority question, and their presupposed connection. This was a relationship that was never (could not be) seriously developed or explicated in the public sphere, and this caused some problems after 1989.

The greatest representative of this type of discourse was without any doubt the philosopher György Bretter. For some time he was followed by some of his students, but, towards the second half of the 1980s, for some reason or other, high-quality encoded texts became increasingly rare. In the following, two examples of pre-1989 ambivalent discourse will be presented, taken from different areas, expressed in dissimilar situations, and with diverse messages and implied publics. Since the major problem in the case of utopias aiming at education is the creation of a public, the analyses will put a particular stress on the question of whether and how the public was conceived.

The Party's County Committee for Supervising Performances, or Power as a Public

On March 3, 1983, in Kovászna County (in Romanian județul Covasna) the Party's County Committee for Supervising Theatrical and Musical Performances (or performances of any other nature),

came into being.³⁶ It had twenty members (according to the list presented in the first minute), including the propaganda secretary of the county, other Party officials and propagandists, actors, journalists, teachers and workers. Its goal was to watch, discuss and criticize all the performances that were to be presented in the county. This included even the supervision of the program of small bands that played at weddings, in discos, in bars, and so on. The directors, actors and musicians had to take into consideration all the critical remarks raised by this committee. No first performance could take place without its prior consent.

Ambivalent discourse can be seen first of all in the way in which the actors, the directors or the authors tried to respond to criticisms, and this will be shown by using as an example the very first play supervised. The committee started its activity with a scandal. On the day that it was constituted, it had to see and comment on the final rehearsal of András Sütő's play, *Pompás Gedeon*.³⁷ The criticisms of the committee referred in particular to the religious elements to be found in the play. The fragments of religious music – according to “advice” – had to be interrupted with jazz, so that they would lose their continuity. The number of angels had to be drastically decreased, and the atheism of the youth had to be more militantly exposed. The scenes that took place in heaven were not to have any educational potential, and the number of religious texts had to be limited (although originally the play used them satirically).

The most important part of the criticisms, however, referred to the appearance of national topics. A line of a Hungarian nationalist song sung by the (negative) main character, Gedeon – “Where are you, Székelys?” – had to be omitted. As the Party secretary for propaganda mentioned, it could make the public think of the next verse (which runs “I gave you in custody a homeland [meaning Transylvania].” References to “happy Austria” or Francis Joseph also had to be eliminated. The director of the play and the author tried to explain that these elements were used to cast a negative light on the negative characters, criticizing not only their approach to collectivization, but also their nationalism. However, from his

point of view, the Party secretary was probably right: he did not express it, but it was obvious that under those circumstances, in the 1980s, the national values could maintain their expressive force even if expressed by the negative characters,³⁸ or they could even turn those characters into positive or at least ambivalent ones. A public looking for criticism was not interested in the coherence of the play. It was looking for elements that could then be interpreted out of the context and the logic of the play according to its free will. The committee had to limit this possibility as much as possible. The propaganda secretary noticed that the interpretation of the author could contain a trick, and he rejected it.

However, over the period of seven years while this body existed, the most important conflict erupted within the committee itself. Criticisms could be directed against anything, not only ideological problems: the scenery, the clothing (no red boots please, as “this can be interpreted”), the performance offered by the actors, and the play itself. This often brought about hilarious results: even in the case of classics such as Shakespeare or Gogol, “interpretable” parts of the text had to be cut. The permission to present *Antigone* by Sophocles was given by saying “The play is good, and it has already been presented many times.” When commenting on the performance of Gogol’s *Diary of a Madman*, it was stressed by one of the members of the commission that the actor’s dislike of the Tsarist regime was clear. It would have been probably very unpleasant to mention the possibility that the actor saw the Tsarist regime as an analogy to Ceaușescu’s. (Actually, in the end the performance was prohibited.)

Such cases prompted some of the members of the commission to suggest that their duty was only an ideological supervision of the performance, abstaining from artistic criticisms, since none of them was a specialist (actor or director). This would have meant on the one hand that ideological criticism was irrelevant in the case of the classics, and on the other hand that artistic activity would have become less restricted (also making possible the use of “tricks”). The reaction of the hardliners was prompt: a document issued by the National Council for Socialist Culture and Education stipulated

that the commission had the obligation to criticize and give advice from all possible points of view, including artistic ones. However, several meetings were started with their opponents affirming that they had no right to appreciate the artistic achievement of the actors or of the director. They lost every time, since they could not offer counter-arguments to the problem of “interpretability.” Elements of the performances had to disappear, because they “could be interpreted” in a way not wanted by the Party apparatus. Whenever in doubt, the questions were “What will the spectators understand from the play?” and “How will they interpret it?”

As time passed, the elements that “could be interpreted” grew in number and diversity. Colors (in particular red), tones (dark or light), atmosphere (happy or sad) or size could all become a problem. Slowly, a silent and fierce competition developed between the – voluntary or involuntary – critical allusions of the artists and the vigilance of the committee. Practically all the elements of a performance could become “dubious.” And this is how aspirations for total control actually brought about limitless possibilities for roundabout critique.

Baász, or the Real Public

From the end of the 1970s until around the middle of the 1980s, Sepsiszentgyörgy was considered to be an unpleasant town during official holidays. After the action of a couple of schoolchildren who put some anti-communist and nationalist posters in the streets in 1978 (in support of Károly Király), on May Day, or on August 23 (Romania’s national holiday before 1989), one could find Hungarian nationalist posters or handbills in the streets. This created a good occasion for the police (both secret and not) to be present in large numbers in any public place. The population of the town was convinced that it was a provocation, that the handbills were distributed by the secret police, and obviously kept quiet.

In 1981, on the 60th anniversary of the Romanian Communist Party, an exhibition of the county’s artists was organized. For this

occasion, the graphic artist Imre Baász conceived a complex work consisting of two parts.

One was an installation: on a rack there were six shirts stained with blood, and on the floor around them and on the wall there were handbills of two types. On the one hand, there were copies and originals of old leaflets from the interwar period, calling for fighting against the government, for communism, and so on. On the other hand, there were handbills announcing the opening of the exhibition. Baász documented himself going on a special trip to the museum of the Party's history in Bucharest, where he carefully examined what the handbills of the illegal communist activists looked like in the interwar period.³⁹ Although the graphic structure of the new ones was different, he kept the set phrase of the interwar handbills: "Read and pass it on."

The other part of the whole project was a performance.⁴⁰ On the eve of the anniversary, after midnight, Baász and three other friends started walking around the town, sticking handbills inviting people to the opening of the exhibition everywhere.⁴¹ After a while they were caught by a frightened policeman, who immediately asked for a patrol, and reported to the headquarters that he had found two people sticking up manifestos in the street. Almost simultaneously with the patrol, the chiefs of the county police and of the secret police appeared.⁴² Baász and his friends were taken to the police station, where they were interrogated. To their complete bewilderment the police found out that the posters had no particular subversive message, and that they were officially approved. The county's Party secretary was woken up at around three o'clock at night, and he confirmed that he approved of the whole thing: the invitations to the exhibition had to be made public. Baász and his friends were set free.

To convey the atmosphere of those times, it should be added that after three o'clock at night, when he got home, Baász immediately called his wife (who was away), told her the whole story, and confessed that he feared that his joke would not go unpunished: he could even go to jail. Nothing like that happened. On the contrary:

the next day Baász was called to the police, where he was presented with formal apologies.

In those days, Baász used to say “It is not the existence of the work of art, but the method that became of primary importance.”⁴³ As has already been mentioned, for him the two pieces – the installation and the performance – were a unitary whole. The invitations to the exhibition functioned like the interwar handbills: they were also part of the installation. The interwar handbills were also stuck on the walls at night. The formal resemblance between the interwar leaflets and the nocturnal actions lead to a mixing of periods of time, frames of reference, enemies, goals, values, and so on, into a new unitary whole.⁴⁴ The six white shirts also constitute a problem. They should symbolize moral cleanliness, stained with the blood of the victims. However, in those times the white shirt came to be part of a different context: the suit (usually dark) and the necktie. And these were already symbols of the “integrated” person, first of all the Party officials and the secret police (somewhat like the leather coat in the 1950s). The whole image could also be seen as officialdom stained with blood, in a context in which past and present fighting and martyrdom against injustice merged.

Conclusions: Ambivalent Discourse and Parrhesia

Ambivalent discourse – probably considered to be reprehensible by most moralists – has played, and will play, an important role in two major spheres of everyday life. On the one hand, it creates and/or reproduces an acceptable and pragmatic image of oneself and the world. Ambivalent discourse has become constitutive of an acceptable, although “motley,” personality, which receives its coherence not in abstract rationalizations, but in practical validity. On the other hand, it can seriously contribute to the management of everyday conflicts as well (including inter-ethnic ones), since ambivalent discourse “liberates” us from the exigencies of “sincerity” and of plain speech. In exchange, it offers a plurality of values, norms and interpretations that can be chosen according to

the context of action and the context when the action in question is retold. This is how a personality develops, one that from the point of view of everyday life is both morally and pragmatically coherent, acceptable and meaningful. Coherence is achieved not by separating the public and private sphere, but by constantly reconciling them.

Ambivalent discourse makes it extremely difficult for an “opinion-leading” public elite to create abstract communities that rest on common, coherent values that are consistently assumed in public; to construct publics that are easy to convince about the correctness of long or short term social, political projects. One such project is nation-building. Another one in Eastern Europe (but not only there) is “transition.” In this latter case one will face a strange situation: in many respects, the goals, values and norms of regime change, while legitimate for common people, are not valid.⁴⁵

The problem of ambivalent discourse is not specific to Eastern Europe. From a moral point of view, the situation is similar to the conflict between sincerity and strategic games presented by Norbert Elias.⁴⁶ He treats the antithesis between “superficiality” and “depth,” “falsity” and “honesty,” and “outward politeness” and “true virtue,” all connected to the German antithesis between *Zivilisation* and *Kultur*, in the context of French versus German mentality, aristocratic and middle-class respectively, and national consciousness. In a discussion between Goethe and Eckermann analyzed by Elias, the following standpoints are presented. The latter, an adherent of middle-class values, argues in favor of a frank expression of personal values. Interaction is defined by personal likes and dislikes, by the similarity of the interlocutors’ inner natures. Goethe, on the other hand, puts forward a typically aristocratic argument, based on reason, a result of a process of civilization, opposed to anything like “nature.” The tendency to take our nature as a guide, he says, is not sociable. Natural tendencies are opposed to education. One should not expect people to harmonize with us. Instead, one should converse with everybody, since “with opposed natures one must take a grip on oneself if one is to get on with them.”

Such conflicting values can be generalized to apply to any situation where differences in social standing, culture and mentality are part of the interaction. Should one give way to “natural tendencies,” including frankness, honesty and the selection of partners according to inner resemblances, like Eckermann? Or should one behave in a “civilized,” “rational” way, like Goethe: conversing with all people, without expecting others to have ideas, values similar to ours?

Even more generally, adapting a problem raised by Michel Foucault: what are the conditions of the possibility of truth-telling?⁴⁷ In Ancient Greece, one is told, truth-telling was distinguished from a series of other types of discourse. First of all, it was in no way connected to (self-)doubt, a topic that appeared much later. Instead, it was associated with certain moral qualities. Knowing and speaking the truth was an *ethical*, not an *epistemological* problem. The proof of moral qualities was courage, involving a risk that was taken consciously. Parrhesiastic courage was a duty, not the result of some external coercion. The point was not to demonstrate the truth, but to be critical towards others and towards oneself.

Telling the truth also involved certain social requirements. First of all, the parrhesiastic game required that both the truth-teller and the target of criticism be free citizens. People outside the realm of freedom could not take part in this moral game. The second condition was connected to courage, duty and risk: telling the truth implied a position of inferiority. And last but not least, the parrhesiastic exercise brought about a valid result when the criticized person(s) entered the game, presented themselves as standing on the same moral platform, and accepted the criticisms wholeheartedly. Parrhesia was not a monologue (as in the case of rhetoric), but part of a dialogue.⁴⁸ In this respect, the practice of Athenian democracy that made open criticism difficult, or even impossible, shows that it was unable to enter the parrhesiastic game.

What can one say about Eastern European parrhesia? Since there is hardly any research in this field, one can only attempt to raise some hypotheses taking the Ancient Greek case as a comparative guide:

a) In everyday speech, telling the “truth” – just as in the Greek case – is not reflexive, it hardly shows (self-)doubt, and it is not a problem of adequacy with reality.

b) “Truth-telling” is considered to be a moral act, but one can often be moral by *not* telling the truth, or by telling only half of it, or just by alluding to it in a so-called encoded speech. Consequently, 1. Truth-telling is not always connected to “courage.” “Courage” is not always connected to personal agency, as the social context can make it impossible to be “courageous”; 2. Truth-telling in Eastern Europe is not necessarily connected to criticism; 3. Truth-telling is not connected to duty. The stress is not on courage, on criticism, on duty, on responsibility, but on “pragmatism,” on being a trickster who outwits the “partner.”

c) While in Ancient Greece truth-telling was connected to social standing, in our case it is more complicated. One can be (partly) critical, a truth-teller, even in a position of superiority. Role-distancing made possible a non-identification with a regime that one is supposed to represent.

d) Parrhesia is a question of dialogue. However, the rules of the game are much more complicated, involving an ambivalent character. On the one hand, dialogue can bring about precisely the avoidance of open criticism, and/or of responsibility, limiting its goal to outwitting the other. On the other hand, it *may* also be a means by which the parrhesiastic game is forced onto the partner.

e) While classical truth-telling is a meaningful act by definition, for several reasons in Eastern Europe very often “meanings” were not assumed publicly, people stressing instead – for example – that art was first of all about technical virtuosity and/or inventiveness, without any particular “message.” More often than not, this opened the way up not only to genuine artists, but to charlatans as well.

f) Consequently the following question arises: how can one turn the meaninglessness and shallowness of a “private/public,” or “official/oppositional” polarization into something meaningful? Until now, one strategy seems to have been successful, namely the transformation of the polarity into a triangle that has a non-political

meaning, transposing personal experience into a different register: art (Baász), God, love, “thirst for knowledge,” and so on.

Notes

- 1 Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton N.J., 1996).
- 2 For the problem of enduring transition, see Árpád Szakolczai, *Reflexive Historical Sociology*, (London, 2000).
- 3 See Katherine Verdery, “Comment: Hobsbawm in the East”, *Anthropology Today* 1 (1992): 8–11, and Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton N.J.), 1996, Chapter 4: “Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-socialist Romania,” pp. 92–97.
- 4 The following argument does not deal with another major problem raised by this analysis: namely that certain conflicts have a historical aspect, as they took shape long before state socialism.
- 5 Stanley I. Benn, Gerald F. Gaus, *Introduction*, in Stanley I. Benn, Gerald F. Gaus eds., *Public and Private in Social Life* (London, 1983).
- 6 This topic cannot be discussed in detail here. On the problematic relationship between the public and the private sphere, and the way in which their categories change in time, see, for example, Benn and Gaus, *op. cit.*, Charles S. Maier, ed., *Changing Boundaries of the Political: Essays on the Evolving Balance between the State and Society, Public and Private in Europe* (Cambridge, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney, 1987), Stephanie Coontz, *The Social Origins of Private Life: A History of American Families 1600–1900* (London and New York, 1988), Dario Castiglione, Leslie Sharpe, eds., *Shifting the Boundaries: Transformation of the Languages of Public and Private in the Eighteenth Century* (Exeter, 1995), Jeff Weintraub, Krishan Kumar, eds., *Public and private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy* (Chicago and London, 1997).
- 7 See on this issue Zoltán A. Biró, József Gagy, “Román–magyar interetnikus kapcsolatok Csíkszeredában (az előzmények és a mai helyzet)” [Hungarian–Romanian Interethnic Relationships in Csíkszereda/Miercurea Ciuc (Antecedents and the Present-Day Situation)]”, *Antropológiai Műhely* 1 (1993): pp. 7–66.

- 8 See the motto.
- 9 On this, see Erving Goffman, “Role Distance”, in *Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction* (Indianapolis, 1961), pp. 85-132.
- 10 Peter Burke, “Notes for a Social History of Silence in Early Modern Europe”, in *The Art of Conversation* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 123-141.
- 11 In classical rhetoric, the issue was discussed among others by Cicero (“reticentia”) and Celsus (“obticentia”). Quintilian called it aposiopesis. See *Institutio oratorica*, IX. 2, 54–57.
- 12 Peter Berger, Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London, 1966), Burke, *op. cit.*
- 13 See Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel* (New York, Toronto, 1992), and Zygmunt Bauman, “Dismantling a Patronage State”, in Janina Frentzel-Zagórska, ed., *From a One-Party State to Democracy: Transition in Eastern Europe* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, 1993). The latter says that communism collapsed because the ruling elite lost belief in their order, and society felt and observed this. One may add as a conclusion that this can explain the slackening of the zeal of the apparatus towards “converting” the population.
- 14 A similar view can be found in Zygmunt Bauman. According to him, there were two axes on which intellectual life in communist regimes was plotted. On the one hand, there was a systemic and social integration, which drew intellectuals “into direct engagement and competition with political power.” On the other hand, there was a regimentation of intellectual practices, and pressures to “assimilate centers of intellectual authority within the structure of officialdom.” See Zygmunt Bauman, “Love in Adversity: On the State and the Intellectuals, and the State of the Intellectuals”, *Thesis Eleven* (1992) 31: 162. For the current, generally accepted view stressing the regimentation and manipulation of society under socialism, see Tismaneanu, *op. cit.*, for example on p. 283.
- 15 Putting aside unpalatable love stories involving tractor drivers and milkmaids.
- 16 Periods of “liberalization” were usually linked to the change of the secretary-general of the Party. “Freedom” certainly had a cost: for example, the relaxation in the analysis of certain domains of the past (such as the 1950s) diverted people’s energies from analyzing other periods (such as the present).

- 17 There was a differentiation between people as well. Some were allowed to write on “hot” issues, while others were not. Being “courageous” meant not only to have “courage.”
- 18 Another pair of the opposition “dominant vs. popular” is problematic as well. If popular is everything outside dominant, could one call Havel a “popular author”? Just because he was certainly not “dominant” before 1989, at least?
- 19 A famous example can be provided by some of Mikhail M. Bakhtin’s works written together with Valentin N. Voloshinov or Pavel N. Medvedev. See for example *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. A work – this time a literary one – written in the same vein seems to be Mikhail Sholohov’s *Quiet Flows the Don*.
- 20 For this, see some of György Bretter’s works.
- 21 Sándor Tóth, *Dicsőséges kudarcaink a diktatúra korszakából. Gaál Gábor sorsa és utóélete Romániában 1946–1986* [Our Glorious Failures during the Dictatorship: The Fate and after – Life of Gábor Gaál in Romania between 1946–1986] (Budapest, 1997), pp. 66, 72.
- 22 Tóth, *op. cit.*, p. 57.
- 23 Tóth, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
- 24 Tóth, *op. cit.*, p. 86.
- 25 Tóth, *op. cit.*, pp. 164–165.
- 26 Tóth, *op. cit.*, pp. 123, 140–155.
- 27 See Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, Ill., 1952).
- 28 Leo Strauss, *Az üldöztetés és az írás művészete* [Persecution and the Art of Writing] (Budapest, 1994), pp. 40–42. Strauss uses the term “philosopher,” but enlarging the category does not seem to contradict his intentions, and it is more appropriate for this discussion.
- 29 Sándor Tóth’s book on Gábor Gaál shows us another reason for reading a text as if it were encrypted: respect for a certain person, and understanding of her/his fear. It is shown that after 1948 Gaál wrote practically under constant menace. In Tóth’s view, the texts produced under such circumstances do not reflect one’s own ideas. If one is interested in what the author really wanted to communicate, then one should not look for the dogmatic views, but look for the small, hidden elements showing his/her unique, individual character, by presupposing that the text was encrypted, and that there were secret ideas introduced on purpose. See Tóth *op. cit.*, p. 56.

- 30 Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Oxford, New York, Hamburg, 1988).
- 31 Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis*, p. 2.
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 *Ibid.*, pp. 9–12.
- 34 One can add that the whole situation also led to a mental-structural inability to cope with practical responsibilities.
- 35 This is shown by Koselleck in his description of the role of the freemasons' lodges (see *op. cit.*, p. 91).
- 36 The following presentation is based on the minutes taken at the meetings of the commission. At the moment, they are to be found in the archives of Kovászna County's Inspectorate for Culture. They are in an A4 format copy book with hard covers, having in total 200 (unnumbered) pages. The minutes take up 66 pages, the rest of the pages being blank. It contains all the minutes taken between March 3, 1983, and December 15, 1989. Unfortunately, here only some anecdotal details can be presented, throwing light on the issue discussed.
- 37 The title can be roughly translated as *Gedeon the Pompous*. The author was already at that time considered to be a living classic of Hungarian literature. The play is an early one, written in the 1950s, criticizing "kulaks." It was probably chosen because a) Nobody could take a play about collectivization seriously any longer, so the message could be distorted by ignoring the propagandistic atmosphere of the 1950s, and b) It made indirect criticism possible, through some parts of the text that were naive and inoffensive if taken literally. In the context of the 1980s they could also be seen as hidden criticisms of the regime or of its rhetoric – or, in certain cases, as will be seen later, just as acts of bravado.
- 38 And they were by far not really negative, since hardly anybody thought that kulaks were despicable people.
- 39 In Romania, the Communist Party was banned between 1924 and 1945.
- 40 The whole performance was told to me by several people, among them Baász himself. There were no differences among the different versions.
- 41 There are photographs of this moment of the performance.

- 42 One should not forget that it was on the eve of an extremely important anniversary, and the heads of these two institutions were directly responsible for what happened.
- 43 Bálint Chikán, *Baász Imre* (Budapest, 1994), p. 36.
- 44 While this type of game with the form was original, recourse to a symbol of power in order to “fight” it was not unique. See, for example, the case of Shostakovich, who said that the “Leningrad” symphony did not refer to the town under siege during the war, but to the destruction of old Leningrad and its people by Stalin. See his memoirs: Dmitrij Sosztakovics, *Testamentum*. Dmitrij Sosztakovics emlékei Szolomon Volkov szerkesztésében [Testament: The Memoirs of Shostakovich Edited by Solomon Volkov] (Budapest, 1997).
- 45 On the difference between legitimacy and validity, see Max Weber, *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Vols. 1–2 (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1968), pp. 31–32.
- 46 Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process. The Development of Manners: Changes in the Code of Conduct and Feeling in Early Modern Times*, Vol. I (New York–Oxford, 1978), pp. 29–34.
- 47 See Michel Foucault, *Discourse and Truth: the Problematization of Parrhesia* [six lectures given by Michel Foucault at the University of California at Berkeley, Oct–Nov. 1983], downloaded on the 30th of November, 2002, from <http://foucault.info/downloads/discourseandtruth.pdf>.
- 48 The distinction between dialogue and monologue shows strong resemblances with Mikhail Bakhtin’s views. See Mihail Mihajlovics Bahtyin, *op. cit.*, and Mihail Mihajlovics Bahtyin, “Beszédelméleti jegyzetek” [Notes on the Theory of Speech] [The Russian title: Iz zapisey 1970–71 godov.], in *A beszéd és a valóság. Filozófiai és beszédelméleti írások* [Speech and Truth: Writings on Philosophy and the Theory of Speech] (Budapest, 1986), pp. 515–547.

Noémi Both

SERVICE OF THE PEOPLE AND COMPROMISE – A LIFE'S WORK IN SOCIALIST ROMANIA¹

Introduction

In the title of Katherine Verdery's book about Romanian cultural life in the Ceaușescu era the words *compromise* and *resistance* appear, the intensity of value and the moral foundation of both attitudes being inarguable.² The proximity in time of the 1989 revolution and the vivid ideas (biased by personal interest in some cases) and judgments of value associated with the old system, as well as the biases present in the self-judgment and in the judgment passed by others on the activity of the elite in the twentieth century, make historical research very difficult.³

In our present work I shall not venture to delimit myself from moral judgment, so I will use Katherine Verdery's categories, with slight alterations. All (individual or group) action carried out in the Communist period may be placed in the following categories of activity, categories that also encompass moral judgment: *resistance*, *compromise* or *selling out*. In my present work I try to showcase the way of the *compromise* in a case study-like manner, although this is difficult, due to the limits that have to be drawn between the "labels" and the subjective approach that the undertaking requires. In our interpretation the "contract" of compromise with the system is one of the possible routes of *service of the people*, and is the only warranty for legality in the case when actions and values conveyed are not (or are only partially) in congruity with the ideology issued by the Party. By this definition, according to our thesis, the main feature of István Imreh's work with regard to his relationship with the system is the applying of solutions involving compromise.

In my present work the signs of Marxist historiography and the bearing towards "*vulgar Marxism*"⁴ made compulsory by the

Communist system are differentiated, with emphasis being placed on discussing the latter. This is also supported – besides the significant differences between the aforementioned directions and their serving different purposes – by the fact that the subject of our research, István Imreh (1919–2003), himself related differently to the Marxist view of history and to the vulgar Marxist dogma that served as groundwork for the ideology of the Romanian Communist Party. While elements of the former had – according to the testimony of many of the sources used – had an influence on him, and he applied them successfully in his work, the compulsory use of the narrative of the Communist dictatorship proved a hindrance to his activity. Thus, while some elements of the Marxian worldview are part of István Imreh's scientific outlook, the Communist system determined (delimited) the context (or confines) of this scientific activity.

In the chapter entitled *Challenges in the Historiography of the Hungarian Minority According to Programmatic Writings* we present the central ideas of key texts, which appeared after the shift of 1919, and which state the aims of the historiography of the Hungarian minority, so that we may be able to discuss the ambitions and results of István Imreh's work in their temporal context. On the other hand, the contrasting of the challenges presented in these programmatic writings and the results achieved during the Communist era (along with the revelation of the causes of incidental failures) may add to the scale of the detrimental effects of Communist Party power, as the origins of Hungarian minority historiography stretch back to the interwar years.⁵

In the second part of our study, in the chapter entitled *Portraits of Contemporaries*, we attempt to provide a sketch of the scientific activity of the more prominent Hungarian researchers from Kolozsvár/Cluj, from the perspective of the 1945–1948 censorship and with regard to the long-term and short-term effects of the Communist takeover and power on scientific achievement. When selecting the researchers to be analyzed, we took into account two criteria: domestic and international renown, and the existence of a scientific relationship with István Imreh. Our thesis implies that

with the rise to power of the Communist Party, the researchers had to change direction, and were more or less forced onto a path of necessity within their fields of study. We try to exemplify the issue through the life's work of a number of professionals.

After giving a brief and thus selective overview of these paths of necessity and providing a sketch of the challenges that the Hungarian minority's historiography faced, we move on to the second part of our study: István Imreh's work, conducted under the Communist regime. The chapter entitled *István Imreh's Work* gives a short presentation of the researcher's professional activity, the main characteristics of this activity, the view of history that he expressed and the reasons for the abiding and continued professional validity of his life's work. In this part of the study we place emphasis on István Imreh's work conducted within the institutional framework, while also noting the relationship between the institutions in question and the central power. In the next chapter, *Ambivalent Discourse*, we showcase the palpable signs of adhering to Party policies in István Imreh's printed works. For this we used methods of textual analysis adequate for providing conclusions of a qualitative nature, but at the same time, when it seemed valid and worthwhile, we also applied the method of quantification to the texts in question.

In the chapter entitled *Reception* we strive to map the retrospective analyses of this activity and life's work, primarily through István Imreh's own writings of appraisal and evaluation. We reconstructed the way in which fellow researchers, students and the wider audience related to István Imreh's work and their measure of understanding with the help of his correspondence, which is to be found in the heritage of manuscripts. We also tried to show the way in which the Romanian Communist Party related to István Imreh's professional activity. In order to reveal this, we used interviews alongside specialist literature.⁶

Challenges in the Historiography of the Hungarian Minority According to Programmatic Writings

In Transylvania, empirical social studies started to take shape in the early part of the twentieth century, later than the European average. This tendency and general ambition in development unavoidably brought about the acclimatization of the methods of sociology and sociography in the region. Because of the consequences of the Treaty of Trianon, the connection between political power and the organization and conducting of scientific activity became tighter, as the newly arisen context demanded that intellectuals take a political stand, and thus the main goal of authors became the shaping of political will and public opinion.⁷ As a result of the effort towards Romanian national edification during the interwar years, the professional activity of the scientific elite of the Hungarian minority was directly determined by the need for national self-preservation, for which the circumstances “were present,” because, as Imre Mikó put it: “[...] only a minority perpetually threatened in its existence can draw its strength away from sectarian fighting and concentrate this strength into solving the problems of life and death.”⁸ The emergence of social issues was closely linked to national efforts, as “In the new circumstances it became clear that the basis of the culture of the Hungarian minority, of our identity, may only be folk culture, as the rural population represents the bulk of the minority.”⁹

The programmatic writing by Miklós Asztalos (1899–1986) that appeared in the pages of *Magyar Kisebbség* (Hungarian Minority) may be viewed as representative in terms of the goals professed by historians of the Hungarian minority in that period,¹⁰ as the ideas that it presents keep appearing in the same or a revised form in the writings of various authors for decades to come. At the same time, the goals that it had stated seemed to find their way into practice as well. From the description of the age and from its effects on scientific life, it may be perceived that for the intellectuals who had ended up in the diaspora, scientific research was to be carried out to forward a clearly defined purpose, thus becoming subordinate

to plans of social engineering, “applied” science in effect. Miklós Asztalos pens this fittingly in his programmatic text, stating that “to avoid any misinterpretation, we must make it clear that when we place history in the service of the minority issue, we have to give up the notion of history being an end in itself, from the very beginning,”¹¹ because “the historiography of the minority is not in itself an end, only a means to solving the issue and thus its methods need to be adapted to the nature of the question.”¹² This, however, does not mean the renouncing of a scientific approach, because “the revealing of true history” is needed in all cases. In all cases the revealing of the past is needed by scientific means, when they try not to keep the rights of the minorities laid down in international pacts whith the help of falsification of history.¹³

So Miklós Asztalos sees the role of historical research as the explanation of the current situation through the exact presentation of its evolution, during which the historian “[has to] almost biogenetically demonstrate his/her assertions regarding the society of mixed race.”¹⁴ “There is a need for a historiography that will reveal the way of life, determined by a myriad of factors and unchanging, of the societies of mixed race that have evolved here and there during the centuries,”¹⁵ because he sees the reasons for the emergence of the situation of the time in national (ethnic) interests taking precedence over natural proceedings shaped by organic evolution.¹⁶ It is clear that the primary purpose of a historian from the minority is the explanation of the origins of the society of “mixed race” and the understanding and explanation of its aims and ideal developmental model. He/she has to show how this ethnically heterogeneous society has preserved its homogeneity, and point out the spiritual or natural factors that have led the given society into a particular direction. As a result of this research, the historian (has the opportunity) “[...] to register the moments that underpin human rights with the historical past, and, secondly, the historian has the opportunity to give an example through undeniable historical parallels regarding change and finally familiarization of the mixed race society with itself [also becomes possible].”¹⁷ Minority historiography, by its

inexpedience, cannot have any other point of view (analysis of national,¹⁸ chronological, material or intellectual forces) but that of “social science.” As Miklós Asztalos uses the terms, social “science” and “sociology” have the same meaning, so both are “the summing up of all sciences that are in connection with the research of human collectivity.”¹⁹ For a full analysis of the societies of bygone ages the researcher needs the tools of “social science.” In today’s terms we would call these interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary methods.²⁰ Miklós Asztalos deemed it important, alongside stating the goals of minority historiography, to ensure the institutionalization of this activity, which meant the funding of The Hungarian Institute for Minority Studies in Romania.

József Venczel (1913–1972) also discusses the role of Transylvanian historiographers²¹ in his writing entitled *Metamorphosis Transylvaniae*, which was published in 1936 and which emphasized the need for “revision” of the minority Hungarian elite.²² Venczel points to “serving the people” as being the exclusive duty or calling of Transylvanian Hungarian intellectuals. He considers that nurturing and conserving Hungarian culture may be resurrected by researching the life of traditional rural society. Venczel also states that the basis of “self-revision” is social autognosis, in effect the knowledge of the historical past, and he also thinks’ so the forming of a “Transylvanian Hungarian view of society,” which essentially means a sociological analysis of the dominant social relations and living conditions of the age as well as the noting and evaluation of the results. All this research amplifies “the essence of the Transylvanian Hungarian cultural spirit, which forms self-awareness,” while the results of social studies’ research are intellectual products without which plans for social edification cannot proceed.²³

The programs of historiographers from the minority drafted above are by no means exhaustive in terms of the trends present in the period between the two world wars, but we presented the general direction of ambitions present in the age. By this we also showed the values and goals that had driven István Imreh’s professional activity, as well as the work of his contemporaries in the field of

Transylvanian Hungarian historiography. The views expressed with regard to the role of Hungarian historiography are not only characteristic of the interwar period, but also a struggle showing the continuation of the aforementioned values may also be detected in the assessment of the achievements of Transylvanian Hungarian historiographers of the Communist period, not only in practice but occasionally in doctrine as well. Intellectuals of the second half of the twentieth century considered themselves duty-bound to achieve the aims drawn up in the programmatic writings showcased here, and made significant efforts to discharge that duty. One may even venture to state that the (general) canon of historiography in the interwar period is not directly antithetical to Marxist historiography, and the primary reason for this cannot be the presumed leftist leanings of Hungarian historians (although it is no coincidence that many had such leanings).

Based on the above premise we arrive at the conclusion that the Transylvanian Hungarian historiography of the second half of the twentieth century was, in terms of its stated goals, successful in tackling the special challenges that minority historiography faced. In spite of this we must not forget or take lightly the impeding and hindering nature of the Communist system, which continually forced itself onto historians and historiography (with varying intensity).

Portraits of Contemporaries

“The works enumerated here often owe their existence to compromise – the perpetual objector may say. Yes! But let us not forget that we all stayed alive by making compromises. These compromises were forged on the paths of necessity of our century.”
(Samu Benkő)

The changes of 1945 and especially those of 1948 brought about a shift in all walks of life, and historiography was no exception. Besides the official requirement for the class-struggle approach

(to put it tactfully) Hungarian historians in Romania had other obligations as well, because of the national character of the system, which became prevalent during the Ceaușescu era but had been felt during the Dej era in the 1950s and early 1960s. These external expectations had as much impact on the course of these authors' lives as on their fields of study, theses or the methodology that they used. Along with this, the crucial circumstances for conducting research also grew sparse, as access to Western bibliography and primary sources was strongly impeded, as were study tours and other travel by historians. Added to this, the institutions conducting and organizing scientific activity in Hungarian, which had persisted through the Romanian policy of assimilation between 1918 and 1940 and the hardships of war, were either completely eradicated or were incorporated into others (see Bolyai University or Transylvanian Museum Society) In these inhospitable conditions the historiography of the Hungarian minority was capable of showing results and of "producing" historians whose achievements are valuable to this day, even if in many cases one may see a politically predetermined track, which implied treading the "side track" of economic, cultural and social history as opposed to the ideologically weighted path of political history.

Attila Szabó T. (1906–1987) was, next to Lajos Kelemen (1877–1963), one of the most influential characters among Transylvanian Hungarians active in the field of the humanities, and the founder of an entire school of thought in researching the history of the Hungarian language. He had started off by showing an interest in theology and literature, but eventually moved on to linguistics, history, ethnography, literary history and sociography, probably because in 1925 he acquainted himself more closely with the Archives of the National Museum of Transylvania and its archivist, Lajos Kelemen. In 1928 he started his university studies in Cluj, in the arts department, where he studied English, Hungarian literature and universal history.²⁴ In 1930 he taught at the Bethlen High School in Nagyenyed/Aiud, and later at the Wesselényi High School in Zilah/Zalău, striving to map the history of these settlements by

approaching it from the point of view of linguistics. The summing up of this research was in effect his PhD thesis, and he received his degree in Debrecen in 1934. He spent the next stage of his life in Kolozsvár/Cluj, so most of his life's work was done in connection with the historical and ethnographical study of Kolozsvár/Cluj and its surrounding areas. Szabó had great respect for the Romanian rural study movement headed by Dimitrie Gusti, and he considered the application of professional methods in the activity of the Hungarian rural study movement to be of the utmost importance.²⁵ Attila Szabó T. was the one who, in 1936, organized the first rural study camp in Bábony/Băbiu, which may be considered to be significant both in terms of scientific value and in terms of initiative.²⁶

In 1940 he got a position at the university in Kolozsvár/Cluj, and he also held positions of responsibility at the Scientific Institute of Transylvania and the Transylvanian Museum Society. Following the changes of the late 1940s Attila Szabó T.'s work was also criticized, and because he refused to give in to this criticism, he was branded a follower of the "neo-grammatical school." The case related by Samu Benkő matches the series of aspersions exactly: "[...] at a public convention he was outright accused of belittling Stalin's work, because in his remarks he had referred to the writings on linguistics of the Soviet statesman (honored as a classic) as articles, while his critic called them treatises."²⁷ In 1952 he was dismissed, along with several other notable researchers, but due to the lack of a suitable replacement he was invited back in 1954 and he was able to continue giving lectures until the year of his retirement (1971). He did not break off his connection with the university even after 1971, but his writings show that he resented members of the department. Even so, János Péntek considers that it was not they who were responsible for the deterioration of the state of affairs, but the ever-mounting pressure weighing upon the conducting of Hungarian studies.²⁸ In 1966, while at the same time still working at the university, he started compiling the Historical Dictionary of the Transylvanian Hungarian Lexis (*Erdélyi Magyar Szótörténeti Tár*), the first volume appearing in 1975. The enormous amount of energy

that the first volume had required made it necessary to expand the one-man workshop, so for the editing of the subsequent volumes a small workgroup formed around Attila Szabó T. Following the edition of the fourth volume in 1984, the political situation became ever direr, and Attila Szabó T.'s sudden death in 1987 shook the research group even more.

Zsigmond Jakó (1916–2008) was also a member of the same generation, which bore signs of having been greatly influenced by Lajos Kelemen, but his work also shows characteristics specific to the school of folk and settlement history founded by Elemér Mályusz. Those of his writings that reveal and analyze sources are highly varied in their topics, as he dealt with economic, social and cultural history, as well as with the history of writing and publishing. He also added greatly to the establishing of a canon in the professional publishing of resource materials. The historical topics highlighted by Zsigmond Jakó fit into several schools of history (even Marxist historiography to some extent), but as András Kubinyi suggests, it would not be fitting to place this life's work into any school.²⁹

The diversified choice of topics fits well into a setting in which the periodicity and occasional paths of necessity were determined by the expectations of the institutions and those of the political power.³⁰ At the initial stage of his career research of the history of economics and peasant life had taken center stage. Following the Communist takeover, however, Jakó judged that Marxist doctrine and source materials could not be reconciled,³¹ and thus he turned his attention from rural/agrarian history to the study of the auxiliary sciences: paleography, source research and the history of writing and publishing. This did not mean, however, that he managed to neutralize the negative effects of the central control. The most striking example of this was the publication in Hungarian of an abstract of the preserved Latin records of the convent at Kolozsmonostor (Cluj-Mănăştur) from 1259 to 1556: the Communist Party denied permission under the pretext that publishing abstracts of sources in translation was incompatible with the usual method of Romanian science in publishing source material.³²

In the year following his move to Kolozsvár/Cluj (1941), he was already teaching at the university, an activity that he would pursue until 1981, except for the period between 1952 and 1954.³³ Besides teaching, Jakó took no public positions, and so he could devote himself to his research and suffered no uncalled-for harassment.

Elek Csetri (1923–2010), like most of his generation, sought his moral and professional integrity in researching and publishing in the field of economic and cultural history during the socialist period. He took his state examination in 1947 at the arts department of the University of Kolozsvár/Cluj, then continuing with PhD studies. In spite of the fact that his appointment to a teaching position at the university had already been in progress at that time, it was only finalized in 1949, as his relationship with the newly established (or in the process of being established) system was less than pristine. Due to the pressure of circumstance he concentrated on the history of economy and culture, and researched the life and work of Miklós Wesselényi the younger therein, with the goal of writing a monograph. Still “It became more and more apparent that the Wesselényi biography, the key element in his career being political activity, could not be written in the Romania of the time,” so he turned his attention to characters the significance of whom was recognized by universal science, thus coming to deal with Sándor Kőrösi Csoma or Gábor Bethlen.³⁴

In 1980 *Erdély változó társadalma* (Transylvanian Society in Change),³⁵ a joint work by Elek Csetri and István Imreh, appeared, in which the authors provide a statistical approach to Transylvanian society of the period between 1767 and 1821. In the second half of the 1980s the conditions for writing and education became ever more difficult, so he retired as a docent in 1986, discontinuing his lectures at the university. In those years, due to the immense pressure, the opportunities for editing and publishing also narrowed, so part of his accumulated works only appeared after the end of Communism (as did those of many contemporary Hungarian historians in Romania).

Ákos Egyed (born 1929) graduated from Mikó Székely High School in Sepsiszentgyörgy/Sfântu Gheorghe and completed his university studies between 1938 and 1952 in Cluj. In 1951 he was an assistant lecturer at the university, but his teaching career came to an abrupt end as his family were branded as kulaks and he was swiftly dismissed from his position. Instead, having completed his studies, he got a post as a researcher in the social history department of the Romanian Academy of Sciences' office in Kolozsvár/Cluj, his assignment being the research of workers' and peasants' movements. Soon he managed to direct his studies towards the fields of agrarian, economic and social history, topics that allowed comparably more room for expressing the historian's views. Starting from the 1960s, due to the lighter political atmosphere, his attention turned more and more to the research of the Revolution of 1848–1849 in the Háromszék region. In 1978, as a result of this work, the monographic work entitled *Háromszék 1818–1849* appeared.³⁶ The synthesis of the Revolution in Háromszék was in due course followed by research into the full Transylvanian context of the Revolution. In the 1980s, however, the circumstances were no longer favorable to this work, so the opportunity to publish the synthesis in two volumes *Erdély 1848–1849* (Transylvania 1848–1849) only arose after the fall of the Communist dictatorship, in 1998, for the 150th anniversary of the Revolution.³⁷ In the 1980s, as was so often the case, research into economic and social history took precedence over more “uncomfortable” topics in the work of Ákos Egyed also. In 1981 there appeared one of the author's most successful works to this date, entitled *Falu, város, civilizáció* (Village, Town, Civilization).³⁸ In this work about the nineteenth-century modernization and urbanization of Transylvania,³⁹ the historian focuses on phenomena such as the establishing of the railway network and credit system, and the process of urban and industrial development, his studies supplying references for more in-depth analysis of these issues by the historians of today.⁴⁰

The works in the field of the Transylvanian historical past by Attila Szabó T., Zsigmond Jakó, Elek Csetri, Ákos Egyed and

István Imreh (whom we shall discuss in more detail later) or András Kiss (born 1922), Samu Benkő (born 1928) and many others whom we could mention are, from an ethnic perspective, comprehensive in character. A holistic approach to Transylvanian Hungarian society demanded knowledge of the Romanian and Transylvanian Saxon historical research, and at the same time a collaboration with fellow researchers, which resulted in coactions in viewpoints – and thus in methodology and topics – between Romanian and Hungarian researchers. The palpable results of this joint work and mutual influence are joint editions and bilingual treatises in memorial editions. In connection with the above Hungarian authors we should mention the names of David Prodan (1902–1992) and Camil Murășan (born 1927), who, in spite of the prevalent pressure of political ideology in the second half of the twentieth century, and in spite of the official Romanian nationalist line, applied the above-described “strategies” to forward a professional approach in historical research.

In the last paragraphs we did not strive to achieve completeness either in the presentation of the careers or in the full review and enumeration of the noteworthy historians of the period. Our aim was that István Imreh’s work be placed in a wider context, through which we may offer an insight into the path-seeking of historians that had developed as a response to the compulsory expectations of the Communist Party.

It is apparent that we may speak of paths of necessity (although on different scales) in every case when the personal system of values and goals did not match that of the official ideology of the political power, and when the reaction to this was not compromise or the withdrawal from intellectual work but the search for the optimum within the given circumstances. The historians mentioned here, even in difficult settings, managed to create works that come up to professional standards and represent unquestionable scientific value even to this day, free of (or less suffused by, to be more accurate) ideology. A very good example of this observation is the *Erdély története* (History of Transylvania)⁴¹ in three volumes, edited by

Béla Köpeczi, which appeared in 1986 in Budapest, which used the findings of the historians mentioned here, and often quoted them as references. On the debate that followed its publication,⁴² we cannot find any comment by the authors in focus prior to 1989–1990, although at the same time they are often referred to during the debate⁴³ as productive researchers highly worthy of professional recognition, whose results deserve to be presented to the public and taken into professional account.⁴⁴

Case Study: the Work of István Imreh

István Imreh's name is widely known, and his work as a historian is recognized in professional and lay circles alike. Most of his life's work dedicated to the past of the Székely or Szeklers (primarily from an economic and social perspective) and to adapting the methodology of historiography to actual demands is highly praiseworthy. Being an avid connoisseur of national and European historical and theoretical works the level of his writing is on par with European the expectations. His view of history is primarily characterized by its novelty and eclecticism in the sense that he strove for an original historiography of a European level, adapted to local circumstances with a cognizance of past and contemporary views of history. He also tried to establish a view of history with its roots in various movements, schools of historiography, historiographers, or the work of intellectuals. Parts of his life's work and some aspects of his vision show a relation to Marxist historiography, Marxist views and methods; however, many of the ideas that Marx stood for are reflected in several schools of historiography, and so stating that a particular view is surely a *direct* effect of Marxism would be risky and highly debatable. Thus we see it as likely that the thematic character noticeable in the historian's works as well as some of his methods, which are also expressed in the Marxist view of history and Marx's own historical writings, are a consequence of the development pointed out by Hobsbawm, which says that the evolution of historiography moved in the same direction, apart from the historiographers ideological conviction.⁴⁵

The roots of István Imreh's leftist stance, proven by his writings as well as the testimony of those close to him, in our opinion can be traced back to the service of the people's ideology and the "*strategies for integration*" of the minority Hungarian elite. The taking shape of these can be traced back to the peace treaty ending World War I and the ensuing Romanian struggle to create a nation state.⁴⁶ The generation hallmarked by the names of József Venczel and Imre Mikó (1911–1977) had as its main focus, partly due to the connection to folk writers,⁴⁷ the peasant society and the village,⁴⁸ as "In the new circumstances it became clear that the basis of the culture of the Hungarian minority, of our identity, may only be folk culture, as the rural population represents the bulk of the minority."⁴⁹

The ideology of serving the people mentioned above set the "*elevation*" of this group as its main goal, encompassing national (ethnic) conservation and the improvement of relevant social conditions. The *state of balance*⁵⁰ of these two particular value systems is rather characteristic of István Imreh's work, which is not surprising, the author having been socialized in this medium and having established strong professional and personal ties to those propagating this idea.

In consequence, we consider that István Imreh's professional activity is, both in terms of the view of history and in the methodology applied, akin to Marxist historiography. The connection, however, is not one-way, and the similarity is probably not even the result of direct influence; rather his views took shape as a synthesis of several parallel schools of thought.⁵¹ Besides this it is also necessary, when discussing someone's life's work (in our case István Imreh's), to analyze the specific problems of the age and of the answers suggested for these problems along with the restrictionary facts. With regard to the specific problems of the time period we have to mention the minority condition first of all, while in the case of constraining measures of the 1948–1989/1990 period we must mention the indisputable negative effects of the totalitarian system (on science as well). Thus, "In István Imreh's work too, one has to take into account the age in which he wrote and consider whether what he wrote was written willingly or as an assignment."⁵²

“Ambivalent Discourse”

The introduction of the term “ambivalent discourse” in Hungarian specialist literature is closely linked with József Lőrincz, who, in his book entitled *Az átmenet közéleti értékei a mindennapi életben* (Public Values of the Transition Period in Everyday Life) gives a case study-like example of the ambivalent discourse⁵³ compulsory before 1989 and ingrained afterwards (1990–1994) in both lay and intellectual circles. The writings that appeared (mostly) in the public sphere can be interpreted on two different levels, and the clearly conscious effort to achieve this is obviously a result of a conflict of interest and value. The core of the value system of the Transylvanian Hungarian elite in the post-1945 period is a commitment to the community, tradition and service of the people.⁵⁴ “People” in this context indicates the Transylvanian Hungarian minority and their smaller (regionally distinct) groups/communities. The direct or indirect protection and serving of traditions and of the community as a traditional form of social organization guaranteed the fulfillment of the rural communities’ interests and national conservation.⁵⁵

This system of values was confronted in the late 1940s by the growing influence of the official ideology⁵⁶ of the Romanian Communist Party, which functioned not only as a guideline but also as a dogma⁵⁷ (with changing content and varying intensity) until the fall of the Communist system. Socialism as an ideology was based on Marxism, but “reduced science to an ideology, and reduced ideology to a propaganda tool, a petty justification of haphazard political standpoints,”⁵⁸ thus depriving Marxist thought of its essence and filling it with elements alien to it. One of these “alien elements” was national, nationalist discourse, which was one of the characteristic features of Romanian Communism.⁵⁹

Given that the nationalistic aspects of the official discourse had as its ultimate aim the creation of the Romanian nation state, which meant the assimilation of minorities, it was directly opposed to the struggle of the minority Hungarian elite.

The tension between the official ideology and the values of the Hungarian minority, along with the arising of a general need to serve the people (the intellectuals' sense of duty), played the main role in the universal adoption of the so-called ambivalent discourse. Using this discourse gave intellectuals a chance to convey some values, thus keeping their legitimacy, and, by the minimal compliance necessary, to use those forums that would have been unapproachable without willingness to compromise, so they also remained legitimate in the eyes of the system.⁶⁰

In our case, dealing with this ambivalent discourse, we must subject to analysis the written information available in the texts, their way of being presented, the author's explicit or implicit opinion of the topic elaborated on, the reasons for writing, the justification of the choice of topic, the time and place of edition, and we also have to dissect the reasons behind the selection of authors and texts being referred to. It is also necessary, however, to pay attention to the information omitted from the texts and to the reasons for the author's silence alongside the thorough analysis of textual data. Henceforth we shall attempt to offer an example of ambivalent discourse in practical use, applying the established points of view.

One of the ways of applying ambivalent discourse practiced by István Imreh, as pointed out by József Lőrincz as well,⁶¹ is the insertion of orthodox Communist texts between otherwise coherent bodies of text, the insertions being logically ill-suited to the whole. We consider that the insertion of these fragments, due to their lack of integration and also because of the pressure to adapt to ideological expectations, was totally motivated by outside expectations, and that they do not represent the author's personal conviction or opinion at all. These bodies of text are usually to be found at the head of the treatise or in the conclusions, but they occasionally appear wedged into the main body of the text as well.

Besides the paragraphs that convey lectures on Party policy inserted into informative or scientific texts, we also find writings that adhere fully to the discourse of the regime. The reason for this may probably be found in that it was "*not proper*" to deny the

“requests” issued by publishers heavily controlled by the Party.⁶² In parallel with this there is a palpable tendency that caused propaganda and censorship to intertwine. The forcefully banned and the officially prescribed public communication determined by Party doctrine became fixed without appeal, but the doctrines development had also made its mark prior to that.⁶³ István Imreh’s review that appeared on the pages of the *Korunk* (Our Age) in 1963 may be deemed an example of just such a “request,” as in the review he gives his opinion on a study that sums up the results of Marxist historiography between 1948 and 1963 in an orthodox fashion.

Alongside the boundlessly positive adjudication and the appreciative recounting of the results produced by Marxist historiography, passages praising the “glorious deeds” of the Communist Party also appear, expressing the “recognition” (induced recognition) that “It was becoming ever-more apparent that the Communist Party was the only political power to raise the flag of progress high, in the interest of the people, and so Romania would turn its arms against Hitler’s Germany.”⁶⁴ Surely the author was trying to avoid having to produce such flourishes in his exposition of the state of contemporary historiography, where, resigned, he states the following: “It is no use pointing out one by one the more significant stages of this period, as we speak of the glorious period the essence of which is the victory of the socialist revolution, the establishing of the socialist system in our homeland, and in the days of which we have been living in.”⁶⁵

It can be deemed a result of the national character of Romanian Communist Party ideology that when discussing certain topics, one could not concentrate exclusively on historic Transylvania, but had to include the analysis of the territories beyond the Carpathians.⁶⁶ With regard to the population of Transylvania, the works that did not showcase the peaceful coexistence of the peoples inhabiting the area but approached a question from a strictly national point of view, were vetoed or banned from appearing in print.⁶⁷ Even so (for different, political reasons) it was forbidden to draw a parallel between the Romanian (ethnic) nation within the borders of Romania

and the Romanians living in the diasporas and the Hungarian and Saxon minority groups and the mother-nation.⁶⁸

The research done by István Imreh concentrated mainly on Transylvania, primarily on the Székelyföld region and the area of Háromszék. The introductory treatise of *A rendtartó székely falu* (The Orderly Székely Village)⁶⁹ interprets the village records found in the area, while the second part of the volume contains the records themselves. In spite of this, and in spite of the fact that there is no mention of Wallachia or Moldova in the introduction, the introductory study contains the following paragraph in its conclusions:

“Naturally, it was so everywhere in the country. Especially in the *răzeș* villages of Moldova, in the *moșneni* settlements, in the Saxon *communitas*, and also where inhabitants of different tongues lived side by side, gnawed by the same problems, bound together by common strife.”⁷⁰ The thought unambiguously echoes the idea(l) of the “brotherly coexistence” of peoples of various nationalities. Even so, it is necessary to point out that Marxist historiography and the Communist canon were not the only ones to speak out against the construing of the historical past solely based on a national framework. The need for a holistic presentation of history was as present in the program of European historiography as it was in that of the more progressive Romanian and Hungarian research groups that emphasized its importance, their main argument being the multi-ethnic Transylvanian society. In consequence the rhetoric of multi-ethnic coexistence prevalent in the writing of Transylvanian history cannot be interpreted as a mere compliance with expectations, even when this appears in an exaggerated fashion, embossed with ideological theses. The fact, however, that the borders of holistic approach and analysis coincide with the state borders of Greater Romania may eventually be traced back to coercions of political ideology.⁷¹

Another method of circumventing censorship was for the author to judge a phenomenon from the perspective of the values imposed by Party doctrine after having tried to present it in a truthful way.⁷² “The long centuries of feudalism were primarily characterised by

exploitation, by the oppression of the many by the few, by a lack of freedom and by ignorance and the rule of superstition. In this context, the village community, a small group of simple people, developed a consciousness of the need to belong and huddle together and to take responsibility for each other,”⁷³ is the conclusion drawn by István Imreh following the presentation of the general characteristics of the age of “feudalism.” Next to the application of the moral categories of Marxism, the text also reveals elements of the Marxian worldview that were most exploited and most adopted by the Communist system (the interpretation of history as the struggle of “exploiters” and the “exploited,” and the dismissal of religion, superstition and mysticism). The first sentence of the quoted text raises the charge from the Marxian critique of feudalism; in the second sentence, however, those values of the village community (solidarity and community) appear that the political power also deemed to be its own on the level of rhetoric.⁷⁴

Henri H. Stahl speaks of the phenomenon that he calls “the freedom of Marxism” in a 1986 interview. The term “[marks] a method free of ideology, the neutrality of which can be defended exactly by the reference to Marxism.”⁷⁵ The inclusion of Marxian doctrine and a reference to the founders of “scientific” socialism was also part of applying an ambivalent discourse. In István Imreh’s works that appeared under Communist rule, quoted fragments from Marx and/or Engels are either present, or referred to, and, although fewer in number, Lenin’s axioms (*sic!*) are also quoted. Even so one can observe that the author tried to use texts that had a professional value and were relevant to the topic.⁷⁶ In spite of this we consider that the aforementioned references did not come about as products of the author’s own conviction, as prior to the 1940s and after the fall of the Communist regime these are altogether absent from his writing (see annex). We rarely came across the names of the developers and leaders of the socialist system⁷⁷ in István Imreh’s works during our research, and this was also the case with quotes from their texts.

Next to the obligation of referring to the greater authorities of socialist ideology and to the texts of leftist intellectuals, referring to

bourgeois intellectuals was occasionally also forbidden, implying a risk of amercement. The *Gazdaságtörténeti Tanulmányok* (Studies of Economic History), started up in 1965, in which István Imreh first published his work entitled *Majorsági gazdálkodás Székelyföldön a feudalizmus bomlásának időszakában* (Manorial Farming in the Székelyföld in the Waning Days of Feudalism) caused a great uproar among historians partly because of the aforementioned text, and partly because of previous results and the setting of future goals in historical research. According to József Pataki, the criticism received by István Imreh developed because

In these chapters [dealing with social history] that are not the main focuses for the author, for lack of anything else [he] was forced to use more widely the works of historians with bourgeois and even feudal views. The debate about the book sprang precisely from the fact that the author's stance, against these bourgeois historiographers, especially against Károly Apor, was not enough showed out.⁷⁸

György Bözödi objected to the work on the grounds that in his view the author “reveals the question of the Székely peasantry as presented by the landlords of the past century,” and what is more, “with regard to the rapport between the lands of Székely landlords and those of serfs Imreh refers to the article of law that conveys the interests of the ruling classes, without thoroughly interpreting them or passing judgment”⁷⁹

One of the determining elements of Marxian thought and socialist ideology is the characteristic use of terms determined by purposeful intentions. One can find some of the expressions characteristic to the narrative of Communist power, as brilliantly summed up by Françoise Thom,⁸⁰ and keywords of Marxian thought in those of István Imreh's works that were written during the Communist era (e. g. struggle, work, exploitation, class, class struggle). Here we would like to point out the term “feudalism,” because we suspect that the use of the word may conceal compliance with Party expectations rather than with professional norms.⁸¹ György Bónis in his work that appeared in 1948 conducts a thorough legal analysis of the

manner in which the feudal system developed in Western Europe, then comparing it to the medieval Hungarian legal system.⁸² Bónis consequently calls the social, economic and political system in Hungary “hűbéri” (liege/feudal) and “rendi” (estates of the realm). With the Communist takeover this influential work was blacklisted.⁸³ István Imreh uses in his writing, in order to indicate the same reality, the “Marxian feudalism” and the terms consciously used by György Bónis – “hűbéri” (liege/feudal), “rendi” (estate)” and. “úrbéri” (manorial) – alternatively. Even so one may note that while in the *Székely falutörvények* (Székely Village Laws), which appeared in 1947, the term “feudalism” never appears, in *A Rendtartó székely falu* (The Orderly Székely Village), which appeared in 1973, the terms “hűbériség,” “rendiség” or “úrbériség” are seldom used, “feudalism” being the preponderant term (see annex).

As we have previously hinted, we may deduce the presence of the official Communist Party ideology in a text from the omission of certain phenomena from the analysis. It was forbidden, ill-advised or professionally unproductive to speak about individuals or phenomena (see above the case of Miklós Wesselényi Jr) that confronted current Party doctrine. Instead of the endless enumeration of these cases, we shall illustrate by one precedent this interference of censorship with scientific work: the way in which the institutions of the Church and religious life are presented (or not presented, to be more precise) in István Imreh’s work. In those of his works that appeared in print during the “tougher” periods of the dictatorship, the role of clerical institutions and the highly influential presence of religion (let us not forget that we are dealing with village communities of the Modern Age) are not discussed, or are discussed too briefly.⁸⁴ In contrast, however, those volumes that handled the same topic, but were not published in Romania, or appeared during the more “liberal” years of the dictatorship, place significantly more emphasis on these institutions and cultural phenomena.⁸⁵

Reception

In the time of the Communist system those who got marginalized or sidelined from the Party (or the *nomenklatura*) and the favored circles had to comply with certain criteria and meet certain expectations in order to legally be publicly active. We have tried to showcase this through the work of István Imreh. From here on we will examine to what extent István Imreh's work as a historian reached its aim in light of the compulsory nature of compliance with the political power. We will analyze this partly with the help of feedback from the scientific community and the wider public, with special attention to the success (in the face of power and the public) of ambivalent discourse, and on the other hand we will see how in retrospect István Imreh saw his work as a historiographer and its success during the socialist years.

The precondition for the use of an ambivalent narrative in the public sphere is that the one who imparts a text or information presupposes an audience whose values, goals and language/code are close to the ones that the author represents or uses, or are in fact identical.⁸⁶ In the event that this is lacking, the connection between the emitter and receiver (or group) ceases.

The adequate usage of ambivalent discourse and the successful use of this possibility is obvious when looking at István Imreh's work, as his contemporaries and even today's researchers speak of his activity with appreciation, and he is also a popular researcher in the eyes of the wider public. On the other hand he conducted his educational and scientific work up to the middle of the 1980s, which implies the confines of the state system and thus no (radical) hindrance by the political establishment.

However, this picture needs more detail, because in Imreh's professional correspondence (although the content of the letters generally, mostly to be more precise, supports the hitherto established paradigm) one may find letters by readers that show a complete misunderstanding of the author's life's work (see annex). The letter addressed "*Tisztelt Imreh István Professzor Elvtársnak*"

(To Comrade Professor István Imreh, with respect) appreciates the researcher's four decade long activity dedicated to the more in-depth cognizance of the Székely past, in which he had made great headway "in the field of establishing the socialist self-awareness of our people." The entire text conveys the official ideology. Knowing that the power had access to both public and private writings, we might say that the author of the letter used ambivalent discourse in order to ensure his personal safety. Even so, we may not speak of ambivalent discourse in this case, as the letter conveys no information other than the fixed phrases of the official ideology, and it also seems that the author has no difficulty in the extensive use of the orthodox rhetoric.

The large majority of letters distance themselves far more from the official narrative, and even the letters that are addressed giving the title "comrade" to the recipient are rare. In contrast, most letters discuss the professional significance of one or another of István Imreh's works or the value of the researcher's work, praising István Imreh's novel view of history and the correctness of his methods (chiefly interdisciplinary), and expressing the need for his research into the history of the peasantry and the economy (for example see annex 8.2).

As the reading and interpretation of István Imreh's writings split fellow professionals and the wider public, so the comparatively safe work of opposition to the system also needs further detail. István Imreh's work as a researcher, his four-decade-long teaching career and the frequency with which his work was published all bear witness to the fact that with a minimal compliance with expectations he was able to continue his work to the best of his abilities. Even so, we have to point out that similarly to many other exceptional researchers his work at the university and his position were not proportionate, as in 1983 he retired as a docent (although he was promoted to become a professor several times).⁸⁷ The blame for withholding the well-earned promotion primarily lies with the political power⁸⁸ and its discriminatory policy towards minorities.⁸⁹ According to Mária Farkas's statement, István Imreh's

appointment to the position of professor had been made conditional by the Securitate on the writing of a derisory article about Gyula László, and Imreh was not willing to write it, thus not receiving the position.⁹⁰

We need to refine our statement about the frequent (and comparatively unimpeded) publishing both in terms of quality and quantity. The bibliography of István Imreh's life's work contains a significantly high number of titles,⁹¹ but the number of publications or larger treatises from the late 1940s, early 1950s and 1980s is markedly smaller when compared with those of other decades, especially when weighing the number of publications in Hungarian. This is surely connected to the political line and the change of doctrine in Party policy to the extent that the Communist system, during its last decade, had his writings blacklisted.⁹² Besides this, occasionally studies with topics thoroughly suffused by ideology appeared under his name, the publisher itself signifying the aim of publishing (Academic Press of the People's Republic of Romania).

Just as the published texts bear the marks of the demands made by the Party, one had to meet these demands in the work at the university as well. According to the interviews with István Imreh's students and the writings published by them regarding this topic, even with the existence of restraints and expectations, István Imreh always found a way to give information that in his system of values had to be conveyed to his students.⁹³

As István Csucsujá states, the reason for István Imreh's conflict with the leadership of the university emerged not necessarily because of the content of the lectures but rather due to the subjects taught, as the leadership was repeatedly asked to report because of the subjects dealing with fascism and the Second World War taught by Imreh.⁹⁴ The interviews with István Imreh's students and the writings published by them regarding this topic testify to the fact that, even with the existence of restraints and expectations, the lectures given by István Imreh were not interlaced with ideology. Given that someone always reported on what had been said during

the lectures (as István Imreh well knew) he “did not stray too far [from the official line], but he did not need to,” István Csucsuja states.⁹⁵

Conclusions

Due to the obligations and pressure from the political power weighing on the historians of Eastern and Central (Eastern) Europe in the second half of the twentieth century, the historiography of the period bears specific marks. In the late 1940s, in the developing new circumstances, it became increasingly hard for historians to remain true to the goals and value systems that had been established by their predecessors during the interwar period. The need to serve the people and the minority ethnic Hungarians did not cease, however, and during the years of the dictatorship there may be detected a group of historical researchers that was working to satisfy these needs, searching for a way that lay between the respectable historiography above political regimes and the compulsory compliance with the directives issued by the political power. This social and professional attitude was a passable way from the late 1940s up to the 1970s and early 1980s. In the last decade of the Communist establishment, however, the class-struggle approach and the dramatic escalation of the national aspect of Romanian Communism made it impossible for the Hungarian elite to apply these strategies any longer.

The compulsory adoption of the official “vulgar Marxist” narrative by everyone with no distinction whatsoever prompted different answers from the historians. In this study, because of the complex nature of the issue, we only ventured to speak a few words about the best examples of compromise solutions. Through the sketchy overview of the life’s work of Attila Szabó T., Zsigmond Jakó, Elek Csetri and Ákos Egyed it may have become apparent what direct and indirect effect the obligatory and consequently enforced Party expectations had on the personal life and professional activity of the historians in question.

The focus on István Imreh's life's work following the synthetic overview aimed to fulfill our goal of analytically shedding light on those methods that were indispensable for walking the middle course and earning legitimacy in the eyes of the establishment.

The ambivalent discourse, along with the values in its background, mostly found understanding and even significant recognition within the lines of the professional and lay public, even if there are extreme examples to the contrary. We took the liberty of choosing to point these out only because we do not need to prove the wide recognition of István Imreh's work either with regard to the past or with regard to the present.

Notes

- 1 For his assistance in choosing the topic and in writing this thesis I owe gratitude to senior lecturer Dr. Attila Gábor Hunyadi (BBU, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Institute of Hungarian History). I owe further thanks to docent Dr. Judit Pál (BBU, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Institute of Hungarian History) and Silviu Taraş, historian and high school teacher (Sándor Plugor High School of Fine Arts, Sfântu Gheorghe) for their help. I am also grateful to Samu Benkő, István Csucsujá, Ákos Egyed, Mária Farkas and András Kiss for their cooperation. Nevertheless, the author takes full responsibility for any incidental errors.
- 2 Katherine Verdery, *Compromis și rezistență. Cultura română sub Ceaușescu* [National Ideology under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania, London: University of California Press, 1991] (Bucharest, 1994).
- 3 For Romania's official position regarding the Communist system, see *Comisia prezidențială pentru analiza dictaturii comuniste din România* [Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania] (Bucharest, 2006); http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/RAPORT_FINAL_CPADCR.pdf (February 19, 2012).
- 4 The term is used by Eric Hobsbawm in a stump speech-like writing arguing for Marxist historiography, in which he draws the line between Marxist philosophy/historiography and the vulgar Marxism "turned inside-out" and degraded into an ideology and even

- propaganda by the Communist establishments in Eastern Europe; Eric Hobsbawm, *A történelemről, történetírásról* [On History, New York: New Press, 1997] (Budapest, 2006), 168.
- 5 Áron Nagy, “A romániai magyar történetírásról” [On Hungarian Historiography in Romania], *História* (1987) 3; <http://www.tankonyvtar.hu/historia-1987-03/historia-1987-03-081013-7#> (March 1987).
 - 6 During our research we conducted interviews with Samu Benkő, István Csucsuj, Ákos Egyed, Mária Farkas and András Kiss. The methodology involved making audio recordings of the conversations, making transcripts of the recordings and sending the transcripts back to the interviewees for review. Given the fact that not all of the transcripts have made their way back to us before the submission deadline for this paper, we shall not include the transcripts here. We shall, however, provide a reference in the cases when the main body of the text includes information obtained during an interview.
 - 7 Péter Cseke, “A tényfeltárás műhelyei a két világháború közötti Erdélyben” [Transylvanian Fact-Finding Workshops in the Interwar Period], *Tiszatáj* (2002/56) 1: 61–62; <http://www.lib.jgytf.u-szeged.hu/folyoiratok/tiszataj/02-01/cseke.pdf> (February 29, 2012).
 - 8 Imre Mikó, “Erdélyi politika” [Transylvanian Politics], *Magyar Kisebbség* (1998/IV) 3–4. <http://www.jakabffy.ro/magyarkisebbsseg/index.php?action=cimek&lapid=10&cikk=m980307.htm> (March 3, 2012).
 - 9 Nándor Bárdi, “A kisebbségi értelmiség önképe a második világháború előtt” [The Self-Concept of Minority Intellectuals before the Second World War], *Magyar Kisebbség* (1998/IV) 3–4; <http://www.jakabffy.ro/magyarkisebbsseg/index.php?action=cimek&lapid=10&cikk=m980307.htm> (March 3, 2012).
 - 10 Miklós Asztalos, “A kisebbségi történetírás feladatai és módszerei” [Challenges and Methods of Minority Historiography], Part I, *Magyar Kisebbség* (1929/8) 5: 168–175; Miklós Asztalos, “A kisebbségi történetírás feladatai és módszerei,” Part II, *Magyar Kisebbség* (1929/8) 6: 223–231; Miklós Asztalos, “A kisebbségi történetírás feladatai és módszerei,” Part III, *Magyar Kisebbség* (1929/8) 7: 248–252.
 - 11 Asztalos, “A kisebbségi történetírás feladatai és módszerei,” Part II, p. 224.
 - 12 *Ibid.*, p. 225.

- 13 Asztalos, “A kisebbségi történetírás feladatai és módszerei,” Part I, p. 175.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 173.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 174.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 173.
- 17 Asztalos, “A kisebbségi történetírás feladatai és módszerei,” Part III, p. 175.
- 18 Regarding the method of minority historiography the study also stipulates that the separation of “eastern and western” Hungarians has to be overwritten by “racial” affinity. The censorship in Communist Romania forbade discussing the political and cultural nation at the same time (even to Romanian historiography, until the 1970s), and also forbade not separating the circumstances in Hungary and Transylvania during discussion; Klára Lázok, “Könyvkiadás és cenzúra az 1950–60-as évek Romániájában” [Publication and Censorship in Romania during the 1950s and 1960s], *Regio* (2007/18) 3: 126; <http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00036/00067/pdf/117-145.pdf> (March 1, 2012).
- 19 Asztalos, “A kisebbségi történetírás feladatai és módszerei,” Part II, p. 225.
- 20 At this point we do not wish to draw a parallel between Miklós Asztalos’s programmatic writing and the program presented by the periodical *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* established by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre in the same year (1929).
- 21 The idea of self-revision in József Venczel’s writing may be traced back to the main idea of a book by Sándor Makkai that appeared in 1931, entitled *Magunk revíziója* [Our Own Revision]. Therein the author changes the central idea of revising the borders established by the Treaty of Trianon to that of a need for the Hungarian minority to revise their approach. See Sándor Makkai, *Magunk revíziója* [Our Own Revision] (Miercurea Ciuc, 1998); <http://www.adatbank.ro/cedula.php?kod=324> (April 3, 2012).
- 22 József Venczel, “*Metamorphosis Transilvaniae*,” *Magyar Kisebbség* (1998/IV) 3–4; <http://www.jakabffy.ro/magyarkisebbsseg/index.php?action=cimek&lapid=10&cikk=m980312.htm> (March 3, 2012); the treatise first appeared in “Venczel József: *Metamorphosis Transilvaniae*,” *Hitel* (1936/1) 1: 73–80.
- 23 This pragmatic approach to social studies in József Venczel’s principles may be put down to the direct influence of the

sociological movement in Bucharest, centered around Dimitrie Gusti (see Antonio Momoc, *Capcanele politice ale sociologiei interbelice. Școala gustiană între carlism și legionarism* [The Political Traps in Sociology during the Interwar Period. The School of Gusti between Allegiance to Carol II and Allegiance to the Legion of St. Michael] (Bucharest, 2012), pp. 19–79). At the same time, the “utilitarian” view of the humanities may be considered as a general trait of minority Hungarian historiography.

- 24 For a more detailed presentation/description of Attila Szabó T.’s career and life’s work, see Samu Benkő, “Szabó T. Attila műhelyei” [Attila Szabó T.’s Workshops], in Samu Benkő, *Újrakezdések. Tanulmányok, előadások, beszélgetések, búcsúztatások 1990–1995* [New Beginnings: Studies, Lectures, Discussions 1990–1995] (Miercurea Ciuc, 1996), pp. 170–193; János Péntek, “Szabó T. Attila. A régi és a megújult Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesületet összekötő életmű” [Attila Szabó T.. A Life’s Work Connecting the Old and the New Transylvanian Museum Society], in Gyöngy Kovács Kiss, ed., *Hivatás és tudomány. Az Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület kiemelkedő személyiségei* [Profession and Science. Eminent Personalities in the Transylvanian Museum Society] (Cluj-Napoca, 2009), pp. 463–493; Samu Benkő, “Szabó T. Attila a tudományszervező” [Attila Szabó T., Organizer of Scientific Life], in Benkő Samu, *Alkalmak és szavak. Tanulmányok, előadások, beszélgetések, vallomások, búcsúztatások* [Events and Words. Studies, Lectures, Conversations, Confessions, Memorials] (Cluj-Napoca, 2002), pp. 220–231.
- 25 “The objective study of society reveals the virtues and flaws of rural society, traits that are to be trimmed or developed. In turn, the knowledge of ethnographic phenomena (settlement, architecture, economic life, wood-carving, cottage industry, spiritual life, folk songs, vernacular) reveals the intellectual and material treasure trove that was produced by the people or accepted through external influence, but was adapted to their own spirit and circumstance”; quoted by Samu Benkő, “Szabó T. Attila műhelyei,” in Samu Benkő, *Újrakezdések*, p. 180.
- 26 For details about the study camp organized by Attila Szabó T. in Bábony in 1936, see Attila Szabó T., “Az első munkatábor” [The First Study Camp], *Hitel* (1937/2) 1: 51–65, and Péter Molter, “Falukutatás Bálványosváraán” [Rural Research in Bálványosváraán], *Hitel* (1940–1941/5–6) 3–4: 285–306.

- 27 Samu Benkő, “Szabó T. Attila műhelyei,” in Samu Benkő, *Újrakezdések*, p. 185.
- 28 János Péntek, “Szabó T. Attila. A régi és a megújult Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesületet összekötő életmű,” in Gyöngy Kovács Kiss, ed., *Hivatás és tudomány*, p. 486.
- 29 András Kubinyi, “Jakó Zsigmond a történettudós” [Zsigmond Jakó the Historian], *Erdélyi Múzeum*. (2006) 3–4: 14; http://epa.oszk.hu/00900/00979/00418/pdf/EM-2006_67_03-04epa.pdf (March 16, 2012).
- 30 See. “... pályám egy nagy kaland volt...” [My Career Was an Adventure]: interview with Zsigmond Jakó; interviewer: Mária Makó, March, 2006, Cluj-Napoca, in *Erdélyi Múzeum* (2006/68) 3–4: 16–27.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- 32 Samu Benkő, “A nyolcvanadik évtized” [The Eightieth Decade], in András Kovács, Gábor Sipos, and Sándor Tonk, eds., *Emlékkönyv Jakó Zsigmond születésének nyolcvanadik évfordulójára* [Festschrift for Zsigmond Jakó’s Eightieth Birthday], (Cluj-Napoca, 1996), p. 491; <http://mek.niif.hu/02700/02717/02717.pdf> (March 11, 2012).
- 33 Jakó Zsigmond lost his position at the university in the same “cleansing” (1952) in which Attila Szabó T. was temporarily dismissed from his post.
- 34 “Ars longa, vita brevis. Interjú Csetri Elek történész-akadémikus születésének 80. évfordulója alkalmából” [Interview on the Occasion of the Historian Elek Csetri’s Eightieth Birthday], by József Somai, in *Közgazdász Fórum*. (July–August. 2004): 3; <http://epa.oszk.hu/00300/00315/00028/pdf/00028.pdf> (March 21, 2012).
- 35 Elek Csetri and István Imreh, *Erdély változó társadalma 1767–1821* [Transylvania’s Changing Society 1767–1821] (Bucharest, 1980).
- 36 Ákos Egyed, *Háromszék 1848–1849* [Háromszék 1848–1849] (Bucharest, 1978).
- 37 Ákos Egyed, *Erdély 1848–1849* [Transylvania 1848–1849] (Miercurea Ciuc, 1998).
- 38 Ákos Egyed, *Falu, város, civilizáció: tanulmányok a jobbágyfelszabadítás és a kapitalizmus történetéből Erdélyben: 1848–1914* [Village, Town, Civilization: Studies on the History of Capitalism and the Liberation of the Serfs in Transylvania: 1848–1914] (Bucharest, 1981).

- 39 The volume shows a connection in time and a resemblance in terms of the time frame discussed, the methods used and the author's premise to István Imreh's *Erdélyi hétköznapiok* [Everyday Transylvania], which appeared in 1979. See Egyed, *Falu, város, civilizáció*, pp. 5–7.
- 40 Judit Pál, “Egyed Ákos nyolcvan éves” [Ákos Egyed Turns Eighty], in Judit Pál and Gábor Sipos, eds., *Emlékkönyv Egyed Ákos születésének nyolcvanadik évfordulójára* [*Festschrift for Ákos Egyed's Eightieth Birthday*] (Cluj-Napoca, 2010), p. 7.
- 41 Béla Köpeczi, ed., *Erdély története három kötetben* [History of Transylvania, New York: Columbia University Press: 2001 (vol. I.), New York: Columbia University Press, 2002 (vols. II–III)], <http://mek.oszk.hu/03400/03407/html/index.html>, (Budapest, 1986); <http://mek.niif.hu/02100/02109/html/> (March 29, 2012).
- 42 The debate that ensued after the appearance of the *Erdély története* among the ranks of Romanian and Hungarian professionals and politicians was made possible by the very fact that unlike the situation in Romania, where in the 1980s the dictatorship did not mellow but took an even harder line, in Hungary politics and everyday life or professional life had become ever more distant from each other.
- 43 For more information on the topic and content of the debate, see Béla Köpeczi, “Erdély története harminc év távlatából” [The History of Transylvania Thirty Years On], *Kisebbségkutatás* (2006/15) 1. http://www.hhrf.org/kisebbségkutatás/kk_2006_01/cikk.php?id=1332 (March 29, 2012); István Rácz, ed., *Tanulmányok Erdély történetéről. Szakmai konferencia Debrecenben 1987. október. 9–10* [Studies on Transylvanian History. Professional Conference in Debrecen, October 9–10, 1987], (Debrecen, 1988).
- 44 Ákos Egyed, Camil Murășan and István Imreh along with several other researchers (C. Daicoviciu, Șt. Pascu, V. Chereșteșiu, Al. Neamțu, T. Morariu, C. Bodea, B. Surdu, C. Nuțu, V. Curticăpeanu) were co-authors of the ideologically biased and nationalistic *Din istoria Transilvaniei* [From the History of Transylvania], which appeared in 1961 under the seal of the Romanian Academy, being the negative example of what the *Erdély története* that appeared in Budapest was. Among the authors of the edition from 1961 we find many researchers who were ideologically and politically very close to the narrative of the establishment. In the case of the historians we pointed out that active participation in the publishing of the volume

was a fulfillment of an official request that was hazardous to refuse in the given political atmosphere. András Kiss, in our interview, also pointed out this aspect when discussing István Imreh (our questions having been aimed at his career).

- 45 Hobsbawm: *op. cit.*, p. 74.
- 46 For more on the definition and integration strategies of the generation groups, see Nándor Bárdi, “A romániai magyar elit generációs csoportjainak integrációs viszonyrendszere (1918–1989)” [The Integrating Relationships of the Generation Groups within the Hungarian Elite in Romania (1918–1989)], in Nándor Bárdi and Attila Simon, eds., *Integrációs stratégiák a magyar kisebbségek történetében*. [Strategies of Integration in the History of the Hungarian Minorities] (Somorja, 2006), pp. 41–66; <http://mek.oszk.hu/08000/08023/08023.pdf> (March 4, 2012).
- 47 At this point we have to mention the effects of the Bucharest school of sociology centered around Dimitrie Gusti, which also directed attention in this direction and also had a great effect on the Transylvanian Hungarian rural research movement in terms of methods.
- 48 Nándor Bárdi, “A romániai magyar elit generációs csoportjainak integrációs viszonyrendszere,” in Bárdi and Simon, eds., *Integrációs stratégiák*, pp. 43–44.
- 49 Bárdi, “A kisebbségi értelmiség önképe a második világháború előtt.”
- 50 We need to elaborate further on the term “balance,” as István Imreh’s contemporaries and the following generation lent markedly towards the left, because “They considered that rising above the state of minority and the internationalism represented by the Communist Party will solve the problem of ethnic rifts”; Bárdi, “A romániai magyar elit generációs csoportjainak integrációs viszonyrendszere,” p. 44.
- 51 It may be important to note here that István Imreh was by training an economist, which is apparent in all of his life’s work, as this assuredly had a part to play in the characteristic choice of topics and methods. Alongside this his training in economics is significant in terms of observing the effects of Marxian philosophy, which had, although not exclusively, manifested itself in this field.
- 52 Interview with András Kiss, Cluj-Napoca, 2011.

- 53 József Lőrincz, *Az átmenet közéleti értékei a mindennapi életben* [Public Values of the Transition Period in Everyday Life] (Miercurea Ciuc, 2004); <http://www.adatbank.ro/cedula.php?kod=322> (October 13, 2012).
- 54 *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- 55 *Ibid.*
- 56 In the beginning the minority Hungarian elite (mainly the political elite) saw the left as an ally against the civic wing, which had branded them “guilty” because they were Hungarians. The Soviet-style establishment, however, quickly made it clear that the values most in danger were those that had forged the alliance with the left; Nándor Bárdi, *Javaslatok, modellek az erdélyi kérdés kezelésére. A magyar elképzelések 1918–1940* [Suggestions, Models for Handling the Transylvanian Question. Hungarian Ideas 1918–1940]; <http://adatbank.transindex.ro/vendeg/htmlk/pdf2400.pdf> (February 17, 2012).
- 57 Verdery, *Compromis și rezistență*, p. 28.
- 58 Hobsbawm: *op. cit.*, p. 152.
- 59 See Verdery, *Compromis și rezistență*.
- 60 József Lőrincz, *Az átmenet közéleti értékei*, pp. 61–62.
- 61 *Ibid.*, p. 74.
- 62 Interview with András Kiss, Cluj-Napoca, 2011.
- 63 Gábor Györffy, “Cenzúra Romániában” [Censorship in Romania], *Regio* (2007) 3: 107–108; <http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00036/00067/pdf/095-116.pdf> (January 3, 2012).
- 64 István Imreh, “Tizenöt év történetírása a ‘Studii’ mérlegén (1947–1962)” [Fifteen Years of Historiography on the Balance of the “Studii” (1947–1962)], *Korunk* (1963/22) 8: 1015.
- 65 *Ibid.*, p. 1017.
- 66 András Kiss, “Jakó Zsigmond (1916–2008). Túlélés, kényszerpálya, alkotás” [Zsigmond Jakó (1916–2008). Survival, Paths of Necessity, Creation], *Korunk*. (2011/22) 5: 98. http://korunk.org/letoltlapok/Z_YKorunk2011majus.pdf (February 16, 2012).
- 67 Lázok, “Könyvkiadás és cenzúra,” p. 125.
- 68 *Ibid.*, pp. 126–127.
- 69 István Imreh, *A rendtartó székely falu. Faluközösségi határozatok a bomló feudalizmus utolsó évszázadából* [The Orderly Székely Village: Decrees by Village Communities from the Last Century of Waning Feudalism] (Bucharest: Kriterion, 1973)

- 70 *Ibid.*, p. 90.
- 71 From this point of view the approach present in the *Erdély története* appears to be more real. In the foreword the authors note the following with regard to the eastern and western connections of Transylvania and Transylvanian society: “While in the case of Hungary the ethnic connection were the Hungarians in the case of Wallachia and Moldova they were the Romanians.” Béla Köpeczi, ed., *op. cit.* p. 6.
- 72 József Lőrincz, somewhat contrary to most of the above, considers that this method of using ambivalent discourse lies in the precise presentation of the ideological “opponent’s” opinion and “confuting” his/her “hostile” opinion; József Lőrincz, *Az átmenet közéleti értékei*, p. 74.
- 73 Imreh, *A rendtartó székely falu*, p. 90.
- 74 Lázok, “Könyvkiadás és cenzúra,” p. 136.
- 75 Ambrus Miskolczy, “Bevezetés Henri H. Stahl világába és történeti szociológiájába” [Introduction to the World and Sociology of Henri H. Stahl], in H. Henri Stahl, *A régi román falu és öröksége* [The Old Romanian Village and Its Heritage] (Budapest, 1992), p. 19.
- 76 The texts above, taken from István Imreh’s work are more “extreme” examples compared to our other quotes, and are less characteristic of the author’s writing. Moreover, they were written in the years when the pressure on historians was the greatest.
- 77 We do not find any references to the leaders of the Romanian Communist Party or to any Soviet chief Party secretaries after Lenin.
- 78 József Pataki, “Eredmények és feladatok a székelyek történeti múltjának feltárásában” [Results and Challenges in Revealing the Székely Historical Past], *Korunk*. (1957/16) 2: 330.
- 79 *Ibid.*, pp. 333–334.
- 80 Françoise Thom, *Limba de lemn* [Newspeak: Language of Soviet Communism, London: Claridge Press, 1989] (Bucharest, 2005).
- 81 We have to note, however, that the Western European, mainly French, historians who influenced Imreh’s work greatly denote the medieval social establishment including political, social, economic and to some extent even cultural life by the term “feudalism.” As an example of this it is enough to mention Marc Bloch’s influential work about feudal society: Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*: vol I: *The Growth of Ties of Dependence* (1989); *Feudal Society*: vol II: *Social Classes and Political Organisation*, (1989).

- 82 See: György Bónis: *Hűbériség és rendiség a középkori magyar jogban* [Feudalism and Estates of the Realm in Medieval Hungarian Law] (Cluj-Napoca, 1948); <http://www.adatbank.ro/cedula.php?kod=1123> (February 14, 2012).
- 83 Kiss, “Jakó Zsigmond (1916–2008). Túlélés, kényszerpálya, alkotás,” p. 92.
- 84 See, for instance, Imreh, *A rendtartó székely falu*.
- 85 István Imreh, *Székelyek a múlt időben* [The Székely through Time] (Budapest, 1987).
- 86 József Lőrincz, *Az átmenet közéleti értékei*, p. 58.
- 87 Interview with István Csucsuja, Cluj-Napoca, 2011.
- 88 Mária Farkas named Constantin Daicoviciu, who had then been rector, as the one who had impeded the professional elevation of István Imreh. István Csucsuja gave a negative answer when we inquired about this issue. Interview with Mária Farkas, Cluj-Napoca, 2011; interview with István Csucsuja, Cluj-Napoca, 2011.
- 89 Later, in the 1990s István Imreh received the title of professor by a decision of the senate, but as he had already retired as a docent this did not include any financial benefit: *ibid*.
- 90 Interview with Mária Farkas, Cluj-Napoca, 2011.
- 91 See András Kiss, Gyöngy Kovács Kiss, and Ferenc Pozsony, eds., *Emlékkönyv Imreh István nyolcvanadik évfordulójára* [Festschrift for István Imreh’s Eightieth Birthday] (Cluj-Napoca, 1999), pp. 536–555 (note: the reference points to where one may find information about the publishing and availability of István Imreh’s works, along with the bibliography of professional literature dealing with his person and his writing).
- 92 Interview with Mária Farkas, Cluj-Napoca, 2011.
- 93 See Gábor Gyöngyösi, “Milyen a székely ember? Imreh István: Székelyek a múlt időben” [What Are the Székely Like? István Imreh: The Székely through Time], *Napjaink* (1998/27) 2: 33.
- 94 Interview with István Csucsuja, Cluj-Napoca, 2011.
- 95 *Ibid*.



**TRANSYLVANIA
IN COMMUNIST ROMANIA,
1945–1989:
Modernization, Administration,
and the Nationalities under the Ceaușescu Regime**



József Gagyí

**POWER, EXPERTISE, TRANSFORMATION.
THE BEGINNINGS OF SOCIALIST MODERNIZATION
IN A BACKWARD REGION OF ROMANIA**

According to official propaganda, the turn of the 1950s and 1960s was the period when economic growth took off in Romania. According to what was declared on the podiums of the highest political forums, the Party Congresses, the average annual growth in industrial production in the period between 1956 and 1960 was 10.8 percent, and 14.4 percent in the period between 1961 and 1965.¹ This latter is the highest value in the history of Romania after the Second World War.

In the Soviet Union, the period was dominated by the figure of Khrushchev, and by the conception that in certain areas the economies of the socialist countries would catch up with and surpass the economies of the developed capitalist countries, proving the superiority of the Soviet political-economic and social system. The opening of the “space age” was undoubtedly characterized by Soviet successes. The principle of *dognat’ i peregnat’* (catch up and overtake) would define Eastern European success propaganda up until the start of the Brezhnev era.

According to the outlook of Khrushchev and his companions, the political and social center of the historical processes of the present comprised the dynamically developing Eastern European countries building socialism, led by the Soviet Union. The trouble was with the socialist economy, in which the processes harmonized with the state plans made possible the mobilization of enormous resources, but the elaboration of long-range plan targets was lacking. At the turn of the 1950s and 1960s in the Soviet Union a development plan of twenty years was elaborated, while in Romania, following the working methods and advice of Soviet experts, a six-year “national plan for economic development,” as well as a 15-year-long development plan incorporating the former,

was elaborated. By adapting to this and fulfilling this, they hoped for rapid development, and to win the competition with the capitalist countries.

In June 1962 in Moscow the leaders of CMEA member countries held negotiations on coordinating the simultaneously elaborated long-range plans, and deliberated “the basic principles of the international socialist division of labor.” The Romanian leaders did not accept the role allotted to the Romanian economy, and in 1964 Romania formulated its theses regarding its own separate position. The essence of these was that the Romanian leadership did not consent to certain economic management functions passing from the jurisdiction of the state to the jurisdiction of supranational agencies or organizations. According to the argument,

The planned management of the national economy was one of the fundamental, essential and inalienable attributes of the sovereignty of the socialist state – the state plan being the chief means through which the socialist state achieves its political and socio-economic objectives, establishes the directions and rates of development of the national economy, its fundamental proportions, the accumulations, [and] the measures for raising the people’s living standard and cultural level. The sovereignty of the socialist state requires that it effectively and fully avails itself of the means for the practical implementation of these attributions, holding in its hands all the levers of managing economic and social life.²

The state, here, although the Romanian leaders did not state this openly, was “us” – without Soviet or any other assistance and support. Rather than declare this directly, they alluded to it:

The balance of class forces and their disposition in one country or another, the shifts in forces and the evolution of the frame of mind of the masses, the peculiarities of the internal and international political conditions of a country, cannot be better and more thoroughly known by anybody than by the Communist Party of the respective country. It

is the exclusive right of each party to independently work out its political line, its concrete objectives, [and] the ways and means of attaining them [...] There does not and cannot exist a “parent party” and a “daughter party,” parties that are “superior” and parties that are “subordinate,” but there exists the great family of Communist and Workers’ Parties, which have equal rights. No party has or can have a privileged place, or can impose its line and opinions on other parties.³

This was not merely bold maneuvering by the regime, but also the exploitation of the Sino-Soviet conflict with a good tactical sense. Compared to the early 1950s – the period of seizing power with the aid of Soviet tanks, the era of state-building commencing with Soviet economic and technical assistance and Soviet advisors, the country’s territorial and administrative restructuring on the Soviet pattern, and the copying of the Stalinist constitution – all this presumes a quite serious change in outlook and structure. Moreover, it presupposes the following: knowledge that was accumulated precisely during the preparation and elaboration of long-term plans, and not least the creation of the institutional framework necessary for it. This meant several things: a positive, all-encompassing, significant amount of knowledge; familiarity with the mechanisms for using economic success for political legitimacy; the conceptualization and maintenance of organizational potential ensured by everyday forms of the Party functionaries and the symbolic political forms offered by the Party Congresses (and the forms of organization based on this); last but not least, the integration of the most viable strengths of a new generation into Party and state activity.

In Romania, such accumulation and a new era of modernization began only in the late 1950s – despite the fact that they had been announced as early as the late 1940s. If judged in terms of international comparison, this process was by no means strikingly successful. In 1960, in terms of economic development among socialist countries Romania was ahead of only Yugoslavia, and was on the same level as Greece and Portugal. In 1980, it was still on the

same level as Yugoslavia, and had been surpassed by Greece, while Portugal (which joined the EEC in 1986) remained slightly behind it.⁴ What happened in reality?

Research must defeat and overcome its initial uncertainty if it wishes to observe and judge the era in its own completeness. In what way did Romanian society change, what became of it (and at the same time, what happened in a subsection within it: specifically, the Hungarian society of the Székelyföld, or Szekler Land, examined herein) during the 42 years of socialism? In what way and to what extent did it change permanently and irreversibly? Where are the turning points of the change that can be demonstrated? If modernization means social change in a broad sense, neither the direction of which nor the essence of which is from the outset given, then the process and the description of the end result are constitutive in nature and may go beyond the limits of a narrowly interpreted scholarly inquiry.⁵

My study will focus on the third of the above questions: on the turning points of the change. My objective is to present the turn of the 1950s and 1960s in a backward region of Romania, the Hungarian-majority Székelyföld.

Congresses and Plans

In Romania, because of the prolonged power struggles and the deficiencies of state-organizing bureaucratic competence and Party organization, the party state's well-oiled structure evolved slowly. After the takeover of power, two years had to pass before the congress held in February 1948, merging the Communist and Social Democratic Parties, was followed by another one. It was in this period that the planned economy was introduced,⁶ and two one-year plans and a five-year plan were elaborated, but these did not come before the Party Congress, and therefore their adoption and implementation took place without the legitimization and rituality that evolved later. The scene of their announcement was not the Party's highest forum, but rather that of the government, the Grand

National Assembly. The Party at this time was not yet able to create and exploit those practical and symbolic advantages that the joining of the congress, the Party-building and the announcement of national development was meant to provide. The elaboration and approval of the plans were carried out hastily by a narrow group, presumably with the collaboration of Soviet experts, and there was neither time nor opportunity to involve the Party apparatus. At the time that the first one-year plan was submitted in 1949, Gheorghiu-Dej acknowledged that they had planned only for one year, because the deadline for putting the plan into effect “did not give sufficient time for a broader preliminary study necessary for a plan of long duration. [...] This preliminary study would have demanded statistical and documentary material worked out on a scientific basis, expressly prepared for the purposes of planning, yet this material is only now being prepared. [...] our experience – whether that of the technical apparatus or that of our economic cadres – did not allow for the elaboration of a plan for a longer period of time.”⁷

It was likewise the Grand National Assembly that passed the second one-year plan as well as the five-year plan for the period between 1951 and 1955.⁸ In the latter, in addition to the fundamental indicators, specifications can also be found indicating that the plan not only set the direction, but also at this time even directly served to strengthen the primitive labor organization and discipline. For example, it prescribed as mandatory that the work be organized and performed on the basis of production graphs, thereby forming the conditions for rhythmic production at the enterprises.⁹

Only in 1958 did long-range planning in Romania begin, as in the other member countries of the CMEA, with Soviet encouragement and the participation of Soviet advisors.

In the late 1950s it happened for the first time in Romania that significant technical knowledge was successfully integrated into the development preparations. The elaboration was followed by “media coverage”: a national debate about the plans, so that there would be no employee working in a responsible post who would not know of these. And there were longer-term consequences as well.

A New Model

In Romania it was in the Stalinist era that the power, economic, administrative and bureaucratic conditions necessary for modernization to take off were created. Following the showdown with the Pauker–Luka–Georgescu group in 1952, the state machinery was governed according to the unitary ideas of Gheorghiu-Dej and his group.

As mentioned in the introduction, in Romania, too, only with the onset of the Khrushchev era did a relative distancing from Stalinist economic and social management become possible. In fact, this was not a radical break:¹⁰ the right to make decisions influencing society-building and economic processes – naturally – continued to remain in the hands of the narrow Party leadership, yet the process of *preparing* the decision was gradually transformed, and the mechanisms serving to implement the decisions were transformed.

In Romania the modernization process under socialism gained momentum from the late 1950s onwards. It was at this time that a model took shape, the essence of which was the establishment and putting into operation of specialized institutions for examining the facts of reality – complex, yet understood as rationally manageable – as well as for preparing the decisions that transformed reality.

As a result, the management of reality, the represented reality itself, took on a completely different, more profound and more complex nature. The quantity of knowledge devoted to planning and preparation in society grew. Perceptibly more institutions, organizations, and more social actors were to take part in more levels of preparation and implementation. Following the decisions, tasks that were jointly worked out, presented in campaigns and therefore obligatory were discussed in public. The inclusion of a part of society into the system's functioning increased.

The result was the reorganization of the distribution of resources controlled or dominated by the political system. We may not speak of concessions caused by social pressure, but only of taking into

account the circumstances of the consumer needs of society. Society continued to have no say in distribution, but for the population the era represented a perceptible upswing, and the possibility of relative individual accumulation. From the start of the 1960s until the end of 1970s, the party state in Romania facilitated livable forms of living and consuming.

The Turnabout on the Periphery

I. In November 1958, at the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party (RWP CC), Gheorghiu-Dej praised the Party leadership of the Hungarian Autonomous Region (HAR). In his *Report* he discussed how the Party organs had to exercise effective supervision over the administrative management of the enterprises in the economic sphere as well – and this was possible only if the Party organizations studied and were familiar with the technical and economic issues of plant organization and planning, the production process and the local possibilities, and had a direct working relationship with the experts. The elaboration of the Six-Year and the Fifteen-Year Long-Range Plans created an opportunity for all this. The Party Committee of the HAR (and also of the Suceava Region also mentioned in the speech, lest the HAR be the only role model) deserved praise because it had not contented itself with controlling and monitoring the work of elaborating the draft proposals, but also “together with the popular councils and the local economic organs, it has elaborated studies and long-term proposals for the economic development of the regions in question.”¹¹

Hitherto, the activists of the Party Committee only guided and were held accountable; in 1958, for planning economic development, however, they had to sit at the same table with the experts of the popular councils and economic units to negotiate and coordinate. Already at the start of the 1950s it was a practiced method that the Regional Party Committee debated certain economic questions on the basis of reports prepared by the managers of the enterprises in question (actually, in large part the chief engineers

and experts of the enterprises rather than worker managers), and then made a decision. Starting from the mid-1950s the activists (with regard to economic questions: the activists of the economic department) prepared their own reports; these were attached as companion reports alongside those of the experts. Both reached the members of the Party Committee. The general political knowledge, fighting spirit and class loyalty of the Party activists of the heroic age were no longer sufficient for writing the appended reports. Organizational knowledge and knowledge of the respective area, and ability to summarize and edit were needed for writing. In the cases of changes in cadres the following justification appears more and more frequently: the dismissed cadre “is not capable of assuming the area of activity entrusted to him.”¹² In the mid-1950s it was now considered desirable if the cadres had obtained a diploma by attending evening school, or graduated from university by correspondence; beginning in the later 1950s, however, a secondary school diploma, and later the completion of advanced studies, was now compulsory for activists as well. Naturally, the enforcement of the rules was associated with a generational shift: young persons who entered the Party apparatus and occupied high posts were now graduates of advanced Party schools or university.

All this is important because in the late 1950s and early 1960s there were now activists who were capable of discussing technical questions with experts, and of not only supervising the planning process but also understanding it both in its elements and its entirety.

In the Hungarian Autonomous Region, too, a region comprising the historical Székelyföld (but somewhat more extensive than the latter) and considered as peripheral from the viewpoint of economic development and urbanization, the great turnabout with an impact that lasted for decades began in the late 1950s. On February 13, 1958, at the meeting of the Regional Political Committee, Manea Mănescu, the deputy director of the RWP CC economic directorate, gave an account of his visit to the region. He stated that the committee led by him had studied the situation

of raw material management and on this basis the possibilities of configuring the region's economic profile. He emphasized the point that it had understood the problem of the region's development, and the elaboration of the 15-year long-term development plan had begun.¹³

The plans were drafted in rapid succession: the first version by September 1958,¹⁴ the second by August 1959,¹⁵ and the third by April 1960.¹⁶ Meanwhile, in September 1959, the region was visited by the highest Party and state leaders: on September 10 Comrades Gheorghiu-Dej and Chivu Stoica¹⁷ laid the foundation stone of the new chemical works, which would open a new era in the socio-economic development of Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş).

The year 1959 was incidentally the year of balance sheets: it is no coincidence that the only statistical yearbook of the HAR appeared in 1960, the result of the work completed in 1959. The publication, entitled *The Hungarian Autonomous Region on the Path of Economic Development*, was prepared under the supervision of the regional propaganda secretary, Zoltán Szövérfi, and under the direction of economist Sándor Keszi-Harmath, an employee of the Planning Department of the Regional Popular Council. The volume was sent back from the press and a campaign of terror was launched against the authors: Sándor Keszi-Harmath was expelled from the Party and removed from his post. The motive: the Székelyföld was mentioned, the HAR was treated as a separate part of the country, and the phenomena discussed were not embedded in a national context. It is an absurdity of the era that in the autonomous region the state of autonomy appeared as a condemnable indictment count! The true purposes were as follows: politically, terrorization and preparations to abolish the HAR, and economically, the consolidation of unitary planning.

Three descriptions, statistical summaries, are available to us for surveying the state of affairs prior to the rapid modernization commencing in the 1960s. One is the statistical yearbook, the second is the three development plans, and the third is the manuscript of the work carried out under the direction of Sándor Keszi-Harmath.

Unfortunately, even thus the picture that can be untangled from all these is rather sketchy.

The fundamental problem of the Székelyföld, the lack of industry, cropped up in every approach: “Although the population density of the Székelyföld was not great, compared to the work possibilities there had arisen a sizeable excess population, which the manufacturing industry – because of its underdevelopment – could not absorb. The ever-deepening relative overpopulation and the socio-economic troubles resulting from this have placed the necessity of industrializing the Székelyföld firmly and urgently on the agenda.”¹⁸ If they did not industrialize, the backwardness and poverty of society would be constant.

It was in the 1950s that the initial steps towards electrification were taken. The thermal power plant at Gyulakuta (Fântânele), utilizing natural gas, began operating at full capacity starting in 1958. The delivery of current through high-tension lines, however, was only partially solved: Marosvásárhely, Régen (Reghin) and Szováta (Sovata) received the electrical current from Gyulakuta, Székelykeresztúr (Cristuru Secuiesc) and Székelyudvarhely (Odorheiu Secuiesc) from Segesvár (Sighișoara), Gyergyószentmiklós (Gheorgheni) and Balánbánya (Bălan) from Békás (Becaș), and Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfântu Gheorghe) from Brassó (Brașov) – while Csíkszereda (Miercurea Ciuc) at this time still did not receive it from anywhere. Prior to 1944 the introduction of electrical current took place in 32 villages, and in 67 villages between 1945 and 1958. This was followed by a sudden increase, and a large part of society would become acquainted with the advantages of everyday use of electrical current only in the 1960s.

The supply of natural gas was typical of Marosvásárhely alone – 91.46 percent of residents at this time were using gas for heating. Village locales, lacking their own resources, were unable to connect to the gas supply: in 1955 15 locales requested that the gas be tied in, but only two had their own financial means for this.¹⁹

There was urban mass transit in four settlements (Marosvásárhely, Sepsiszentgyörgy, Gyergyószentmiklós and Régen). The

apartment situation was catastrophic in every town. In the meantime the population of the towns grew by 60,000 between 1952 and 1956, the increase in living surface was sufficient for only half that many, and in Marosvásárhely there were 4.22 square meters of living surface per person.²⁰

Travel and conveyance were quite cumbersome – at that time even distances relatively short by today's standards (for example the 50 kilometers between Székelyudvarhely and Csíkszereda) could be called significant. In 1955 personal transport on the highways was carried out by 44 buses in the region, by 1959 the number of these had increased to 81, and the 198 trucks making deliveries in 1955 had increased to 482 by 1959. The length of the entire network of roads was 3,121 kilometers: 4.35 percent of this was modernized (asphalt or concrete), and most of them were paved (80.39 percent), but there were plenty of dirt roads as well (13.64 percent). In the assessment of the study, 25 percent of the entire road length was of good quality, 34.5 percent of average quality, and 39.6 percent of poor quality.²¹ The modernization of the Marosvásárhely–Szováta–Székelyudvarhely–Csíkszereda route proceeding across the interior of the Székelyföld commenced in 1960.

Problems with goods, and specifically food provisioning, of the 1950s also appeared, because the suppression of private commerce (first and foremost selling at the market) was continuous. Between 1952 and 1958 urban commercial trade doubled (but between 1948 and 1959 the urban population also rose from 102,830 to 222,779), and specifically the trade of socialist commerce became three and a half times larger. In 1952 business transacted by private commerce was still 51 percent of all trade, but in 1958 it was now only 22 percent. The expanding network of shops, too, signified the spread of socialist commerce in towns. In 1952 in the towns of the region there were 80 state grocery stores, 183 industrial goods stores, six produce (vegetable and fruit) stores and 55 public dining facilities. In 1958 270 grocery stores, 268 industrial goods shops, 70 produce (vegetable and fruit) stores, and 130 public dining facilities operated: “In the food sector there is one shop per 808 consumers,

in the industrial goods sector one shop for 793 consumers, in the hospitality industry there is one unit per 1,890 consumers, and in the vegetable and fruit sector there is still one sales unit per 4,120 consumers...’’²² In villages, the store network of the consumer cooperatives operated with 1,376 units (shops, pubs and so-called kiosks, and vending booths) in late 1958. Among these the greatest number were grocery stores (660) and snack bars (better known as *bodega* or *bufet*, but actually pubs, 424). In village environments, a mere eight pastry shops operated in total; here the spread of pastry shops and the custom of drinking coffee were the indirect consequence of collectivization (the evolution of a more relaxed work rhythm).

An increasingly greater percentage of the population’s incomes derived from the socialist sector – 57 percent of aggregate income in 1952, and 76 percent in 1958. If we take the 1952 level as one hundred percent, the entire money income of the population during the six years grew to 220 percent and money income *per capita* to 205 percent.

Between 1952 and 1958, average wages rose by 76 percent. The sums of money reaching the village population also increased, since the lack of success of the compulsory deliveries forced the state to employ the methods of purchasing and contracted production.²³

All these changes concealed primarily political considerations. It is no coincidence that the CC chose its plenary session of December 27–29, 1956, to decide on modifying the proportion between the accumulation fund and the consumption fund in favor of the latter. The priorities had to be changed, and preparations for modernization at an accelerating pace began also on the periphery, in line with the country.

II. As early as late 1961 and early 1962 important changes occurred in the leadership of the new territorial-administrative structure established by constitutional amendment on December 18, 1960, the Maros Hungarian Autonomous Region (MHAR). On August 28 Iosif Banc was appointed as first secretary of the Regional Party Committee in place of Lajos Csupor.²⁴ Still in this year, on

December 29, the switch took place in the other key position as well: Nicolae Vereş, until then first secretary of Dicső District, replaced István Vargancsik at the head of the Marosvásárhely Party Committee.²⁵ The third person against whom proceedings were launched and whose membership in the Executive Committee of the Regional Popular Council was suspended was Sándor Kocsis, head of the Popular Council's Commerce Department.²⁶ Kocsis was an *éminence grise* who had been in office since the early 1950s. He was responsible for supplying the region's commerce with goods, and for the distribution of goods – and moreover oversaw the supplying of the *nomenklatura* officially (through the economy of the Party), and at the same time unofficially (by practicing favoritism for those in positions and using connections).

On January 6–7, 1962, the Regional Party Congress was held. At this the ethnic shift in the change of leadership became unmistakable: although 64 percent of the region's inhabitants were of Hungarian nationality, 50.5 percent of the Regional Party Committee and 54 percent of the Bureau were to be of Romanian nationality.²⁷ In addition to the Romanian first secretary, two Romanian and two Hungarian secretaries directed the region's Party matters.²⁸ Finally, in January 1962, the chairman of the Regional Popular Council EC, László Lukács, was dismissed, his place assumed by Dumitru Puni.²⁹

In 1961 the MMAT was also the scene of a countrywide attempt to make planning comprehensive and strengthen labor discipline at the local level. For half a year it became a recurring theme to debate the draft plans arriving at the local level from the center, summarize the recommendations together with the additions and send them up to the center, then break down the returned planning indices, by now obligatory. According to the evaluation of Vasile Patilineţ, the representative of the RWP CC, for the first time in Romania it happened that in the course of a six-month-long process the next one-year plan had been successfully prepared, and it is thanks to this that Romania's rate of development was the greatest in the socialist camp after that of the Soviet Union.³⁰

The breakdown of the planning indices, along with their debate and presentation as compulsory, was a longer process lasting about a month. Delegates arrived from the ministries, and took part in the meetings of the enterprises to debate and accept the planning targets, and for this reason a detailed schedule had to be assembled. The methodology was new: Béla Csavar, president of the Union of Regional Trade Unions, not familiar with this, proposed at the preliminary meeting that the trade unionist groups of the enterprises should discuss the planning indices first. Banc, however, rebuked him: “the breaking down of the planning indices is not an action for the trade unions,”³¹ as this activity was to take place under the direct leadership of the Party Committees.

This time those who were accorded a greater role were the experts. At the state enterprises several meetings could be held, but only one with the workers, where they acknowledged and passed the planning indices. To the sessions of the managing council, on the other hand, there also had to be invited persons who did not belong to the administrative or political leadership, but “who contribute [to managing the process – J. G.] and study [and understand and explain to the others – J. G.] the planning indices.”³² My hypothesis, thus far still not supported by data, is that the discussions with the delegates from the ministries were mostly conducted not by the political leaders of the enterprise but experts familiar with the professional circumstances related to fulfillment of the plan. In the end, the economic division of the Regional Party Committee, in a propagandistic, cataloguing and meaningless report, summarized the results of the campaign: 824 meetings were held, the number of participants was 57,846, some 10,000 made comments, and commitments to over-fulfill the plan were also made.³³

Behind the legitimizing, ritual games (approval of planning targets, commitment to over-fulfillment) greater thoughtfulness and more thorough expert opinions were palpable, and the realistic weighing of conditions and the incorporation of the collected knowledge into the planning process were more typical than they had been previously.

In 1961 meetings of economic leaders, experts and ministerial delegates (deputy ministers, undersecretaries, department heads) took place twice in the region.³⁴ These were coordinated by János Fazekas – then deputy prime minister. At these meetings the primary role did not belong to the ideologues and ideology: they asked about concrete economic, infrastructure improvement issues and cadre issues, and tried to seek solutions.

The region's most significant investment was the Chemical Industrial Works in Marosvásárhely, the location of which the Party leaders had designated in September 1959. Since then only planning and preparations had been taking place.³⁵ In 1961 construction had still not begun, but a recommendation was made that the manager be a highly trained, experienced cadre: Alexandru Gross, managing director in the Ministry of the Chemical Industry. The Party wanted to bring over the director of the Cable Factory opening in late 1961 from Craiova, the latter being the head of the central laboratory of the Electroputere Factory, electrical engineer Balázs Máthé.

In order to prepare the construction projects starting up, a list of the region's best master builders was compiled. Likewise a list was drafted of the best economists, engineers and technicians, to be able to examine the extent to which they made use of their knowledge and skills in their workplace, as well as sending some of them on exceptional occasions on study trips abroad (to West Germany, Belgium, the United Kingdom and Czechoslovakia).³⁶ All this indicates that experts and expertise in certain cases had become more important than blind loyalty to the Party.

In 1961 the mass electrification of the villages was still only being planned and prepared, but in 1962 the region's independent electrical company was now formed.³⁷

The recommendations of the Regional Popular Council's Executive Committee for the year 1962 reveal that the collection of local contributions needed for electrification had commenced in the villages, but the campaign was proceeding quite slowly. The contribution could only be collected from the population in small, monthly amounts. If there was a state enterprise or cooperative unit

(collective farm) in the locality, it contributed to the costs, but if there was not, the Regional Popular Council also had to shoulder support of varying proportions. The inhabitants had to contribute to electrification by a sum equivalent to two months' average salary per family. This, to be sure, was a significant sum for the agrarian collectivist families.³⁸

In the early 1960s the most spectacular changes took place in apartment construction. Quite significant resources and organizational capacity were expended in order to eliminate the shortage of the most important durable consumer item, housing. The Regional Construction Trust was one of the economic units employing the greatest number of workers in the region.³⁹ Besides Marosvásárhely it had satellites in Régen, Dicsőszentmárton (Târnăveni) and Székelyudvarhely (this latter belonging to Csík District as well).⁴⁰ The experts of the Directorate for Town Planning, Construction and Planning,⁴¹ established in 1958 and operating within the Regional Popular Council, were already capable of elaborating comprehensive, long-term plans in 1962.⁴² The task set by the Party organs was the reconstruction of Marosvásárhely into a socialist city, a program that in the period 1960–1965 meant the construction of more than 5,000 apartments as well. As a study being prepared for February 1962 reveals, however, the appropriate urban plans for all this were lacking. For this reason, the directorate's employees elaborated an outline project – this was debated by the Regional Political Committee.⁴³ According to this, first the empty lots still existing in the town had to be built on, and demolition was to be avoided. The larger building ensembles were to be planned in such a way that they would fit into the existing infrastructure. The third phase was the building of a large-scale residential quarter on the vacant territory on the outskirts of the town,⁴⁴ which demanded thorough planning and reconstruction of the town's infrastructure (for example, its sewer system and thoroughfares) and thus was very costly.

Supply in the early 1960s was still stalling. Although the sale of bread through ration coupons had ceased, one still had to stand

in line for it. Meat continued to be a scarcity. In the first quarter of 1961 about 32 percent of the quantity produced went to the center in Bucharest, and 13 percent was sent abroad (Italy, Portugal), but some was delivered to the worker centers in Brassó and Ploiești and to the canning factory, and thus only 34 percent (about 320 tons) remained for local consumption.⁴⁵

Focusing on ideological and propagandistic goals and economizing with reserves, only during holidays and only for a few days could the illusion of bountiful food supplies be maintained.⁴⁶ At such times imported items were also sold.⁴⁷ In 1961, for example, on May 1 and 8 (the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party) boxes of Nescafé, 10,000 kilograms of lemons, 3,000 pairs of women's nylon socks, men's nylon shirts, 100 imported washing machines and 50 imported tape-recorders arrived in the shops of the region as luxuries.

A few recreational-treatment centers located in the region, such as Szováta, Tusnádfürdő (Băile Tușnad), Borszék (Borsec) and Gyilkostó (Lacu Roșu), had a special status. In 1960 the four resorts were visited by some 150,000 guests; citing this, in 1961 the Commercial Directorate requested an increase in the quantity of goods from the Ministry of Commerce. In the designated places for summer vacations, holidays and recreation, provisioning improved significantly compared to the 1950s. In Szováta and Borszék the 1961 investment plan included construction of a commercial complex.⁴⁸

Plans for handling the labor force freed up after the completion of collectivization emerged as early as 1959. According to a report prepared in April 1961, in the region, which had 801,631 inhabitants at that time, the number of capable of work but unemployed was 50,433, 30 percent of whom were under the age of 30.⁴⁹ This figure was reached speculatively, the number of those employed being subtracted from the number of the inhabitants capable of work. It is of particular interest that almost twice as many men figure in the statistics as women. Ultimately I believe that this figure means nothing other than the quantity of labor that, independently of the facts of the case, happened to have been taken into consideration

in the current processes of economic planning. In the socialist era 1962 was the final moment when masses entered the labor market (departing from the collectivized villages) in such a way that their number can only be estimated. Henceforth the newer generations could obtain work only through the strictly controlled training channels, adjusted to the needs of the command economy. Among other things, the task of collectivization was also to make possible another turnabout necessary for forced industrialization: the creation of full-scale labor management by the state.

Researchers of Romanian Hungarian society up until now have presented the turn of the 1950s and 1960s as the period of resurgent Romanian nationalism, the elimination of Bolyai University, and the transformation/abolition of the HAR. The ethnic turn within the regime ruling Székelyföld society is beyond doubt. Collectivization, which was resisted longest in the Csík and Gyergyó regions, established the socio-economic defenselessness of the village and the villagers. But in the same way it is beyond doubt that this regime played a significant role in the economic application of technical expertise, infrastructural development, the rebuilding of Marosvásárhely and the creation of consumer conditions as well. In 1962, too, society in the Székelyföld was for the most part rural, agrarian and tradition-bound – but not for long. As for what unfolded after 1989, as a result of transformations that took place in the meantime (increased and other kinds of knowledge, the new model) it could no longer be a revival of the processes interrupted in the 1950s and 1960s.

Modernization – Demodernization?

Forced industrialization had been proclaimed already by the First One-Year State Plan – in reality, however, the regime’s organizational and mobilizing strength was enough only to exploit the advantages arising from the “sharpening” of the class struggle and from Soviet assistance to consolidate its position. What happened was really not general industrialization but rather *punctiform* industrial

development, the concentration of industry in certain prominent places (Vajdahunyad, Jiu Valley, Brassó and Bucharest). Certain basic branches of industry (such as the chemical industry) did not exist, and planning and the manufacture of building materials stalled. Because of the obsolescence of the machinery, delivery was cumbersome, coordination in construction was lacking, the lack of experts had to be contended with, and the deadlines for handing over were constantly postponed. In vain was a ten-year electrification plan passed in 1950; energy troubles were truly solved only when the hydroelectric plant at the Iron Gates was handed over in the early 1970s, but even then only temporarily.

It was the era when change was the greatest in Romania, and in the Székelyföld: the 1970s, specifically the late 1970s. This was the time when industrial production, the number of employees, real incomes and consumption grew in the greatest proportion.

Behind all these things was the mass shift in lifestyle. A socio-historical turn beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s was taking shape.

This is not yet a closed era, and it is difficult to draw the boundaries of the turnabout precisely. The urban population, too, had only reached 50 percent in 1985. Since then the second generation of settlers has grown up in the jungles of housing blocs in the towns, and what stable urban forms of existence it has created for itself are dubious.

Between 1975 and 1980 the accumulation base was the greatest in the era: the greatest amount of money was spent on new equipment and updates – technical modernization. Unfortunately, it was spent not only on this, but also on the megalomaniacal plans of the dictatorship – for example, the construction of the Danube–Black Sea Canal, suspended in 1953 and later restarted. In the 1980s or in the years that followed, numerically the largest numbers of industrial products were manufactured – then a decline in production commenced in the last years of the era.

A very unfortunate consequence was the fact that, in the grip of the dictatorial restrictive measures, until 1990 the country's

population increased – and then headed into a rapid decline. Compared to 1990, in 2002 1,508,539 fewer people lived in Romania: that is a decline of 6.5 percent of the population figure for 1990.

In his theory of nationalism, Ernst Gellner⁵⁰ speaks of two well-definable types of society: agro-literate society and advanced industrial society. In 1945 75 percent of Romania's population was rural and performed some agrarian activity, while 24 percent of the total population was unable to read or write. In 1989 the rural population performing agrarian activity made up 28 percent of the total population, but the statistics are silent about the percentage of those able to read and write. The era was dominated by the ideological principle according to which, in direct proportion to industrial developments, urbanization, the harnessing of natural forces and the resources used for this, welfare would evolve and increase uninterruptedly. The facts supporting this represented the most important basis of the regime's legitimacy. The growth rate of the population significantly declined in the 1960s, and the continuous rise can be attributed only to the artificially introduced and maintained restrictions. Education became widespread; however, we cannot speak of quality assurance, especially at the time of the recession of the 1980s.

According to Gellner's definition, an important difference between the two societies is the nature of the work performed: really it is a question of strenuous physical labor, working the land – or controlling, managing and maintaining machines. The "rapid manipulation of meanings and people" is performed by workers trained for this in the educational process. Work, says Gellner, losing its physical character, becomes "semantic" and to a large extent flexible and manipulable. The possibility evolves of people in certain states of development thinking and acting in the same way and, as a consequence, of forming the obedient masses of industry and development (as well as consumption). Naturally, the possibility also evolves of the (mobile, urban) groups and communities "torn from the soil" of defining themselves by producing their own

meanings and creating their own public sphere. This, however, was not possible in the strictly controlled social space and public sphere of socialism.

Romanian society reached the point where 50 percent lived in towns, but even today the percentage of the latter is no more than 55–56 percent, and in fact there is a trend of flowing back into the villages. The economic structural transformation and mass unemployment once again induced the move away from intellectual or “semantic” work towards physical work. This is also the case whether one picks strawberries in Spain as a foreign worker or mixes cement in Hungary. The successful processes of the 1970s went down in the 1980s, and in the 1990s they became chaotic and multi-directional. To the present, the most successful period in the era after the Second World War in Romania was that of the development that commenced in the early 1960s and lasted until the start of the 1980s.

Notes

- 1 The data come from the congressional reports of the Party first secretaries; see Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, *Articole și cuvîntări: decembrie 1955 – iulie 1959* [Articles and Speeches: December 1955 – July 1959] (Bucharest, 1959), pp. 14–110.
- 2 See *Statement on the Stand of the Rumanian Workers' Party Concerning the Problems of the World Communist and Working-Class Movement* (Bucharest, 1964), pp. 29–30.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 49–50.
- 4 The comparison of the level of economic development based on the corrected *per capita* GDP indicator – see Hunya Gábor et al., *România, 1944–1990* [Romania, 1944–1990] (Budapest, 1990), p. 50.
- 5 The introduction of the H. A. Diedericks and J. Th. Lindblad, eds., *Nyugat-európai gazdaság- és társadalomtörténet. A rurális társadalomtól a gondoskodó államig* [Western European Economic and Social History. From the Rural Society to the Caring State] (Budapest, 1995) textbook, p. 14., speaks about this.
- 6 The consolidation of the planned economy is the result of a longer process; on this see Tamás Réti, “A román tervgazdaság

- kialakulása 1944–1956” [The Formation of the Romanian Planned Economy 1944–1956], in Hunya Gábor et al., *Románia, 1944–1990*.
- 7 “Részlet Gheorghiu-Dej-nek a Román Népköztársaság 1949 évi állami terve kapcsán a Nagy Nemzetgyűlés előtt 1948. december 27-én elmondott beszédéből” [Excerpt from Gheorghiu-Dej’s Speech before the Grand National Assembly on the State Plan of the Romanian People’s Republic for the Year 1949, Delivered December 27, 1948], in *Az 1949 évi állami terv* [The State Plan for the Year 1949] (n.d.): 13–14.
 - 8 In December 1950 the Grand National Assembly passed the *Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Economy of the Romanian People’s Republic* for the years 1951–1955. The plan appeared in *Buletinul Oficial* No. 117, December 16, 1950.
 - 9 That is, activities conforming to the plan specifications and carried out in the unit periods (months, quarters and half-years) featured in the specifications.
 - 10 The Romanian party leadership never strayed far from Stalinism, and its separate way within the socialist camp had not theoretical but practical criteria: “the preservation of the leadership’s power, as well as the program of the Romanian conception of industrialization, the overtaking of the more developed countries.” Andrea R. Süle, ed., *Hetven év. A romániai magyarság története 1918–1989* [Seventy Years. The History of the Hungarians Living in Romania 1918–1989] (Budapest, 1990), p. 234. Destalinization “remained within entirely narrow confines”. Ibidem, p. 231. At the same time, after the liberalization of Gheorghiu-Dej’s successor, Ceaușescu, in the 1960s the dictatorship hardened once more, and “the final outcome of the Ceaușescu regime was strongly linked to the traditional line of Stalinism”; Hunya, *op.cit.* p. 56.
 - 11 See “Jelentés az RMP KV 1958. november 26–28-i plenáris ülésén” [Report at the RWP CC Plenary Session, November 26–28, 1958], in Gheorghiu-Dej, *op.cit.* p. 616.
 - 12 The literal Romanian expression: “nu poate cuprinde sarcinile încredințate.” It is true that the genuine motives for the dismissals generally do not appear in the minutes of the Politburo’s meetings, yet it may be deduced that those who – among other things – had this attributed to them also had a problem with their level of training and intellectual capacity as well, and perhaps through their conduct had caused material damage and a loss of prestige.

- 13 Romanian National Archives, Service of Mureş County (henceforth SJANMS), Maros Megyei Pártbizottság Iratai [Documents of the Maros County Party Committee] – Fund 1134, pack 1958/192, ff. 43–48.
- 14 SJANMS, fund 1134-es, pack 1958/194, a Politikai Bizottság ülései [the minutes of the Political Commission’s meetings], ff. 56–376.
- 15 SJANMS, fund 1134, pack 1959/226, ff. 14–254. – a Politikai Bizottság ülései; pack 1959/227, ff. 1–110. – a Politikai Bizottság ülései [the minutes of the Political Commission]
- 16 SJANMS, fund 1134, pack 1960/ 287, Gazdasági komisszió [Economic Commission]; 1–165.
- 17 At this time Gheorghiu-Dej was secretary-general of the RWP, and Chivu Stoica the president of the Council of Ministers.
- 18 Sándor Keszi-Harmath, ed., *A Magyar Autonóm Tartomány a gazdasági fejlődés útján – 1959* [The Hungarian Autonomous Region on the Economic Development]. Manuscript, National Széchényi Library, Budapest, 1959. pp. 41–42.
- 19 SJANMS, fund 1134, pack 1959/226, a Politikai Bizottság ülései, f. 68.
- 20 *Ibid.* ff. 73–74.
- 21 *Ibid.* f. 62.
- 22 Keszi-Harmath, *op. cit.* pp. 171–172.
- 23 *Ibid.* pp. 180–187.
- 24 SJANMS, fund 1134, pack 301/1961, f. 168.
- 25 *Ibid.* f. 142.
- 26 *Ibid.* f. 1.
- 27 SJANMS, fund 1134, pack 329/1962, f. 265.
- 28 *Ibid.* f. 169. The first secretary was Iosif Banc, and the organizational secretary, Ioan Cozma, served as his deputy, while Jakab István was responsible for propaganda, Gheorghe Raita for agriculture, and József Anderko for industry.
- 29 *Ibid.* f. 3.
- 30 SJANMS, fund 1134, pack 295/1961. The statement was made at the November 27 session of the regional Party *Aktiv*.
- 31 Literally: “The breakdown of the planning indices is not an action for the trade union now. This is a party job, the action of the Party and not the trade union; every mass organization must contribute to it fully, but the entire action happens under the direct leadership of our Party organizations.” SJANMS, fund 1134, pack 304/1961, f. 2.

- 32 SJANMS, fund 1134, pack 304/1961, f. 2.
- 33 *Ibid.* ff. 75–80.
- 34 One meeting took place in February, the other in December. At the February meeting, for example, on the grounds that a better-prepared expert was needed, the head of the planning division of the Regional Popular Council was dismissed. SJANMS, fund 1134, pack 298/1961, f. 115–126; pack 304/1961, f. 63.
- 35 SJANMS, fund 1134, pack 313/1961, f. 36. The construction of the Chemical Works was planned in several stages, and it would reach its full production capacity in 1980. In the first period it had 659 workers, with a further 175 workers in the thermal plant. Some 1,600 would work on the construction project.
- 36 *Ibid.* f. 36.
- 37 See *Un secol de electricitate 1898–1998* [A Century of Electricity 1898–1998] (Târgu Mureș, n.d.), p. 54.
- 38 SJANMS, fund 1134, pack 312/1961, f. .
- 39 In the summer of 1961 it had 4,884 employees, including only 36 engineers, 135 technicians, 72 craftsmen, and in addition 347 officials. The percentage of workers was 89 percent, 52 percent of whom had specialized training. SJANMS, fund 1134, pack 297/1961, f. 24.
- 40 SJANMS, fund 1134, pack 293/1961, f. 57.
- 41 According to a 1961 compilation, the institute employed 19 architects, 41 engineers, 65 designers, 39 draftsmen, 6 accounting experts and 42 administrative personnel. SJANMS fund 1134, pack 297/1961, f. 24.
- 42 SJANMS, fund 1134, pack 329/1962, ff. 98–113.
- 43 *Ibid.* f. 96. Iosif Banc’s comment in connection with the study: “Let’s hasten the modernization of the town, let the old buildings and shacks be torn down ...”
- 44 The study proposed the Kövesdomb (Dâmbul Pietros) quarter. The Politburo did not approve this but rather recommended demolition and construction in the areas lying north of the town center, towards Régen. Iosif Banc declared the following: “Let us utilize every area in the town because in this way construction will not cost as much as in Kövesdomb. We cannot take 50 hectares out of agricultural production. Let’s not expand in the lower part of the town...”
- 45 SJANMS, fund 1134, pack 312/1961, f. 33.

- 46 According to a quite revealing inventory statement, which would be worthy of separate analysis, in the region 15 percent more goods had been prepared for those celebrating May 1 than one year earlier. On April 25 the accumulation of reserves had already begun. In addition to the towns, the statement includes the worker settlements (Balánbánya, Szentegyháza–Lövete, Hargitabánya, Galócás, Gyulakuta) as well as the resorts (Szováta, Borszék, Tusnádfürdő); SJANMS fund 1134, pack 311/1961, ff. 173–181.
- 47 It would be necessary to know how many actually went on sale and how many were sold under the counter.
- 48 SJANMS, fund 1134, pack 311/1961, f. 97.
- 49 *Ibid.* ff. 187–189.
- 50 See Ernst Gellner, “A nacionalizmus kialakulása: a nemzet és az osztály mítoszai”; in English, “The Coming of Nationalism and Its Interpretations. The Myths of Nation and Class,” in Gopal Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation* (New York, 1996), pp. 98–145.

Zoltán Csaba Novák

**THE YEAR OF THE “LIBERALIZATION.”
THE IMPACT OF 1968 ON THE HUNGARIAN POLICY
OF THE ROMANIAN COMMUNIST PARTY**

The Administrative Reform of 1968

The year 1968 was an important milestone in the nationality policy, and specifically the Hungarian policy, determined by Nicolae Ceaușescu. In 1968 events of great significance took place in foreign and domestic policy, activating the nationality policy of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP). The country's administrative reorganization and active role in foreign policy could be conceived only with a stable and “pacified” hinterland. In this process, settling relations with the nationalities was also allotted an important role. During this brief period three events that were important from the Transylvanian Hungarians' viewpoint (but for other national minorities as well) took place: the administrative reform, a meeting with Hungarian intellectuals and the establishment of the Council of Workers of Hungarian Nationality (*Magyar Nemzetiségű Dolgozók Tanácsa* or MNDT).

In 1967 Nicolae Ceaușescu, in order to consolidate his power position and put the Party leadership's conception of socio-economic transformation into practice, resolved to take a further step: the organization of the administrative reform realigning the country's territory. The reform played an important role in the Party's economic and social policy from several viewpoints. The counties, smaller than the regions, more transparent and more easily organizable, were intended from an economic point of view to serve the more efficient, decentralized industrial development. At the same time, the realignments occurring during the reform resulted in a large-scale movement of cadres as well, during which the Party leadership put in place elite groups on whose loyalty it

could rely in the long term as well. At the same time, the reform acquired an important role from the point of view of propaganda and mass mobility as well, since by mobilizing local elites and the population, and partially considering and accepting their opinion in making decisions of a local nature, the Party elevated its popularity index to a great degree. The preparation and implementation of the 1968 administrative reform played an important role in the Party's nationality policy as well. From the point of view of nationality policy, the planning for the establishment of the counties continued to follow the principle in operation since the 1950s, according to which the nationality question in Romania had been solved, and thus the particularities of minority existence did not have to be represented as a separate interest. Across the country, during the first phase in the preparations for the establishment of the counties the nationality question cropped up only to the extent that the future decentralized county institutions would ensure the appropriate press and school network for the nationalities living there.¹ Despite all these things the so-called nationality question nevertheless determined the preparations, mainly in relation to the Székelyföld or Szekler Land (in Romanian Ținutul Secuiesc). The question of the Székelyföld appeared both as an administrative question and as an economic one. The essence of the administrative question was whether the administrative modifications would make it possible in the future for the larger part of the Székelyföld, inhabited overwhelmingly by Hungarians, to form a single administrative unit. Moreover, during the debates the region's appalling economic situation came to the forefront, as did the lack of investments and industrial developments, which had led to the economic isolation of the region.² The first draft would have divided the Székelyföld between the “large Székely county,” named Udvarhely-Csík County, and Maros County in such a way that the most of the region would have ended up in the former county, 7,459 square kilometers in area. The planned county border in the north began with the Gyergyói Basin, and ended in the south with Kézdivásárhely and Sepsiszentgyörgy Districts. In this draft, Csíkszereda (Miercurea Ciuc), centrally situated but smaller

than Székelyudvarhely (Odorheiu Secuiesc) and Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfântu Gheorghe), was designated as the county seat. The large Székely county would have counted 364,196 inhabitants, with a Hungarian majority of nearly 95 percent (342,044 persons).³

Examining the minutes of the preliminary debates, three lines of argument unfolded: the restoration in the region of the former, pre-1950 counties, the establishment of a large Székely county, and arguments in favor of the small Székely county, by joining the districts of Sepsiszentgyörgy and Kézdivásárhely (Târgu Secuiesc) to Brassó (Braşov). The representatives of these three opinions represented ideological cleavages within the Party that were at times well differentiated from one another. Among these the most important was the dispute between Ceauşescu and Drăghici, which revolved around the evolution of the post-Dej power structure. After 1965 Ceauşescu expended significant energies on weakening, and even removing from their positions, his possible political opponents tied to the Dej era. In this struggle it was the former minister of the interior and one of the potential heirs apparent to the post of first secretary after Dej's death, Alexandru Drăghici, who represented the greatest danger to Ceauşescu. The dispute and difference in opinion between Drăghici and Ceauşescu determined the preparations surrounding the administrative reform as well.⁴ During the debates a third, less pronounced, national line also emerged with regard to the nationality question (represented by Iosif Banc, Militaru Aldea and Virgil Ioanovici), which resolutely rejected the idea of taking nationality minority special interests into account and the pact policy *vis-à-vis* the nationalities. They resolutely opposed the establishment of the large Székely county. Several important members of the Party leadership (Gheorghe Apostol, Leonte Răutu, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Chivu Stoica and János Fazekas) unequivocally supported the compromising line advocated by Ceauşescu.

As already mentioned, the first draft featured the "large Székely county." Supporters of the plan raised the ethnic principle, the common interests of the region's Hungarian population, as the most important argument. At one of the preliminary sessions, Gheorghe

Apostol articulated this position thus: “Examining it from the angle of the nationality question, we will proceed properly by establishing Udvarhely-Csík County. It must be appreciated that we have found a solution that satisfies the demands of the Hungarian population. Minor modifications naturally will still take place.”⁵⁵ Opponents of the large Székely county took up a stance in favor of annexing Sepsiszentgyörgy and Kézdivásárhely Districts to Brassó County. They based their arguments primarily on economic criteria and interests, according to which the two districts were tied economically to the city of Brassó. At the sessions Ceaușescu himself took up a stance in favor of the large Székely county, acknowledging also that economic interests spoke against this plan: “It really would be natural for Sepsiszentgyörgy and Kézdivásárhely to belong to Brassó County, but the proposals were premised on the point of view of nationality, namely, that we create an opportunity for the Székely population to remain in a single county.”⁵⁶ Until the final decision was taken, the prospect of listening to the opinion of the population was also held out.

Lending an interesting dash of color to the preliminary debates were the arguments raised by Alexandru Drăghici, who proposed that the administrative system from before 1950 should be revisited and the economically viable counties of that period retained. Drăghici found the plan for Udvarhely-Csík County to be contrived, because by putting it into effect, in his view, an artificially established ghetto would evolve in the region. In his remarks Drăghici opposed every kind of territorial annexation that he judged to be artificial: “In my opinion it was groundless for us to annex the three Romanian-majority communes of Bodzaforduló (Întorsura Buzăului) to the Kézdivásárhely District just to make improvements to the ethnic composition of the district. I am of the opinion that we should not establish artificial structures. If we really want to eliminate that ghetto [the Székelyföld – Z. N.], we must industrialize it.”⁵⁷

The plan for the administrative reform was revealed to the public on January 14, 1968. The region’s Hungarian population reacted to the news preceding the creation of the counties and to the plan with

an excitement that could be experienced on the national level. In working out the essential points of the reform, the Party had acted through its customary centralized system; however, in various details of a local nature it asked the opinion of the population. Whereas during the 1950 and 1952 administrative reforms the population followed or acknowledged the happenings for the most part passively, this time an opportunity arose at forums controlled by the Party (popular rallies, deliberations and the press) to express the various opinions. This partial form of liberalization inspired large-scale activity among the populace. Between January 14 and February 9, 1968, the Party's central organs registered 10,606 joint or individual proposals.⁸ In the major settlements of those regions (Râmnicu Sărat, Valea Dâmboviței, Clisura Dunării, Dumbrăveni, Sepsiszentgyörgy and Szilágyság) where the greatest number of questions arose, the Party leadership organized popular assemblies to clarify these.⁹

The presentation of the plan to set up the county system and the opportunities stemming from the Party leadership's liberalization to a large extent mobilized the local political elite and intellectuals of the Székelyföld and the population of the settlements directly affected. The memory of the Hungarian Autonomous Region (HAR) abolished in 1960 was still very much alive in local society, and the possibility of organizing the Székelyföld into one administrative unit actively engaged public opinion. Having at least as much weight – sometimes even overriding the previous factor – was the striving of the region's local elite groups to retain or obtain the most advantageous positions possible during the reform. The internal struggle occurred among three major elite groups: that of Csíkszereda, designated as the county seat in the case of the creation of the large Székely county, and those of Székelyudvarhely and Sepsiszentgyörgy, both possessing important historical traditions.¹⁰ The various local lobby groups swung into motion already during the organizational preparations. The solution was expected from the cadres of Hungarian origin positioned on the upper echelons on the Party hierarchy and the connections of leading intellectuals

working within the regime’s orbit. The bulk of the requests of this nature came in to the most influential Hungarian Party leader of the time, János Fazekas, who himself originated from the Székelyföld.¹¹ What the fate of the Sepsiszentgyörgy and Kézdivásárhely Districts detached from the HAR in 1960 would be, and how the future large Székely county and Brassó County would divide up the settlements of the two districts, figured as prominent problems. As was already mentioned, this question had arisen already during the preliminary debates at the central level, too. The Brassó Party leadership, obtaining the support of a part of the local Party leadership in Sepsiszentgyörgy, deployed every possible means for the sake of retaining the two districts: they lobbied at the meetings of the Party’s central organizing committees, obtained the support of some of the Hungarian cadres in Sepsiszentgyörgy who feared for their positions, and by means of promises, threats and manipulated popular rallies they tried to convince the Party leadership to decide in their favor. The debate divided the local Party leadership of the two districts involved (Sepsiszentgyörgy and Kézdivásárhely) as well, since those of Kézdivásárhely took a position in favor of belonging to the large Székely county.¹² By sending a profusion of reports to the central organs, the Party leadership in Brassó attempted to create the appearance that the population of the region was unequivocally in favor of annexation to Brassó. From other sources (reminiscences, or the personal papers of János Fazekas), on the other hand, it turns out that the bulk of the population and the intelligentsia did not unequivocally share the local Party leadership’s opinion. Local intellectuals and the cadres opposing the Brassó center attempted to signal to the higher forums the abuses that meant that participants and speakers at the popular rallies were influenced by promises and threats in an effort to get them to vote in favor of Brassó, and speakers who thought differently were in many cases silenced.¹³ The two most prominent leading intellectuals of the era also called János Fazekas’s attention to similar abuses. After the meeting with the intellectuals of Sepsiszentgyörgy, András Sütő and Győző Hajdu drafted a letter to Fazekas, passing on the

locals' requests. The letter reveals that the assistant manager of the theater in Sepsiszentgyörgy, Balázs Bákai, had been summoned to the building of the Party's local council, where Éva Sándor asked Bákai to set it down in writing that he requested the attachment of Sepsiszentgyörgy to Brassó County. After Bákai refused, she asked him to recruit actor Gyula Fekete and director András Völgyesi for this purpose. Bákai refused to do any of this.¹⁴ In this same letter they also recount how the local Party organs did not hold any of those meetings about which it could be guessed from the outset that they would decide against Brassó.¹⁵ Another local intellectual group sent a message to János Fazekas personally, asking him to intercede with Ceaușescu so that the districts of Sepsiszentgyörgy and Kézdivásárhely would not end up in Brassó County. "Those who agitate in favor of Brassó think that the administrative changes will negatively affect their positions and their jobs. Some believe that the new county leadership will no longer guarantee jobs for them; they pin all their hopes on their former connections in Brassó, ignoring the interests of the community," reads the letter.¹⁶ The leaders of villages to be attached to Brassó County (Tamásfalva, Gidófalva and so on) also reacted to the plan in a similar fashion.

In the case of Kovászna County, in addition to economic factors, the ethnic factor was also allotted a role. The memory of the abolition of the HAR in 1960, along with the administrative disunion of the Hungarian ethnic bloc, was still alive. The plans and debates on setting up the counties only intensified suspicions and tensions between Hungarians and Romanians. Those arguing in favor of the unitary Székely county were accused by local Romanians and pro-Brassó supporters of separatism, as the Romanian-speaking population of the region would rather have chosen Brassó County. In contrast, for the majority of Hungarians the plan of annexation to Brassó signified nothing other than a new attempt to divide the Székely and to allow the region's "exploitation" by Brassó to proceed.¹⁷

News of the events in Háromszék soon reached the highest levels of the Party leadership. On their instructions a number of central

delegates who also knew the terrain well (Sándor Koppándi, Károly Király, János Fazekas and Vasile Patilineț) tried to ease tensions. For the Party leadership it became increasingly more obvious that most of the region’s population and the local intellectuals clearly did not desire annexation to Brassó. Following the request and the “pressure” of the public, as well as the intercession of higher-ranking Party activists (such as Fazekas and Király), a compromise solution began to take shape: a plan for a new county to be established out of the two disputed districts. As I mentioned, at a national level a similar situation evolved in three other cases concerning Szilágy, Mehedinți and Galați. In the case of Galați, there likewise existed an ancient rivalry with the town of Brăila. On February 10, a Central Committee report officially acknowledged that Kovászna County would be established out of Sepsiszentgyörgy and Kézdivásárhely Districts and a few settlements of Csík District.¹⁸ The final adoption of the new plan (the establishment of Szilágy and Mehedinți Counties, and the separation of Brăila and Galați) took place at the RCP plenary session on February 14, 1968.¹⁹

The complication surrounding the establishment of Kovászna County was not a unique phenomenon in the debates around the establishment of the counties in the Székelyföld. One of the agenda points of the plenary session concluding the process of establishing the counties, held on February 14, 1968, discussed an extraordinary case: in Csíkszereda on the previous day demonstrations had taken place in the interests of this town’s providing a home for the seat of Hargita County. The antecedents to the events included the fact that three towns had applied to obtain the status of county seat for the large Székely county planned in the initial phase: Sepsiszentgyörgy, Székelyudvarhely and Csíkszereda. News of the preparations for the administrative reform threw the competitors into a fever. Already during the preliminary debates, the representatives of Székelyudvarhely, also trusting in the support of János Fazekas, who hailed from the area, addressed a letter to the Party leadership in which they sketched the advantages of Udvarhely.²⁰ “We think about which town would best meet these complex demands on the

territory of the Székely county. We believe we betray neither local patriotism nor bias of any other nature when we consider the town of Székelyudvarhely to be the most suitable county seat,”²¹ wrote the people of Udvarhely to János Fazekas in January 1968. The pressure by Székelyudvarhely can be traced in the official reports arriving from the Maros Hungarian Autonomous Region. “During the public debates numerous citizens from the localities of Hargita County also declared their request that the town of Székelyudvarhely, and not Csíkszereda, be named the seat of Hargita County. They argued that Székelyudvarhely was a more developed town and that it could oversee the duties of the county seat much better,” we can read in the official reports of the local Party organs.²² With the secession of Sepsiszentgyörgy and the areas to be attached to Kovászna County (approved in the meantime), the Party leadership duly changed its ideas concerning the county seat without consulting with the locals. On February 11 a new official version this time designated Udvarhely as the county seat. With the delegates of the neighboring settlements, the constituent session of the new county was duly organized in Székelyudvarhely a day later. The official documents reported a positive atmosphere, yet it was a matter of common knowledge that the people of Csíkszereda were not at all pleased by the new situation, but rather considered it to be expressly humiliating. “We did not want to go. Nevertheless, they rounded up enough people for four buses and a couple of small cars from the enterprises, but they were rounded up almost by lasso, because we didn’t really want to go,” recalls Imre Pataki.²³ The regional Party organs quickly perceived that despite the “obligatory consent” of those from Csíkszereda the situation was very complicated. The Party committee in Marosvásárhely Region immediately signaled to Bucharest that “in Csík District the mood is tense. In various enterprises, like the clothing factory, the timber plant, the motor depot and the mining works in Balánbánya (Bălan), the workers gave voice to their dissatisfaction.”²⁴ The dissatisfaction did not cease in the following days either. On February 13 people arriving from the town’s economic units and the villages of the vicinity, for the most

part in an organized manner, but at times spontaneously, surrounded the building of the Party committee.²⁵ The demonstration continued overnight and the next day as well. From Bucharest a delegation formed by Mihály Gere and Vasile Patilineț negotiated with the demonstrators.²⁶ In the heated atmosphere, after long negotiations, the sides finally reached an agreement that Nicolae Ceaușescu would receive a delegation of the demonstrators.

The meeting between the number one leader of the Party and the country with the delegation from Csíkszereda took place on February 14 in Bucharest. It should be noted that it was in this time period that the Party plenary session was underway and Ceaușescu interrupted this to negotiate with the delegates. The delegation from Csíkszereda consisted of well-known, distinguished locals, such as István Orbán, the secretary of the executive committee of the popular council for Csík District, Ovidiu Muntean, manager of the Woodworking Plant in Csíkszereda, economist Imre Pataki, and school principal Pál János. In addition to Ceaușescu, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, János Fazekas and Vasile Patilineț received them on behalf of the Party leadership. The meeting, providing an opportunity for dialogue as well, was opened by Ceaușescu, who briefly outlined to the delegation the reasons for the planned modifications. He justified the change in the county seat by citing the detachment of Sepsiszentgyörgy and Kézdivásárhely, as well as Székelyudvarhely's economic, demographic and infrastructural features. He promised economic investments to the town of Csíkszereda and also promised that a number of the future county's institutions would be moved to the town. The delegation received a map to examine, while Ceaușescu returned to the plenary session for a while.²⁷ After a brief pause the dialogue continued. This time the delegation from Csíkszereda also stated its opinion. István Orbán diplomatically although bravely argued in favor of Csíkszereda, reminding the Party's leaders that the town had been originally designated as the county seat and that nothing at all justified changing this.²⁸ The manager of the timber enterprise, Ovidiu Muntean, attempted to convince the Party leadership with economic arguments and by

sketching Csíkszereda's infrastructural features.²⁹ The economist Imre Pataki also took umbrage at the fact that to his knowledge in Brassó the workers had been obliged to vote in favor of belonging to Brassó. To the counterargument that Csíkszereda would have been centrally situated only in the case of the creation of the large Székely county, Pataki proposed that the towns of Sepsiszentgyörgy and Kézdivásárhely be joined to Brassó and the surrounding areas to Hargita County.³⁰ The school principal Pál János argued the town's historical and cultural heritage and traditions.³¹ The representatives of the Central Committee listened to the extremely convincing and dedicated arguments, and Ceaușescu departed with the promise, providing hope to the delegates from Csíkszereda, that the Executive Committee would reconsider the request of the delegation. The Party leadership in the meantime consulted with the principal figures of the towns involved in the matter of the future county (Balánbánya, Gyergyószentmiklós, Udvarhely and Székelykeresztúr). The close proximity and economic links of the former two towns to Csíkszereda carried great weight. The decision in favor of Csíkszereda must have been reached during the plenary session that same day, since it was now this stance that the Grand National Assembly, meeting on February 15–16, sanctioned.³²

In the dispute, which primarily bore the hallmarks of a regional one, it is an important factor in terms of nationality policy that a compromise was also reached on an issue affecting some of the Hungarian population. Although the large Székely county could not be formed, Kézdivásárhely and Sepsiszentgyörgy and their environs were not attached to Brassó, but instead concentrated in a smaller county, albeit one with a Hungarian majority. The fact that the two aforementioned Székely districts did not end up in Brassó, even though both the Party leadership and the Brassó regional and Sepsiszentgyörgy district leadership considered this to be economically justified, in any event could be counted as a significant success. In this case, even if only to a moderate degree, nationality criteria had taken precedence over economic ones. For its part, the mass protest of the people of Csíkszereda for a long time counted

as a unique act even on a national level. We have no knowledge of street demonstrations of this magnitude from this period, or for that matter going back some years either. In the course of the events in Csíkszereda and the assessment of it by the Party leadership, it is an important factor that behind the events were some of the local Party elite and the intellectuals. The majority of the population was also dissatisfied with the resultant situation, but it was the local elite that pulled the strings behind the events. The demonstrations and the Csíkszereda delegation's visit to Bucharest brought about the decision desired by the town. Csíkszereda became the seat of Harghita County. In February 1968 Csíkszereda was a freshly established county seat where the local elite, with the backing of local society, had had a great say in bargaining with the regime.³³ Influenced by the street demonstrations and not least the delegation's diplomatic but very resolute requests and arguments, Ceaușescu and the Party leadership made changes to their original plans.

**A Further Step:
the Meeting of Nicolae Ceaușescu and the Party Leadership
with Representatives of the Hungarian Intellectuals of Romania
on June 28, 1968**

The development of the international political situation (e.g., the events in Czechoslovakia) in 1968 further generated the internal political processes that had commenced starting in the mid-1960s.³⁴ In the summer of 1968 the Romanian Party leadership needed more than ever before the support of all of Romanian society. Meetings and discussion between the Party leadership and various intellectual groups, as well as visits to the more important counties in the country, multiplied spectacularly.³⁵ This series of tactical gestures by the Party leadership did not bypass the Hungarians of Romania either. Through an “agreement” with society the Party consciously prepared to make advances towards the Hungarian community of Romania as well. In the matter of bringing the nationality question before the highest Party forums, too, movement away from the

impasse of the early 1960s occurred. János Fazekas, charged with mediating with the Hungarian intellectuals of Romania, and the committee responsible for minority affairs continuously delivered information to the Party leadership on issues preoccupying Hungarian intellectuals. Statistics were prepared on the state of nationality education, the number of nationality students, and their opportunities for further study. By the summer of 1968 the Party leadership was prepared for a meeting with the Hungarian intellectuals as well. After the summarizing of demands, complaints and requests and the outlining of a potential catalogue of problems, the list of names of the representative Romanian Hungarian intellectuals was also prepared.³⁶ János Fazekas's letter to Ion Gheorghe Maurer in the summer of 1968 already anticipated the problems preoccupying the Transylvanian Hungarian intellectuals. Among other things, Fazekas mentioned the Hungarians' underrepresentation in the various state, Party and cultural institutions, the reconsideration of the constitutional and legal status of the Hungarian population, the need for new radio and television programs, the development of Hungarian-language education and the demand for the creation of a new organization safeguarding minority interests.³⁷

The steps taken to regain the confidence of the Hungarians of Romania include also the meeting that took place between the top Party leadership and the Hungarian intellectuals of Romania on June 28, 1968. On the initiative of the Party's highest leadership, the preeminent opinion shapers of the Romanian Hungarian intellectuals were invited to Bucharest on the model of previously organized meetings with intellectuals. More than 50 Romanian Hungarian intellectuals (writers, poets, editors, artists and educators) received an invitation. Although the expected happenings of the era theoretically included this same possibility, the invitation nevertheless caught the intellectuals summoned by surprise, since they were informed only a few days before the meeting.³⁸ Under such circumstances there was hardly an opportunity for advance coordination or tactics (possibly a brief conversation among a few people could have taken place), even

though, as became clear from what was said at the discussions, everyone was aware of the most urgent problems of the Hungarians of Romania.³⁹ At the talks, held in the headquarters of the RCP Central Committee, a few key figures of the Party leadership (Nicolae Ceaușescu, Paul Niculescu Mizil, Leonte Răutu, Mihály Gere and János Fazekas) and the representative intellectual elite of the Hungarians of Romania took part: from Bucharest (Géza Domokos, János Szász and Pál Bodor) and from the major Transylvanian cultural centers: Kolozsvár (Ernő Gáll, János Demeter, Lajos Jordáky, Lajos Kántor, István Nagy, Gyula Csehi, Sándor Fodor, Sándor Kányádi and Elemér Jancsó); Marosvásárhely (Győző Hajdu, Zsolt Gálfalvi and András Sütő); Temesvár (Ernő Sisak) and so on. Twenty-six spoke during the talks.⁴⁰ In theory anyone who had received an invitation could speak up, and the duration of the speeches was not strictly fixed either, only in that “as the time passed they were told to be as brief as possible.”⁴¹ As was mentioned, no preliminary coordination took place, but from the speeches given those problem areas that according to Hungarian intellectuals awaited an urgent solution were clearly outlined. The first and one of the most pronounced questions concerned the settlement of the legal status of the Hungarians of Romania and their representation in state and Party organs. Several speakers (such as Ernő Gáll and János Demeter) emphasized the point that there was a need for a minority statute that would regulate the particular, collective rights of the Hungarians.⁴² Those commenting on this subject furthermore also asked that a state agency that would coordinate the cultural life of the Hungarian minority be established. Among the legal issues raised was the rehabilitation of Hungarian intellectuals convicted in the 1950s on the false charge of treason against the homeland and the nation.⁴³ Moreover, the bilingual signs removed in the 1960s and the changed street names were also brought up, as was the use of the minority languages in the state administration.

Belonging to the second category was the discussion of problems in the area of education. Here the most pronounced question was the situation of education in the mother tongue. The majority of

speakers remarked upon the almost complete elimination of technical school instruction in the Hungarian language, as well as the obstacles to studying at school and university in the mother tongue: the prevention of classes with Hungarian as the medium of instruction from starting; the discriminatory measures against Hungarian students during university admission examinations; the textbooks written for the minority students; the teaching of Romania's geography and history in the minorities' mother tongue; the complications surrounding the placement of university graduates.⁴⁴ The scope of the so-called cultural requests and grievances was similar. An array of issues was mentioned, ranging from support for minority tradition-preserving and amateur groups all the way to the deficiencies in theater life. The relationship between the minorities and the Romanian media received relatively extensive space. The intellectuals who rose to speak, sensing the possibilities, requested new periodicals, Hungarian- and German-language television and radio programs, and the quantitative and qualitative improvement of the existing newspapers. In addition, the question of book publishing in the minorities' language was also mentioned, where they urged increasing the number of publications and requested a separate publishing house for the minorities. Appearing as one of the prominent segments of cultural life was the role and position of the minorities in Romanian scholarly life, which according to the majority of speakers reflected neither the proportion of the nationalities nor the quantity and quality of the activity performed by the latter in scholarship and cultural life. The repercussions of the events in Hungary in 1956 in many respects had broken the assessment of the real or imagined integration of the Hungarians of Romania on the part of the Romanian state. The issue of the Hungarian community in Romania became a question of state security, similar to the state of affairs in 1944–1945. A positive change in Romanian society's image of the Hungarians may have been hoped for by those speakers who deplored the lack of information about the Hungarians and about the nationalities in general in the Romanian media and mass communication.

The meeting and the talks that took place between the Party leadership and the Romanian Hungarian intellectuals did not count as a unique phenomenon in 1968, and yet it was an extremely important moment in the Hungarian policy of the RCP. After 1948 the Party had practically declared that the minority question had been solved, the minorities' situation did not signify a unique problem, and the freedoms provided by the socialist constitution made the request for collective rights unwarranted. Until 1968 the Party, discounting the 1956 episode, in practice did not consult in such depth on an issue concerning any minority (or other, religious or social, and so on) group.⁴⁵ Not even at the time that the HAR was established in 1952, which enjoyed great popularity among the Hungarians of Transylvania, and particularly the Székelyföld, was the affected community or even the competent elite group consulted (and not at the time of the latter's partial abolishment in 1960 either). The meeting and talks were undoubtedly the result of the Ceaușescu-style partial liberalization and initiative. The recollections and remarks reveal that a significant majority of the speakers at this time saw the time had come to finally make the Party leadership's aware of all those phenomena and events that the Hungarians of Romania in their opinion could record as grievances. An interesting characteristic of the speeches made during the talks was the diplomacy with which the speakers presented some issues. For Ceaușescu and the Party leadership – putting the blame on the “sabotages” of the activists working in the second line of the Party and the failures committed in the Dej era – it became possible to place minority policy and the related questions of its legitimacy on new foundations. Another characteristic of the talks and the questions raised was the fact that economic arguments and problems were not mentioned. In January of that same year, in connection with the administrative reform within the internal Party debates, however, the economic backwardness of the mostly Hungarian-inhabited Székelyföld appeared as an acknowledged fact. It is also a fact that Hungarian intellectuals working in the area of cultural life could not have possessed, beyond their personal experiences,

accurate economic data, balance sheets or statistics to which they could have referred.

On the basis of the requests presented during the hours-long discussion, the Party leadership prepared a problem catalogue, in which it summarized the requests, observations and the answers to be given to them. An examination of the problem catalogue reveals those questions to which the Party immediately reacted, the most delicate points for the Party leadership, those areas where some sort of compromise could be expected, and those requests that the Party leadership rejected out of hand. The immediate rejection of any request referring to the legal status of the nationalities is striking. The Hungarian intellectuals, availing themselves of the opportunity, tried to break out of the situation canonized since 1948, by requesting a new legal status for the nationalities living in the country. They requested a statute and based on this a well-defined and circumscribed, effective representation at the institutional level. The Party leadership, on the other hand, immediately rejected every kind of request that would have resulted in the recognition of collective rights. In contrast, promises were made regarding administrative changes and putting a few persons of Hungarian background into positions at the various state agencies, which was often confined to the so-called advisory (consultative) role.⁴⁶ We must examine the success or failure of the talks in the given historical-political context. Among the demands and requests voiced very few were actually realized and a few were only partially so. Again the Party leadership did not recognize the collective rights of the national minorities (or those of other communities either), and for this reason it considered the drafting of a statute to be unwarranted. Aside from the launching of a few classes with Hungarian as the language of instruction, technical school training did not change. The changes proposed with regard to language use, street names and bilingual signs generally became lost in the maze of the rural Party and state bureaucracy. The history and geography of Romania were still not taught in the minorities' mother tongue, and nor were special Romanian language and literature textbooks prepared for

ethnic minority students. Beginning in the second half of the 1970s the partial achievements, too, gradually disappeared. At the same time we may also state that despite all these things this meeting also yielded numerous positive results there and then: the Party leadership once more confronted the most urgent, mainly cultural, problems of the Hungarians of Romania. As for the Hungarian elite of Romania, they were presented with an opportunity to state and outline all this before an official forum as well. It was in the period after the talks that the *Kriterion Könyvkiadó* and the cultural weekly *A Hét* were established, and it was also now that the Hungarian- and German-language programs of Romanian television began. In the two counties established in 1968 (but in others as well), the opportunity arose in the late 1960s and early 1970s to cultivate local Hungarian culture, and erect Hungarian statues, monuments and local museums.

The press recounted the meeting with the Hungarian intellectuals laconically and observing the strict rules of Party propaganda. There is no mention whatsoever of the requests, recommendations and debates voiced during the meeting. The communiqué reports merely that “at the meeting those participating in the conference declared their satisfaction with and complete adherence to the Marxist-Leninist nationality policy of our Party and our state, and to the consistent striving of the RCP to enhance socialist democracy, ensure the actual realization of legal equality for all workers, without regard to nationality, for the ceaseless flowering of the common socialist homeland. On this occasion numerous valuable recommendations were made on improving work in various areas of domestic scholarly and cultural activity.”⁴⁷ Lajos Takács also describes the “ambiguous” atmosphere of the meeting to the employees of the Hungarian embassy in Bucharest.⁴⁸

The Birth of the Council of Workers of Hungarian Nationality

Between 1965 and 1968 Ceaușescu succeeded in winning the trust of a significant part of the Transylvanian Hungarian elite of the time. Through the “flexibility” displayed during the process of organizing the counties, the dialogue with Hungarian intellectuals and not least his (intentionally exaggerated) interest displayed during the meetings and visits, he achieved a not insignificant measure of sympathy for himself. The Hungarian cadres coopted onto the Central Committee or other state or Party institutions, the Party activists of Hungarian descent who remained in or gained positions during the administrative reform, the intellectuals given the floor and listened to during the negotiations were in many respects indebted to the Party leadership. And for the more skeptical there remained the hope and optimism that the changes would not just be for show but would also contain substance. Romanian foreign policy displayed towards the 1968 events in Czechoslovakia had an enormous need for the creation of domestic balance and unity and a pacified hinterland. The Party leadership organized a veritable countrywide tour. The most important members of the RCP leadership, headed by Nicolae Ceaușescu, paid visits to several counties during August and September. The Transylvanian counties, located close to the western border and containing minority populations as well, were the first. Counties that were considered to be more important from the viewpoint of propaganda and internal peace were visited by Ceaușescu personally, while important Party leaders paid visits elsewhere.⁴⁹ From the viewpoint of the Party’s Hungarian policy, the Székelyföld and the traditional center of Transylvanian Hungarian culture, Kolozsvár (Cluj), enjoyed a privileged status. The Romanian Party leadership, despite the fact that it really did not agree with the Dubčekian liberalization and had not applied it in its own country, and did not take part in the Warsaw Pact’s intervention in Czechoslovakia. On August 21, 1968, at the zenith of his power and popularity, Ceaușescu condemned the military intervention in Czechoslovakia during an enormous popular rally. A few days after the rally in Bucharest condemning

the intervention of the Warsaw Pact’s troops, we now find Ceaușescu in the Székelyföld.⁵⁰ On August 26, at the height of his popularity, he arrived in Brassó, only to visit later on from there the two newly formed “Székely counties” of Kovászna and Hargita.⁵¹ This was his second visit to the Székelyföld since his ascension to power (1965). While his predecessor, Dej, had made working visits relatively rarely, Ceaușescu – with outstanding political instinct – recognized the importance of frequent and ostentatious visits. At the same time, it must also be emphasized that the Party leadership in 1968 also feared a Soviet (and Hungarian) intervention similar to the one in Czechoslovakia. The frequent visits to the Székelyföld, embracing every larger settlement, carried an important political message for the local populace. The leadership of the two counties was indebted to the Party leadership, but the bulk of the population, too, evaluated the happenings of the recent period positively and with hope. In his remarks Ceaușescu acknowledged the economic backwardness of the Székelyföld and promised large-scale investments.⁵² He also complemented the ostentatious promises with symbolic gestures of outstanding importance in minority existence. During the visit it was possible to address comments in Hungarian as well, and at the end of his speeches Ceaușescu saluted the Party and the two counties in Hungarian as well: “Long live Hargita, long live the Romanian Communist Party!” (*Éljen Hargita, éljen a Román Kommunista Párt!*), he said, for example, in Csíkszereda.⁵³ The elite and population of the two counties assured the Party leadership of their trust and support. In their speeches the speakers (Károly Király, Anna Dukász, Árpád Tankó, László Bránis, Lajos Szávuly and others) met the expectations of the Party: they emphasized their loyalty, condemned the intervention by the troops of the Warsaw Pact and stressed the importance of “common patriotism,” considered to be one of the basic tenets of the socialist nation’s doctrine. By mentioning fraternity and the common fate and mentality, the Party leadership in essence made the local Hungarian elite profess “Romanianness,” belonging to the Romanian socialist nation, which implicitly assumed even fewer bonds with the mother nation.

A few days after the visit to the Székelyföld – following a crowded work schedule in Bucharest – on August 30 the Party leadership visited Kolozs County. In his speeches delivered at the popular rallies in Torda (Turda) and Kolozsvár, Ceaușescu emphasized the importance of unity around the Party, and – exploiting the favorable atmosphere – he found time to promote the major political acts of recent years (partial liberalization, maverick foreign policy, and economic decentralization). During his brief presentation of the Party's nationality policy he referred to speeches made during his visit to Hargita and Kovászna Counties, without detailing the message of the Party leadership delivered there.⁵⁴ During Ceaușescu's visits to Kolozsvár and Nagyszeben (Sibiu), as well as the Central Committee secretary Paul Niculescu Mizil's visits to Temesvár (Timișoara), Arad and Nagyvárad (Oradea), it turned out that the Party leadership considered it to be important primarily in the counties of the Székelyföld to communicate and separately emphasize the most important aspects of the Party's Hungarian policy. During the other visits these questions were only alluded to, inserted into the general mobilization policy of the Party.⁵⁵

In late 1968 a new phase in the political and social transformation initiated by Ceaușescu took place. In the heightened foreign-policy and domestic-policy climate, the RCP leadership, for the purposes of reviving the Party's diminished capacity to mobilize the masses, established a new organization, the "Front of Socialist Unity" (*Frontul Unității Socialiste*, henceforth FUS). The organization's set-up, basic operating principles and goals were debated at the plenary session of the RCP Central Committee on October 24–25, 1968. In his lead address Ceaușescu proposed the name FUS and articulated the purposes for establishing the organization:

In the period between the parliamentary elections there did not exist any permanent body that would have ensured on a national level the regular cooperation of the local organizations under the Party's leadership. This could have occasioned a multilateral exchange of views amongst the representatives of these organizations, and it would have facilitated wide-scale inclusion of the masses in the debating

of the country’s developmental questions. Precisely for this reason, in harmony with the demands for improving social relations and the participation of members of society in economic, political and state life, as well as the directives of the Ninth Congress and the National Conference, the EC recommends the creation of a permanent political organ.⁵⁶

The FUS was built on the model of mass organizations frequently employed in dictatorships, and it embraced Romanian society of the era on every level and in every area.⁵⁷ In the organization’s structure the Central Council represented the highest level, followed thereafter by the county, municipal, town and communal councils.⁵⁸ It was at this same plenary session that the Party leadership decided to establish under socialist mobilization similar organizations for the nationalities living in the country as well, which would function on the model of the FUS and be integrated into it. The name “Council of Workers of Hungarian (or German or Serbian) Nationality” was adopted. Lajos Takács’s proposal, that the new organs be called simply German or Hungarian Nationality Councils, the Party leadership rejected. The latter name must have appeared too “national” to the Party leadership, and did not sufficiently emphasize the fact that these organizations had been established for “nationality workers” and were not to operate as separate, national, interest-advocacy agencies. In his closing speech Ceaușescu patiently addressed Takács’s proposal, but hinted that the latter should withdraw it. Maurer, on the other hand, closed the issue all the more decisively.⁵⁹ The establishment of the nationalities’ councils and their subsequent operation fitted perfectly into the Party’s nationality policy. For the sake of keeping balance in domestic policy, the Party had created a new means of mobilization, and in this it had devoted particular attention to the minorities, first and foremost the minority elites, the leading intellectuals. For the two larger nationality groups remaining after the mass emigration of the Jews (Hungarians and Germans) from the late 1950s onwards the opportunities narrowed significantly. Although the general level of exclusion experienced

by the Germans in the late 1940s and early 1950s abated somewhat starting in the second half of the 1950s, still this community had to confront numerous unsolved problems (education, culture in the mother tongue, proportional representation in politics and public life, maintaining contacts with relatives living in West Germany, and so on), just like the Hungarians of Romania after 1956. In obtaining the support of the minority elites and for the purposes of becoming familiar with the major issues affecting them, the Party leadership considered it to be important to establish a forum for them as well. At the meetings with the leading intellectuals of both nationalities, the demand for the establishment of interest-advocacy organizations was raised. The creation of nationality councils within the FUS involved important tactical, propagandistic and not least practical advantages for the Party leadership in several regards. With this decision the Party signaled to the public (and to the outside world) that it was engaged in finding an actual solution to the nationality question. Ever since the abolition of the MNSZ and the other minority organizations (1953), there had not existed separate interest-advocacy organizations and forums for the nationalities. The appearance and potential opportunity of the changes happening in this area filled the minority elites with optimism, guaranteeing the latter's loyalty towards the Party. The Party leadership partially fulfilled the request frequently asserted by the national minority intellectuals; at the same time, the councils, not having an independent legal status or decision-making jurisdiction, remained fully under the Party's control. By creating them the Party successfully channeled, and at the same time controlled, the activity of the nationalities.

The MNDT was established not for the purpose of enforcing the collective rights of the Hungarians of Romania, but rather to transmit the Party's policy.

It will be one of the main tasks of the councils to contribute to the activity of political education, which the Party and the community organizations held for fostering socialist patriotism and socialist internationalism, for commitment to our new system, for the common homeland, for the development of superior Communist ethics, against all

types of retrograde, nationalist thinking and manifestations, for the continuous elevation of the socialist consciousness of the masses.⁶⁰

At the same time, besides its integrative role, the MNDT, under the rubric of linguistic separation also accepted in the definition of the socialist nation, *in principle* could contribute “to stimulating scholarly, artistic and literary creation in the mother tongues of the co-inhabiting nationalities, in close union with the creative works of the Romanian people, and with the socialist intellectual progress of the entire country.”⁶¹ One stipulation gave cause for hope of a partial remedy to the particular minority concerns. According to this, the MNDT would receive a role “in examining the particular problems of the population of the given communities in order to find the best solutions, in harmony with the general interests of socialist society and the ethnic minority citizens.”⁶²

As we mentioned, the MNDT was organized as part of the Front of Socialist Unity and based on its organizational structure. Bucharest was named the council’s headquarters, and its members were nominated by the county councils of the Hungarian workers.⁶³ Both the German and the Hungarian councils had an elected bureau, the main task of which was to organize the daily activities. In those counties where a sizeable Hungarian, German or other ethnic minority population lived, county-level councils were established. Their members were nominated by the representatives of the workers of the nationality concerned. This meant in practical terms that the persons in question were nominated “on the recommendation of” and with the consent of the representatives of the local Party organs. The county councils of the co-inhabiting nationalities were headed by a chairman and two vice-chairmen. The councils in addition had one secretary each. The relative insignificance of the new organization is conveyed, however, by the fact that their employees “worked based on the principle of public work, and on a communal basis, [and] they [i.e., the councils] could not have paid employees.”⁶⁴ The formation of the MNDT’s national organization took place on November 15, 1968, in Bucharest. Academician

István Péterfi became chairman of the organization's Central Bureau. Lajos Takács, Károly Király, József Méliusz and Tibor Maros assumed the posts of vice-chairmen. In addition elected as members of the bureau were László Bányai, János Demeter, Anna Dukász, Zoltán Kovács, Sándor Egry, Magdolna Fábrián, Mihály B. Kovács, Julianna Márton, Sándor Nagy, András Sütő, József Valter and Dezső Szilágyi.⁶⁵ The council's central organ was expanded by a further 24 members in 1971. The organization of the MNDT's county councils took place likewise in November. On Friday, November 8, constituent sessions were held in Bihar, Beszterce, Kovászna, Hargita, Hunyad, Máramaros, Maros, Szatmár, Szilágy, Szeben and Temes Counties. The formation of the county organizations happened in the presence of Hungarian delegates who arrived from the settlements of the county in question. The constituent sessions were held in every case in the presence of the Party's local leadership. Alongside the local intellectuals, teachers and writers, members in economic posts (from plants and factories) were also coopted onto the county councils and, naturally, the worker members could not be lacking either.⁶⁶

Conclusions

In 1968 three events that to a large extent determined the Party's Hungarian policy took place. In the first half of the year the territorial-administrative reform was completed, during which the nationality question also surfaced, mainly with regard to the territorial division of the Székelyföld. The establishment in the Székelyföld of a unitary administrative unit based on collective rights, the successor to the HAR, was articulated only on the theoretical level; in practical life the political will for it was lacking. At the same time, the Party elite and intelligentsia of the Székelyföld did not emerge from the reform as the clear losers, since two new counties with Hungarian majorities were formed, Hargita and Kovászna Counties, the latter coming about as the result of a lengthy and difficult lobbying campaign. The method of

handling the conflict in the Székelyföld between Csíkszereda and Székelyudvarhely that erupted during the formation of the counties also acquired symbolic significance. Why might Ceaușescu have yielded to “pressure” of this kind? The political aim of the new territorial, administrative and regional network development plans was to establish a loyal elite serving the changed central regime, while its economic goal was the creation of local conditions for decentralized, forced-pace industrialization. Despite the fact that the minority question was regarded as solved, the Party leadership also had to contend with the fact that in the case of the compact bloc of Hungarians in the Székelyföld a very unfavorable decision would do no good at all in terms of achieving future economic and political goals, and nor would it place the country’s international assessment in too good a light either.⁶⁷ In the new political and economic constellation, Ceaușescu in the Székelyföld, too, needed a new loyal political elite, one that could gain positions in the new counties. At the same time, the division of the Székelyföld over several counties, the establishment of multiple political and economic centers, as Dennis Deletant also puts it, “left Hungarian speakers in a majority in more counties than previously, in the old regions, but without the possibility of creating a single, clearly delineated, monolithic bloc of Hungarians, which could have presented a more convincing claim for autonomy.”⁶⁸ A related phenomenon that gained further strength at the level of nationality policy was the situation whereby the “Transylvanian Hungarians” became increasingly marginalized as both an expression and a question of nationality policy in political jargon. With the establishment of the HAR, the Transylvanian Hungarian question in essence became concentrated on the Székelyföld, and this outlook became increasingly entrenched during the preparations for setting up the county system as well. The Party leadership of the time believed that the nationality question no longer existed as a political priority. And with the much heralded linguistic and cultural concessions and the settlement of the administrative and economic issues of the Székelyföld, the demands of the Transylvanian Hungarians could

finally be satisfied. The creation of counties in the Székelyföld also points to another phenomenon frequently determining the region's history. Local antagonisms rooted in the historical past, various economic and political interests, often preempted so-called common, or even national, interests. The debates between Sepsiszentgyörgy–Kézdivásárhely and Csíkszereda–Székelyudvarhely squandered the minimal political strength of the Székelyföld. Only in the preliminary phase did minimal lobbying for the “large Székely county” occur on the part of Fazekas; later on the local disputes always overrode this question. The battle for the county seat of the “small” Hargita County was no longer a nationality but a regional struggle, the attempt of the local elite to retain their former positions or obtain more important, new ones beckoning with greater social prestige and existential opportunities. Giving the populace a voice under controlled confines during the process of creating the counties happened to be strongest in the Székelyföld, perhaps even on a national level. The population of the affected settlements and the local elite took their full share in the local debates and conflicts of interests. The counties came into being, and the subsequent brief period was exceedingly important in the life of the region. In tandem with industrialization, the modernization of the region gathered new momentum: the creation of jobs; providing public utilities; construction projects; the change in the living environment; the expansion of the school network; the stream of professionally trained teachers to the village; the bringing of gas and electricity to the village. New cultural and artistic institutions were formed, in the county seats dozens of intellectuals were hired, and with the support of the local Party elite the nurturing of culture in the mother tongue received new opportunities. The symbolic expanse of Hungarian culture and traditions after 1945 was manifest to a degree hitherto not witnessed, mainly in Kovászna County.

With the intensifying of the foreign policy situation the Party leadership took new steps and made new gestures towards Romanian society and the nationalities. The working visits in the counties and the consultations with the various intellectual groups

multiplied. The counties inhabited also by the minorities formed one of the “favorite” destinations of the visits. In the tense foreign policy situation, the Party leadership could not allow the image of the country, judged positively in the West as well, to be tainted in any respect. Between 1966 and 1971 Ceaușescu and the members of the Party leadership often made appearances in Marosvásárhely, Csíkszereda, Nagyvárad, Szatmárnémeti, Kolozsvár, Sepsiszentgyörgy, Szeben, Temesvár or Székelyudvarhely. The talks conducted with the intelligentsia of the two nationalities were also an ostentatious gesture to the Hungarian and German minorities. By planning talks on issues affecting the nationalities as well, the Party leadership implicitly acknowledged the existence of problem areas that were not adequately solved. The request for legal status based on collective rights, which appeared ideal from the viewpoint of the minority situation, on the other hand, was resolutely rejected. The Ceaușescu regime, building on neo-Stalinist dogmas, did not recognize separate rights in the case of any social, confessional or nationality group. The same was valid in 1968 for the MNDT established within the framework of the Front of Socialist Unity as well. The MNDT, by uniting the political elite of Hungarian descent and the leading Hungarian intellectuals, initially assumed a multifunctional role in relations among the Transylvanian Hungarians, the Hungarian elite and the Party leadership: mediating, as well as legitimizing. These roles were multidirectional. The council transmitted in the mother tongue the Party’s official policy to the Hungarian community, at the same time transmitting in the opposite direction, initially, the community’s fundamental problems to the Party leadership. Besides the official Party and cultural policy and propaganda in the mother tongue an opportunity also arose to cultivate segments of Hungarian culture. The legitimizing role had a similar duality. The Party, through the activity of the council, legitimized its nationality policy; at the same time the raising of minority grievances in the council’s meetings and reports could occur through an official forum. Such dual activity by the council practically institutionalized the ambivalent, dual discourse characteristic of the minority elites

in the initial period. The weak points of the council stemming from its consultative character (the recommendations, even if they were listened to, frequently went off track and off target in the labyrinths of bureaucracy) were apparent already at the start of its operation, but its role beginning in the mid-1970s changed to such a degree as to be reduced from the 1980s onwards to a mere ideological mouth-piece and means of propaganda. The concessions made in the area of cultural life, new institutional opportunities, the movement observable in the area of economic investments, the ostentatious promises and gestures raised the hope in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the Romanian Hungarian elite that there was a chance, a possibility of retaining, and possibly expanding, the successes achieved.

Notes

- 1 For more detail, see Zoltán Csaba Novák, “A megyésítés előkészítése és a nemzetiségi kérdés Romániában 1967–1968” [The Preparation for Establishing the County System and the Nationality Question in Romania 1967–1968], in Nándor Bárdi and Attila Simon, eds., *Integrációs stratégiák a magyar kisebbségek történetében* [Integration Strategies in the History of the Hungarian Minorities] (Somorja, 2006), pp. 455–421.
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 As we can learn from one of his later speeches, it was János Fazekas who proposed the creation of the large Székely county at the National Party Conference. Putting the proposals into a concrete plan was made possible by Ceaușescu’s approval; ANIC, fond CC PCR Cancelarie, dos. 191/1967. f. 20.
- 4 The final showdown with Drăghici took place shortly after the administrative reform. The plenary session of the RCP, at which the rehabilitation of the previously convicted Party activists was debated, took place between April 22 and 25, 1968. It was at this session, based on the charge of political abuses committed during the Dej era, that Alexandru Drăghici, too, was stripped of all of his Party and state functions.
- 5 Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (Central National Historical Archives, henceforth ANIC), CC PCR Cancelarie, dos. 189/1967. f. 10.

- 6 *Ibid.*, dos. 190/1967. f. 6.
- 7 *Ibid.*, f. 5.
- 8 ANIC, fond CC PCR Secția Organizatorică, dos. 1968/4. ff. 8–111.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 In 1966 Csíkszereda had 8,459 inhabitants, Sepsiszentgyörgy 20,768, Székelyudvarhely 15,901, Kézdivásárhely 8,872 and Gyergyószentmiklós 13,204.
- 11 Beginning from the mid-1960s János Fazekas’s political career was once more proceeding upwards: he was a Central Committee member and also held the post of vice-president of the Council of Ministers. In his personal papers there can be found several dozen requests and letters in which intellectuals, cadres and lobby groups in the Székelyföld asked him to intercede on their behalf.
- 12 The conflicts between the leaders of the two districts are also confirmed by Károly Király in his recollections. The Party committee for Kézdi District, Domokos Szász, József Stemmer, József Németh, Gyula Bede, Lajos Szilveszter, Ernő Fábián and Géza Benedek, were proponents of the large Székely county. In contrast, the Party committee for Sepsiszentgyörgy District, led by the first secretary, Károly Sántha, took a position in favor of belonging to Brassó. See Károly Király, *Nyílt kártyákkal. Önéletírás és naplójegyzetek* [With Cards on the Table. Autobiography and Diary Notes] (Budapest, 1995), p. 22. János Fazekas himself confirms this conflict in an interview. See István Sarány and Katalin Szabó, *Megyecsínálók* [County-Makers] (Csíkszereda, 2001), pp. 19–20.
- 13 “Interjú Czikó Árpáddal, Szilveszter Lajossal és Fábián Ernővel” [Interview with Árpád Czikó, Lajos Szilveszter and Ernő Fábián], in András B. Kovács, *Szétsabdalt Székelyföld* [The Székelyföld Carved Up] (Marosvásárhely, 2006).
- 14 Letter of András Sütő and Győző Hajdu to János Fazekas. PTSzL, fund 917. pack 8. dossier 3. ff. 1–3.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Ibid.*, pack 10. dossier 3, ff. 1–5. The letter was signed by, among others, the writer Dániel Veress, the teacher Zoltán Berde, the poet Ernő Valkó, and teachers Ibolya Birtalan and Enikő Cz.
- 17 PTSzL, fund 917, pack 10, dossier 5, f. 1.
- 18 According to Fazekas’s recollections, it was he who had proposed the name Kovászna: see Sarány and Szabó, *Megyecsínálók*, p. 20. We could find no written source for this, although it is a fact that he

proposed the name Hargita. At the time that the new counties were established, in certain cases the Party permitted the use of the old names, while in other cases they were named after some settlement or symbolic terrain formation.

- 19 ANIC, fond. CC PCR Cancelarie, dos. 21/1968, f. 7.
- 20 On December 12, 1967, a group of intellectuals from Székelyudvarhely wrote a letter to János Fazekas in which they tried, using historical, geographical and economic arguments, to prove the importance of the town of Udvarhely. PTSzL, fund 917, pack 10, dossier 3, f. 24.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 Report of the MHAR regional Party organization to the CC. ANIC, fond CC al PCR Secția Organizatorică, dos. 4/1968, f. 135.
- 23 Sarány and Szabó, *Megyeicsinálók*, p. 27.
- 24 ANIC, fond CC al PCR Secția Organizatorică, dos. 4/1968, f. 144.
- 25 József Gagyi, “Az új elit a Székelyföldön. Hargita megyei változások 1968 után” [The New Elite in the Székelyföld. Changes in Hargita County after 1968], *Társadalmi Szemle* 4 (1997): 61.
- 26 ANIC, fond CC PCR Cancelarie, dos. 21/1968, f. 7. In the late 1960s, Gere was responsible for the CC Propaganda Department and later held the post of vice-president of the State Council. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, CC member Patilineț was minister of construction and later mining and crude oil as well.
- 27 Meeting of the Party leadership with the delegates of the town of Csíkszereda, 1968; *ibid.*, dos. 220/1968, ff. 2–4. For more on the memorandum of the meeting, see Zoltán Csaba Novák and Ágoston Olti, “Udvarhely vagy Csíkszereda? Harc a megyeszékhelyért (Egy csíkszeredai küldöttség Nicolae Ceaușescu-nál 1968-ban)” [Udvarhely or Csíkszereda? Battle for the County Seat (A Delegation from Csíkszereda Visiting Nicolae Ceaușescu in 1968)], *Székelyföld* 7 (2008): 85–111.
- 28 *Ibid.*, ff. 4–6.
- 29 *Ibid.*, ff. 6–9.
- 30 *Ibid.*, f. 10.
- 31 *Ibid.*, ff. 12–13.
- 32 *Vörös Zászló*, February 16–17, 1968.
- 33 Although disturbances similar in size to the demonstration in Csíkszereda did not take place, it is important to state that local elites achieved successes in other regions as well. Such were, for example, the separation of the regions of Brăila and Galați into two counties,

- as well as the establishment of Mehedinți and Szilágy Counties, which had not figured in the preliminary plans.
- 34 Relations between the member states of the Warsaw Pact and Romania had soured so much by 1968 that, for example, the Romanian side was not even invited to the talks held in Dresden on March 23.
- 35 For more detail on the phenomenon, see Alina Pavelescu and Laura Dumitrescu, eds., *PCR și intelectualii în primii ani ai regimului Ceușescu (1965–1972)* [The RCP and the Intellectuals in the First Years of the Ceaușescu Regime (1965–1972)] (Bucharest, 2007).
- 36 ANIC, fond CC PCR Secția de Propagandă și Agitație, 18/1968. 98–102 ff. The list of Hungarian intellectuals in Romania considered to be important by the Party contained 121 names in total from Marosvásárhely, Kolozsvár, Bucharest, Szatmárnémeti, Nagyvárad, Csíkszereda, Brassó, Arad, Nagybánya and Sepsiszentgyörgy.
- 37 Informatory letter of János Fazekas to Ion Gheorghe Maurer, 1968. PTSzL. Fund 917, pack 7.
- 38 Andreescu, Varga and Nastasă, *Minorități etnoculturale*, p. 912.
- 39 In his recollections Géza Domokos relates how on the eve of the meeting he visited Pál Bodor and there together with Gyula Szabó wrote the texts of the remarks: Éva Bányai, *Sikertörténetek kudarcokkal* [Success Stories with Failures] (Kolozsvár, 2006), p. 140.
- 40 Memorandum on the meeting between the Party leadership and the intellectuals of Hungarian nationality. June 28, 1968; ANIC, fond. CC PCR Secția Organizatorică, dos. 47/1968, ff. 1–53.
- 41 Interview with Zsolt Gálfalvi (interview in the author’s possession).
- 42 The question of a statute stabilizing the legal position of the Hungarians in Romania had appeared already between the two world wars, but also in the period concluding the Second World War. Facing the peace negotiations, on February 6, 1945, Romania proclaimed the so-called Nationality Statute, which declared the equality before the law of all citizens without regard to race, language or nationality, and guaranteed collective rights in the area of language use to the Transylvanian Hungarians. The class-oriented political system created by the RCP, which came to power in 1947, no longer recognized the collective rights of the nationalities.
- 43 The majority of those convicted at that time were released from prison in 1963 and 1964. However, the central and local Party organs placed erected obstacles to their returning to their former positions

- or perhaps obtaining new jobs. The Hungarian intellectuals asked the Party leadership for a remedy to this.
- 44 Following the local interpretation of the events of 1956, the issue of so-called Hungarian separatism was raised once again, more forcefully. On the pretext of “preventing the separation from the majority nation” of Hungarian students, university graduates, doctors and experts, Hungarian university graduates began to be posted in Romanian-majority areas located far from their native land.
- 45 In the autumn of 1956 the CC secretary, Miron Constantinescu, traveled to Kolozsvár, where on September 29 and 30 he met with the representative Hungarian intellectuals of Kolozsvár. For more details, see Levente Benkő, *Az őszinteség két napja. 1956. szeptember 29–30.* [The Two Days of Sincerity. September 29–30, 1956] (Kolozsvár, 2007). A similar discussion had occurred in October 1956 in Marosvásárhely between the Hungarian intellectuals of the HAR and the local Party leadership; for more details, see *Az 1956-os forradalom és a romániai magyarság*, pp. 143–159. It is characteristic of both meetings that they were prompted by the ramifications of the 1956 Hungarian events in Transylvania. First and foremost the repercussions of destalinization and the reforms in Hungary were evaluated, while at the same time a few questions generally affecting the Transylvanian Hungarians were also debated. At the same time it is to be noted that neither of the meetings attained the complexity of the 1968 meeting.
- 46 Zoltán Csaba Novák, “‘A nyitás éve’, 1968. A romániai magyar értelmiségiek találkozója Nicolae Ceaușescuval” [The ‘Year of Liberalization’, 1968. The Meeting of the Hungarian Intellectuals of Romania with Nicolae Ceaușescu], *Múltunk* 2 (2008): 229–266.
- 47 *Vörös Zászló*, No. 152, 1968; *Scânteia*, No. 7747, 1968.
- 48 Gábor Vincze, *Történeti kényszerpályák-kisebbségi realpolitikák II. Dokumentumok a romániai magyar kisebbség történetének tanulmányozásához 1944–1989* [Historical Fixed Courses – Minority Realpolitik II. Documents for the Study of the History of the Hungarian Minority in Romania, 1944–1989] (Csíkszereda, 2003), pp. 295–299.
- 49 On August 28–29, 1968, the wave of visits culminated on a national level. Gheorghe Apostol visited Brăila, Vrancea and Galați Counties, and Alexandru Bărlădeanu visited Neamț and Bákó Counties. In this same time period Emil Bodnăraș visited Vaslui and Iași Counties,

while Chivu Stoica visited Dolj and Mehedinți Counties: *Scânteia*, No. 7809, 1968.

- 50 This step by the Party leadership, which in any case bore the marks of neo-Stalinism, is interpreted in the specialist literature as the political proceeds of the Romanian maverick policy; for more details, see Retegan, 1968. *Din primăvară până în toamnă*, pp. 54–185.
- 51 Already during the preparations for establishing the county system, Ceaușescu had promised the visits to those concerned, for example the members of the delegation from Csíkszereda negotiating in Bucharest in February 1968. The fact that the Party leadership traveled not just to the two county seats, but also paid a visit to the loser in the battle to become the seat of Harghita County, Székelyudvarhely, was an outstanding symbolic gesture. The latter town was accorded in advance the fervently desired municipal rank as well.
- 52 *Scânteia*, No. 7807, 1968; ANIC, fond CC PCR Cancelarie, dos. 136/1968, f. 39.
- 53 *Ibid.*
- 54 *Scânteia*, No. 7811, 1968.
- 55 *Scânteia*, No. 7812–7813, 1968.
- 56 Stenographic minutes of the RCP CC plenary session, 1968; ANIC, fond CC PCR Cancelarie, dos. 178/1968, ff. 47–56.
- 57 In the years of the royal dictatorship the “Front of National Rebirth” (*Frontul Renașterii Naționale*) had functioned.
- 58 Like the Patriotic People’s Front established by the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party in Hungary, it was a social–mass organization of a coordinating nature. It did not, however, have its own paper. With the harshening of the dictatorship it gradually lost the minimal advisory, opinion-shaping role that it had possessed at the moment of its inception.
- 59 Ceaușescu: “A few objections were voiced regarding the name of the nationality councils, namely, that we call them simply German or Hungarian nationality councils. We think that it is better to stick to the originally proposed expression, the council of workers of Hungarian and German nationality and we will ask Comrade Takács – I believe he proposed it: perhaps he will abandon it.”
Lajos Takács: “I proposed only that we think about this.”
I. Gh. Maurer: “Think about it? We abandon it.” ANIC, fond CC PCR Cancelarie, dos. 178/1968, f. 135.

- 60 Az RKP KB plenáris ülésének gyorsírásos jegyzőkönyve 1968. ANIC, fond CC PCR Cancelarie, dos. 178/1968, ff. 147–156.
- 61 *Ibid.*
- 62 *Ibid.*
- 63 The Hungarian and the German workers' councils were directed both at the central and local levels by the competent Party organs, which expressly determined the identity of persons nominated and elected onto the respective councils.
- 64 *Vörös Zászló*, No. 255, 1968.
- 65 *Vörös Zászló*, No. 273, 1968.
- 66 *Vörös Zászló*, No. 26, 1968. The MNDT council for Maros County was composed as follows: chairman Professor Tibor Maros; board members Géza Fodor on behalf of the county popular council, theater-manager Zsolt Gálfalvi, railway worker Márton Szöllősi, and secretary and activist György Parajdi. A further 42 members belonged to the council's governing board. At the same time the Maros County organization sent 18 members to the MNDT national council.
- 67 This latter argument was raised a number of times during the preliminary debates.
- 68 Deletant, *România sub regimul comunist*, p. 129.

BIOGRAPHIES OF KEY PERSONALITIES

Anghelescu, Constantin (1870–1948)

Romanian politician, doctor and university professor. From January 1914 onwards he was a member of the government on a number of occasions. From December 30, 1933, until January 4, 1934, he was chairman of the Council of Ministers.

Baász, Imre (1941–1991)

Transylvanian artist. He won the Graphic Salon Second Prize for his diploma work (the illustrations to the *Kalevala* prepared for the Kriterion Publishing House). He later worked as a set designer for the Hungarian Theater in Kolozsvár and as an instructor at the Institute of Fine Arts in Bucharest.

Bălan, Ștefan (1913–1991)

Romanian engineer and politician. Between 1956 and 1957 he was deputy minister of education, and then between 1963 and 1969 minister of education. In 1963 and again between 1984 and 1991 he was head of the Technical Division of the Romanian Academy. Between 1979 and 1989 he was an alternate member of the Central Committee.

Balogh, Edgár (1906–1996)

Hungarian publicist and political writer. He was a contributor to several journals, and also filled important political and public roles, and one of the leaders of the Czechoslovak *Sarló* [Sickle] Movement. Between 1944 and 1948 he was vice-chairman of the MNSZ. Starting in 1948 he was an instructor at, and in 1949 rector of, Bolyai University. In 1950, together with a number of leaders of the MNSZ, he was sentenced in a show trial. He was freed from prison in 1955. Between 1957 and 1971 he was deputy editor-in-chief of *Korunk*. From 1959 onwards he taught at the university in Kolozsvár, and was editor-in-chief of the *Romániai Magyar Irodalmi Lexikon* [Romanian Hungarian Literary Lexicon].

Balogh, László (?–?)

Chairman of the group named “National Hungarian Party Opposition,” registered in the courts in Kolozsvár in 1933.

Banc, Iosif (1921–)

Romanian politician. He joined the RCP Maros County organization in 1947. In the years 1950–1953 he was a Central Committee instructor; between 1953 and 1958 he was first secretary of the Várad/Oradea Region, and then between 1961 and 1965 of the Maros-Magyar Autonóm Tartomány/Regiunea Autonomă Maghiară-Mureș (henceforth MMAT). Between 1965 and 1972 he was vice-chairman of the Council of Ministers. In 1973 with the start of the cadre rotation he was appointed as first secretary of Maros/Mureș County. Between 1960 and 1989 he was a member of the Central Committee and, between 1979 and 1989, of the Central Committee Executive Committee.

Bánffy, Dániel (1893–1955)

Hungarian landowner and politician. After 1918 he continued to farm on the family estate and was a member of the board of various timber companies. Following the Second Vienna Award he was appointed as vice-chairman of the EGT, and a member of the group of Transylvanian deputies invited into Parliament, a key figure in the Transylvanian Party. From December 1940 until the German occupation he was Hungary’s minister of agriculture.

Bányai, László (1907–1981)

Hungarian politician and political writer. He completed his university studies in Budapest, Grenoble and Paris. Upon returning home he joined the Communist movement and took part in the founding of MADOSZ. Between 1945 and 1946 he was one of the vice-chairmen of the MNSZ. Between 1950 and 1952 and again between 1956 and 1958 he was an undersecretary in the Ministry of Education. Between 1952 and 1956 he was rector of Bolyai University. Between 1958 and 1967 he was deputy director of the Nicolae Iorga Institute of Historical Sciences in Bucharest.

Bârlădeanu, Alexandru (1911–1997)

Romanian economist and politician. In 1943 he joined the Communist Party. Between 1947 and 1948 he was minister of industry and commerce, and then between 1955 and 1965 and again between 1967 and 1969 vice-chairman of the Council of Ministers. Between 1990 and 1994 he was vice-president of the Romanian Academy. Between 1955 and 1969 he was a member of the RCP Central Committee, and a member of the Central Committee Executive Committee between 1965 and 1969.

Bethlen, György (1888–1968)

Transylvanian aristocrat, politician and agricultural expert, and chairman of the Transylvanian Economic Association (EGE) until 1939. He was a deputy in the Romanian Parliament and chairman of the National Hungarian Party (OMP) between 1926 and 1938. During the royal dictatorship he withdrew from politics. After 1940 he was a parliamentary deputy of the Transylvanian Party.

Betlen, Oszkár (1909–1969)

Hungarian journalist, historian and candidate in the historical sciences. In 1930 he studied at the six-month school of the Young Communist International in Moscow. After his return home, in 1931 he was entrusted with directing agitation and propaganda work and heading the editorial board of *Ifjú Proletár*. He was arrested in April 1931. After serving a nine-month prison sentence he was deported to Pozsony/Bratislava (1932). He soon became a member of the leadership of the Slovak Communist Party as well. He was a delegate at the World Congress of the Communist Youth International (1935); in Slovakia he was head of the Alliance of Hungarian Youth (1936–1937), and then worked in the editorial offices of *Magyar Nap* in Moravská Ostrava (1937–1938). Following the German occupation (March 19, 1939) he participated in helping Communists to flee abroad, ensuring their border crossing between Bohemia-Moravia and Poland. He was betrayed, captured by the Germans (1939), and taken to a concentration camp. He recorded his experiences for

posterity in his book *Élet a halál földjén* [Life in the Land of Death]. After his return home he joined the editorial staff of *Szabad Nép*. From 1946 to 1951 he was a journalist, and between 1951 and 1954 an editor-in-chief. He was an alternate member of the Central Leadership of the MDP (1951–1956). Thereafter he was the managing editor of the Hungarian edition of the Cominform's paper *For Lasting Peace, For People's Democracy* (*Tartós békéért, népi demokráciáért*). From 1957 until his death he worked as a researcher at the MSZMP Central Committee's Institute for Party History. As head of the international section he dealt with researching and analyzing the history of the Communist International.

Bocsánczy, László (?–?)

Financial expert, managing director of numerous Transylvanian banks, a member of the board and managing director of the Alliance of Credit and Economic Cooperatives.

Bodnăraș, Emil (1904–1976)

Romanian politician. As a soldier in 1932 he fled to the Soviet Union, from which he returned in 1944. He took part in organizing the coup of August 23, 1944, in Bucharest. He was minister of defense between 1947 and 1955, and a member of the RCP Central Committee between 1945 and 1948 and of the Politburo of the RWP between 1948 and 1965.

Bodor, Pál (1930–)

Writer and journalist. He began his career as a journalist (*Romániai Magyar Szó, Igazság, Utunk*), and became editor-in-chief of the nationality division of the Literary Publishing House and later the Kriterion Publishing House. Between 1970 and 1979 he was editor-in-chief of the German- and Hungarian-language broadcasts for Bucharest Radio and Television. Until 1982 he was the chief contributor to the journal *Előre*. In 1983 he resettled in Hungary.

Bözödi, György (1913–1989)

Transylvanian village researcher. Author of the significant historical and sociographical work *Székely bánja* [The Sorrow

of Szeklers] (1938). He wrote for Zsigmond Móricz's journal *Kelet Népe*. A founder of the journal *Termés* (1942–1944), he was also curator of the 1848–1849 Historical Shrine Museum. He was a scholarly researcher in Marosvásárhely.

Bránis, László (1928–)

Transylvanian politician. In the first half of the 1960s he was first secretary for the Csík District, and then secretary of the popular council for the MMAT in 1965. Between 1965 and 1969 he was an alternate member of the Central Committee.

Bretter, György (1932–1977)

Philosopher and essayist. He earned a degree in philosophy at Bolyai University in Kolozsvár, later becoming an associate instructor there. From 1959 to 1971 he held seminars at the Ion Andreescu Fine Arts School. He mainly researched the areas of militant existentialism and reform Marxism.

Bukharin, Nikolai Ivanovich (1888–1938)

Bolshevik revolutionary, Soviet politician, Marxist thinker and philosopher. Because of his political activity the Tsarist secret police (Okhrana) hounded him into exile in 1909, but he returned during the Bolshevik Revolution. Later he clashed with Stalin as well. Stalin noticed that the New Economic Policy did not work, and therefore abolished it and introduced collectivization. Being a good economist, Bukharin protested against forced collectivization, as a result of which he lost his position in the Comintern and the Politburo. Stalin later rehabilitated him.

Carol of Hohenzollern (Carol II) (1893–1953)

King of Romania between 1930 and 1940. In 1938 he abolished the constitution and introduced a royal dictatorship. After Ion Antonescu overthrew him via a putsch in 1940, he emigrated.

Ceașescu, Nicolae (1918–1989)

Romanian politician. After completing four years of elementary school he worked as a cobbler's apprentice in Bucharest. In the 1920s he joined the Communist movement and was arrested several times. From 1936 he was a member of the RCP and spent several years in prison. Beginning in 1945 his career

gradually rose upward. In the late 1940s he was general secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, and then within the Central Committee Politburo he was responsible for the Party's leading organs. In 1954 he became a member of the Central Committee Secretariat. Between 1965 and 1969 he was the secretary-general of the Central Committee, and then from 1969 up until his death secretary-general of the RCP. Between 1974 and 1989 he also occupied the post of president of the Romanian Socialist Republic. From 1965 onwards he gradually removed his potential opponents from the more important offices, concentrating ever-greater power in his own hands, which in the 1980s culminated in a very strong, family-based dictatorship. In the course of the revolutionary events of 1989 in Romania his regime was overturned, and on December 25 he was executed, along with his wife Elena Ceaușescu, who actively wielded power with him.

Chicherin, Georgii Vasilievich (1872–1936)

Bolshevik revolutionary and Soviet politician. Between 1918 and 1930 he occupied the post of Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. In 1922 he took part in the Genoa Conference and signed the Treaty of Rapallo on behalf of the Soviets.

Constantinescu, Miron (1917–1974)

Romanian politician and historian. Between 1944 and 1947 editor-in-chief of *Scântea*. From 1948 onwards he was a member of the RCP (RWP) Politburo, between 1945 and 1955 and again between 1969 and 1974 he was a member of the Central Committee, and in 1952–1954 he was a secretary of the Central Committee. Because of his conflict with Gheorghiu-Dej he was expelled from the Party in 1957. He was rehabilitated during Ceaușescu's era. In 1969–1970 he was minister of education, and between 1972 and 1974 he was president of the Grand National Assembly. In 1958 he was the director of the Institute of Party History. Between 1962 and 1965 he was department head in the Nicolae Iorga Institute of Historical Sciences. Between 1970 and 1972 he was rector of the Ștefan Gheorghiu

Party Academy. Between 1972 and 1974 he was vice-chairman of the State Council. In the late 1960s and early 1970s he played an important role in shaping the Party's nationality policy.

Cristescu, Gheorghe (1882–1973)

Romanian Communist politician, a founding member of the Romanian Communist Party. Previously he was chairman of the Socialist-Communist Party. He later turned against his own Party; for this reason between 1950 and 1954 he was sentenced to forced labor, although he was later rehabilitated. Thereafter he tried several more times to publish anti-regime works, but these were all censored and for this same reason the Securitate kept a watch on him until the end of his life.

Csörgő, Lajos (1904–2003)

Dentist, university professor and specialist writer. Between the two world wars he joined the illegal Communist movement. After 1945 he was a leading politician of the MNSZ. Between 1945 and 1948 he was rector of Bolyai University. In 1949 he was arrested along with several leaders of the MNSZ. He was sentenced in 1954, but rehabilitated in 1956. In 1964 he was appointed as rector of the Medical and Pharmacological Institute in Marosvásárhely/Târgu Mureş. From 1985 onwards he lived in Hungary.

Demeter, János (1908–1988)

Lawyer, politician and university professor. In 1932–1933 he was editor of the paper of MADOSZ, *Falvak Népe*, and then from 1941 onwards he participated in the trials of Communists in Northern Transylvania as a defense attorney. After the Second World War he became a member of the Executive Committee of the MNSZ, but was expelled from the RCP for preparing the draft bill of the MNSZ minority law. He was arrested in 1952 and convicted in a show trial in 1954. In 1955 he was freed through a presidential pardon and returned to teach at Bolyai University (after 1959 Babeş-Bolyai University) in Kolozsvár.

Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Alexandru (1879–1938)

Romanian Communist politician. As the child of Jewish parents he received a left-wing upbringing, and therefore early on became acquainted with the works of Marx and Engels. He completed his studies at the University of Munich. After the First World War he was elected president of the Socialist Federation of Prahova. Under the charge of Trotskyism he was later sent to Lubyanka Prison, where he died.

Domokos, Géza (1928–2007)

Writer, editor and politician. He completed his university studies in Kolozsvár, and later continued them in the Soviet Union. He began his career as a journalist and reporter, and between 1957 and 1961 was editor-in-chief of *Ifjúmunkás*. From 1969 to 1990 he was director of the Kriterion Publishing House. Between 1969 and 1984 he was an alternate member of the RCP Central Committee. In December 1989 he was elected into the leadership of the National Salvation Front. He was one of the founding members of the RMDSZ, and between 1990 and 1993 he was chairman of the organization.

Drăghici, Alexandru (1913–1993)

Romanian politician. Originally a locksmith, from 1934 onwards Drăghici was a member of the Communist Party, in which he had an impressive career. After holding posts in the various Bucharest Party organizations for a long time he was the top leader of the Securitate (1953–1957), and then minister of the interior (1957–1965) and vice-chairman of the Council of Ministers (1961–1965, 1967–1968). His political career declined in 1968, when Nicolae Ceaușescu ousted him, along with other politicians close to Dej, from the highest Party leadership.

Drexler, Béla (1877–1937)

Agricultural expert: an official of the Transylvanian bureau of the Ministry of Agriculture. After 1920 he was a member of the boards of the Transylvanian Economic Association (EGE), the Kolozsvár Savings Bank and the Transylvanian Bank. He was also president of the newspaper publishers *Ellenzék*, a board

member of the Hangya Cooperative Center and its chairman from 1928 until his death.

Eisler, Mátyás (1865–1931)

Neolog rabbi in Kolozsvár. During his activity he organized the Neolog congregation in Kolozsvár into a modern congregation and came out in favor of Jewish national ideals.

Farkas, Mózes (1881–1941)

Leather manufacturer and industrialist in Kolozsvár/Cluj. He took part in the political organizing activities of the Hungarian minority and was a significant supporter of Hungarian cultural life.

Fazekas, János (1926–2004)

Transylvanian politician. He was raised in Andrásfalva near Székelykeresztúr. He joined the RCP in 1945. At first he was active in the Union of Communist Youth, and then continued his career in Bucharest. Between 1954 and 1984 he was a member of the RCP Central Committee. He was an alternate and later full member of the Central Committee Executive Committee. In the early 1960s (1961–1965) he was minister of the food industry, and then vice-chairman of the Council of Ministers. Between 1975 and 1980 he was a member of the government's Executive Committee. In addition to his political activity, he was intensively engaged in finding a settlement to the minority question as well. From the mid-1980s onwards he was marginalized.

Ferdinand of Hohenzollern (Ferdinand I) (1865–1927)

King of Romania (1914–1927). He was born in Sigmaringen in 1865, heir of the throne of Romania since 1889 as the nephew of King Carol I of Hohenzollern. After the demise of his uncle, Ferdinand became king of Romania in 1914. During his reign Romania entered WWI on the side of the Antant, then at the end of the war, in 1918, Romania reunited with Bessarabia, Bukowina and Transylvania. The King, faithful to his war-time promises, enshrined the universal male suffrage and a land reform. He was crowned as King of Greater Romania together

with his spouse in the Orthodox cathedral of Gyulafehérvár/Alba-Iulia in 1922. Ferdinand ruled Romania until his demise in 1927.

Fischer, József (1887–1952)

Lawyer and politician in Kolozsvár. The leading figure of the Transylvanian Zionist movement and a parliamentary deputy of the Jewish Party in 1931.

Flueraş, Ion (1882–1953)

Romanian Socialist politician from the Banat. He ran on the National Peasant Party's list in 1928, winning the post of deputy. He was arrested in 1948 and thrown into prison in Szamosújvár for 15 years on a charge of high treason.

Fodor, Sándor (1927–)

Transylvanian writer. He graduated with a degree in Romanian and German in Kolozsvár. He began his career as a teacher, and later was editor for the Literary Publishing House in Kolozsvár/Cluj, and then a regular contributor for the children's publication *Napsugár*.

Gaál, Gábor (1891–1954)

Editor, journalist, philosopher, writer, literary historian, sociologist, literary critic and political writer. He was the successful initiator of Romanian Hungarian literature saturated with Socialist ideals and Marxist culture. His publications appeared mainly in the journal *Korunk*, of which he was in fact the editor.

Gálfalvi, Zsolt (1933–)

Literary critic and editor. He graduated with a degree in Hungarian language and literature from Bolyai University in Kolozsvár. Between 1951 and 1955 he was a columnist for *Utunk*, and then between 1956 and 1969 a contributor, and later deputy editor-in-chief, of *Igaz Szó*. Between 1967 and 1969 he was director of the State Theater in Marosvásárhely/Târgu Mureş. From 1971 to 1975 he was department head in the Ministry of Culture. Between 1975 and 1990 he was a contributor to *A Hétt*.

Gálffy, Mózes (1915–1988)

Romanian Hungarian linguist. From 1956 onwards he was an adjunct, and in the last ten years of his life a professor, in the Department of Linguistics at Bolyai University (later Babeş-Bolyai University). He conducted dialectological field work in the territory of the Hungarian Autonomous Region. He prepared the dialect atlas of the Csík and Gyergyó Regions. His works were published mainly in the periodicals *Korunk*, *Utunk* and *Tanügyi Újság*.

Gáll, Ernő (1917–2000)

Sociologist, philosopher and editor. He studied law and later philosophy at the University of Cluj/Kolozsvár. Between 1949 and 1984 he taught philosophy at Bolyai University, later Babeş-Bolyai University, in Kolozsvár. Between 1952 and 1957 he was the deputy rector of Bolyai University. He was editor-in-chief of *Igazság*, *Utunk* and, for a long time, (1957–1984) of *Korunk*.

Gandhi, Mohandas (1869–1948)

Lawyer and peaceful forger of India's independence. The writer Ferenc Balázs in his book *Bejáróm a kerek világot* [I Wander the Wide World] recounted his personal meeting with Gandhi and the latter's impact on him.

Gere, Mihály (1919–1997)

Transylvanian politician. Originally a stonemason, Gere entered the RCP in 1944. At first he occupied a leading post in the Party organs in Temesvár/Timişoara, and then continued his career in Bucharest. In the early 1960s he was chairman of the popular council of the MMAT. Between 1965 and 1989 he was a member of the Central Committee. He was vice-chairman of the Party's Organizational Department, and later propaganda secretary in the Stalin (Braşov/Brassó) Region. In the early 1960s he was vice-chairman of the Central Committee department responsible for propaganda, and later of the State Council. Between 1979 and 1984 he was chairman of the Council of Workers of Hungarian Nationality (MNNDT).

Gheorghiu-Dej, Gheorghe (1901–1965)

Romanian politician. He joined the illegal Communist movement between the two world wars as a railway worker. Between 1945 and 1948 he was general secretary of the RCP, and then, until 1954, of the RWP, in 1954–1955 its secretary, and between 1955 and 1965 its first secretary. Between 1947 and 1952 he was first deputy prime minister in the Groza government. Between 1952 and 1955 he was prime minister of Romania, and then from 1961 until his death chairman of the State Council.

Gheorghe Maurer, Ion (1902–2000)

Romanian politician. Unlike the majority of illegal Communists, Maurer had advanced training. After attending military school in Craiova he studied law in Bucharest. In the interwar period he worked as a lawyer in several Transylvanian settlements. From 1937 onwards he was a member of the Party, in which he filled several leading functions after 1945. In the period between 1945 and 1974, with a brief interruption, he was a member of the Central Committee of the RCP (RWP). Between 1965 and 1974 he was a member of the Central Committee Standing Presidium as well. In addition to his Party functions for a time he was minister of foreign affairs (1957–1958), chairman of the Grand National Assembly (1958–1961), and later chairman of the Council of Ministers (1961–1974).

Glasner, Mózes (1856–1924)

Orthodox chief rabbi in Kolozsvár. He sympathized with the Zionist movement, and in 1923 settled in Palestine.

Goga, Octavian (1881–1938)

Transylvanian Romanian poet and extreme right-wing politician (pro-Nazi and anti-Semite). Between 1937 and 1938 he occupied the post of prime minister of Romania. From 1920 onwards he was a member of the Romanian Academy.

Groza, Petru (1884–1958)

Romanian lawyer and politician. In 1933 he founded the Ploughmen's Front, which established contact and later entered into an alliance with the illegal Communist Party. From March

1945 until 1952 he was prime minister. From 1952 onwards he was president of the Presidium of the Grand National Assembly. For a long time he was popularly held to be a supporter of Hungarian issues.

Gyárfás, Elemér (1884–1945)

Romanian Hungarian politician and economist. He completed his legal studies in Budapest. From 1919 to 1938 he was a member of the Presidium of the National Hungarian Party in Transylvania. From 1926 onwards he was a member of the Romanian Senate. He wrote works on ecclesiastical law, finance and history. He was the founder and chairman of the Transylvanian Bank Syndicate. He was a board member of the Roman Catholic Status (an autonomous body), as well as of numerous other Transylvanian Hungarian institutions.

Hajdu, Győző (1929–)

Writer, editor and politician. He completed his studies at the Reformed College in Marosvásárhely, and then graduated from Bolyai University with a degree in literature. From 1953 he was editor-in-chief of *Igaz Szó*, launched in Marosvásárhely. He assumed a significant political role as well: he was a member of the Party committee of the Hungarian Autonomous Region (later Maros County), from 1968 onwards he was a (alternative?) member of the Council of Workers of Hungarian Nationality (MNDT), and between 1984 and 1989 he was an alternative member of the Central Committee.

Halász, Sándor (1892–1976)

Transylvanian Hungarian journalist. He obtained university degrees in Budapest and Berlin, where he also obtained his doctorate in law. He was a contributor to the journals *Szamos*, *Cimbora*, *Brassói Lapok* and *Korunk*.

Hegedűs, Nándor (1884–1969)

Politician and political writer. A significant representative of the Jews of Hungarian identity, between 1928 and 1934 he was a parliamentary deputy under the colors of the National Hungarian Party (OMP).

Iliescu, Ion (1930–)

Romanian engineer and politician. He pursued his advanced studies at the Polytechnical Institute in Bucharest and at the Energetics Institute in Moscow. From 1944 onwards he joined the RCP youth movement. He was a Party member from 1953 onwards. Between 1965 and 1969 he was an alternate member of the RCP Central Committee, and then between 1969 and 1984 he was a member of the RCP Central Committee. He filled important posts in the Party's youth and central organs. Between 1962 and 1965 he was head of the RWP Propaganda and Agitation Section, and then first secretary of the Communist Youth Organization's Central Committee until 1971. Between 1971 and 1974 he was first secretary of Temes County and a deputy member of the State Council. Between 1974 and 1979 he was first secretary of Iași County and a member of the State Council. From the mid-1980s he fell from favor, and headed the Technical Publishing House. An outstanding figure of the change of regime in Romania in 1989, he was Romania's elected president for two terms.

Jordáky, Lajos (1913–1974)

Publicist, sociologist and historian. He studied at the Reformed College in Kolozsvár. In 1932 he joined the workers' movement, becoming a member of the Social Democratic Party. After 1945 he filled several important posts: general secretary of the Council of Trade Unions, university professor and literary secretary of the Hungarian Theater in Kolozsvár. In 1952 he was convicted in a show trial and sent to prison, from which he was released in 1955. From 1957 onwards he was a researcher in the Historical Institute of the Kolozsvár Branch of the Romanian Academy.

Juhász, Lajos (?–?)

Factory worker and politician. He took part in the illegal Communist movement. On orders from the RCP he joined the MNSZ, where he enforced the Communist Party's line. In September 1952 the RCP appointed him to head the MNSZ.

Kacsó, Sándor (1901–1984)

Writer, editor and politician. In 1945–1946 he was editor-in-chief of *Falvak Népe*, between 1946 and 1948 a parliamentary deputy, between 1947 and 1952 chairman of the MNSZ, and then director of the Kolozsvár office of the State Literary and Artistic Publishing House.

Kagawa, Toyohiko (1880–1960)

Japanese Christian pacifist, Christian labor activist and cooperative thinker. The writer Ferenc Balázs in his book *Bejáróm a kerek világot* [I Wander the Wide World] recounts his personal meeting with Kagawa and the latter's impact on him.

Kántor, Lajos (1937–)

Editor, writer and literary historian. He graduated from Bolyai University in Kolozsvár with a degree in Hungarian language and literature. From 1959 onwards he was the literary editor of *Korunk*. In 1989–1990 he was chairman of the RMDSZ organization in Kolozs County.

Kányádi, Sándor (1929–)

Poet, translator and editor. He obtained a diploma in Hungarian language and literature in Kolozsvár. He worked as a contributor to several Hungarian-language journals: *Irodalmi Almanach*, *Utunk*, *Dolgozó Nő* and *Napsugár*. He was a member of the Union of Romanian Writers, but left this in 1987.

Kecskeméti, Lipót (1865–1936)

Neolog rabbi in Nagyvárad/Oradea. He regarded the Jews as a religious group and not as an independent nationality; thus he was a proponent of Hungarian assimilation. He carried out significant work in literary and religious studies.

Király, Károly (1930–)

Transylvanian politician. In 1948 for six months he worked on the Szálva Visó railway construction project. In 1949 he was a Communist Youth activist on the Danube–Black Sea Canal. In 1952 he was secretary for the Union of Communist Youth at the hydroelectric plant at Békás, and then first secretary for the Buhuş District. In 1955 he was secretary for the Bákó Region. He

obtained diplomas at various youth and Party schools, and then in 1956–1957 he attended the Kosomol school in Moscow. In 1963 he graduated from the Ștefan Gheorghiu Party Academy. In 1970 he obtained a diploma in economics in Bucharest, and then in 1971 he earned corresponding membership in the Academy of Political and Social Sciences. In 1957–1958 he was a Central Committee instructor in the Suceava, Galați, Nagyvárad, Ilfov and Ploiești Regions. Between 1958 and 1965 he was secretary of the Union of Young Workers of the Hungarian Autonomous Region, and then of the Mureș Hungarian Autonomous Region. Between 1965 and 1968 he was Party secretary for the Gyergyó District. Between 1968 and 1972 he was first secretary of Kovászna County. From 1968 onwards he was vice-chairman of the Council of Workers of Hungarian Nationality (MNĐT), which was formed at that time. Between 1969 and 1974 he was a member of the RCP Central Committee. In 1972 he resigned his post of first secretary, and from 1978 onwards he wrote several letters of protest, criticizing the Party leadership of the time. In December 1989 he was elected onto the leadership of the National Salvation front.

Klein, Miksa (1883–1938)

Lawyer, politician and political writer in Kolozsvár. A proponent of Jewish assimilation in Romania, he supported rapprochement with the Jewish organizations in Bucharest.

Kohn, Hillel (1891–1972)

Politician and lawyer in Kolozsvár/Cluj. From the late 1930s onwards he was an influential figure in the Communist Party of Romania. Following the Second Vienna Award he was regional secretary of the Communist Party of Hungary in Northern Transylvania until the summer of 1941. After the Second World War he was regional chairman of the Romanian Democratic Jewish Committee.

Kolarov, Vasil (1877–1950)

Bulgarian jurist and Communist. In 1895 he was the founder of the local Social Democratic Party organization in Nikopol.

Between 1913 and 1923 he was a deputy, from 1921 on a member of the Communist International Executive Committee, and from 1922 onwards a member of the presidium. Between 1922 and 1924 he was secretary-general of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. In 1923 he organized the BCP foreign bureau in Vienna. Between 1928 and 1929 he headed the Balkan Secretariat of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. Between 1930 and 1939 he was director of the International Agrarian Institute in Moscow. Between 1928 and 1939 he was chairman of the Executive Committee of the Peasant International. Between 1945 and 1946 he was president of the National Assembly, and between 1946 and 1947 provisional president of the republic. From 1949 until his death he was prime minister.

Konrád, Béla (1873–1941)

Doctor, politician and a leader of the Neolog congregation in Nagyvárad/Oradea. An adherent of Hungarian assimilation, he was a member of the National Hungarian Party leadership in Nagyvárad.

Kovács, György (1911–1990)

Writer and publicist. He began his studies in Kolozsvár, but abandoned them due to financial difficulties. He worked for several newspapers in Kolozsvár. In 1937 he took part in the Marosvásárhely Meeting. After 1945 he filled several posts in various organizations of the RCP: a member of the regional and county Party Committees, as well as a member of the RCP Central Committee between 1955 and 1974. Throughout his career he rigidly followed the guidelines set out by the Party.

Kőrösi Krizsán, Sándor (1896–1970)

Also known as Alexandru Crișan, later Sándor Gedeon. Hungarian journalist, editor and political writer. He was central agitprop secretary in the Romanian Communist Party during Elek Köblös's term as general secretary.

Kristóffy, József (1857–1928)

Liberal Party politician: minister of the interior in the Fejérváry government. He came into conflict with his own Party, from which he withdrew. He later tried, but failed, to enter into an alliance with the Social Democratic Party.

Kun, Béla (1886–1938)

Hungarian journalist and Communist politician: people's commissar of foreign affairs and military affairs. In 1920 he emigrated to Moscow. In 1918 he founded the Communist Party of Hungary (*Kommunisták Magyarországi Pártja*). He supported the Austrian and Italian Communist Parties. Linked to Béla Kun's 133-day reign is the Red Terror (in which 590 people were executed, of whom 200 were educators).

Kurkó, Gyárfás (1909–1983)

Locksmith and politician. He began his political career in MADOSZ, from 1934 onwards he was chairman of MADOSZ, and then of the MNSZ (1944–1947). For maintaining a Hungarian system of institutions independent from the state he came into conflict with the RCP: for this reason he was stripped of his post as chairman in 1947, and then, following his arrest in the autumn of 1949, he was convicted along with Áron Márton, Roman Catholic Bishop of Gyulaféhevár, as "Hungarian irredenta" in 1951. He was freed in the general amnesty of 1964.

Lakatos, István (1904–1993)

Romanian Hungarian political writer, member, secretary and later chairman of the Social Democratic Party. He was editor of the SDP weekly alongside Géza Hoffer. His passionate political writings dealt with land distribution, the purges, the need for a Hungarian university, and criticism of the MNSZ and the cooperatives.

Lapedatu, Alexandru (1876–1950)

Romanian historian, politician, academic and economist. An expert on the peace conferences concluding the First World War. Founder and co-director of the Historical Institute in Kolozsvár. He was later a senator, minister and president of the Senate. He ended his days in prison in Máramarossziget.

Lenin, Vladimir Ilich (1870–1924)

Russian revolutionary, chairman of the Bolshevik Party, first head of state of the Soviet Union (*de facto* supplanter of Tsar Nicholas II (Romanov) after his execution in July 1918 as head of what had once been the Russian Empire), and founder of the ideology known as Leninism. Returning from exile to Petrograd (Saint Petersburg), he moved to the forefront of the revolution following the publication of the April Theses. After the failure of the first workers' uprisings he fled to Finland, and then in October 1917 he once again returned. At this time he launched a campaign against the Provisional Government, the motto of which was "All power to the soviets!" He formulated his governing principles in his work *State and Revolution*.

Ligeti, Ernő (1891–1945)

Writer and journalist in Kolozsvár/Cluj. One of the most important public figures and shapers of opinion among Jews of Hungarian identity.

List, Friedrich (1789–1846)

German economist, elaborated the theory of economic nationalism and protective tariffs.

Luka, László (Vasile Luca) (1898–1963)

Communist politician. After 1920 he attained a leading post in the illegal Communist movement, and was convicted on several occasions. In 1940, following the incorporation of Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia, he was released from the prison in Cernăuți, and later worked in Moscow. From September 1944 onwards he was general secretary of the National Democratic Front, and the Hungarian affairs expert within the RCP. Between 1947 and 1952 he was minister of finance, between 1945 and 1952 he was a member of the RCP Central Committee, and later he was a member of the Politburo of the RWP Central Committee. In 1952 Gheorghiu-Dej had him arrested on trumped-up charges; in a show trial in 1954 he was sentenced to life in prison. He died in prison in Nagyenyed/Aiud in 1963.

Madgearu, Virgil (1887–1940)

Romanian economist, sociologist and politician: economic minister in the governments of the National Peasant Party. He was the theoretician of the agrarian trend and populist ideology (“*țărănism*”) and the decisive personality of the Eastern European agrarian states and the Green International. In 1940 he was murdered by the Romanian right-wing extremist Iron Guard.

Makkai, Sándor (1890–1951)

Reformed (Calvinist) bishop, theologian and writer. In 1912 he obtained a doctorate in philosophy. Between 1912 and 1915 he was a teacher of religion in Kolozsvár, and from 1918 a professor of theology in Kolozsvár. In 1926 he was elected as bishop of the Transylvanian Reformed Church. In 1936 he resigned his office as bishop, moved to Hungary and became a university professor in Debrecen. He was author of the influential works on minority policy *Magunk revíziója* [The Revision of Ourselves] (1931) and *Nem lehet* [It is Not Possible] (1937).

Marton, Ernő (1896–1960)

Lawyer, politician and Zionist leader in Kolozsvár: the leading figure and ideologist of the Transylvanian Zionist movement. He was a parliamentary deputy of the Jewish Party between 1931 and 1933.

Mârzescu, Gheorghe (1876–1926)

Romanian politician and lawyer. Mayor of Iași between 1914 and 1916. He occupied ministerial seats several times under the Liberal governments between the two world wars.

May, Henry (1866–1939)

Secretary-general of the International Cooperative Alliance (1913–1939). In 1935 he visited cooperative centers in Romania.

Méliusz, József (1909–1995)

Poet, writer, translator and publicist. Studied in Budapest, Zurich and Kolozsvár. He was a member of the Communist Party during the years of illegality. In 1949 he was imprisoned,

from which he was released in 1955. Between 1968 and 1972 he was vice-president of the Union of Romanian Writers.

Mogyorós, Sándor (Alexandru Moghioroş) (1911–1969)

Transylvanian politician. Between 1945 and 1968 he was a member of the RCP Central Committee, and between 1948 and 1965 a member of the RCP Politburo. After completing four years of elementary school and three years of trade school, in 1929 he joined the RCP. In 1936 he was one of the defendants in the trial against Ana Pauker in Craiova. He was sentenced to nine years and 11 months' imprisonment. After 1945 he was the RCP central delegate in several Transylvanian regions. He played a significant role in developing the RCP organizations in the Székelyföld. Between 1948 and 1954 he was a member of the Presidium of the Grand National Assembly. Between 1953 and 1955 he was the first vice-chairman of the Council of Ministers. With membership in the Central Committee and Politburo, after László Luka was set aside in 1952, in the second half of the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s in practice he was the number one politician responsible for so-called "Hungarian affairs." This role was inherited – after Ceauşescu's ascent to power – by János Fazekas.

Nagy, István (1904–1977)

Writer and publicist. Born into a poor working-class family, he early on joined the workers' movement. After 1944 he assumed a role in political life. He was a deputy in the Grand National Assembly as well. Between 1948 and 1952 he was a professor and rector of Bolyai University. In 1952, during the Party purges his Party membership was suspended. In 1954 he was rehabilitated.

Nicolae-Mizil, Paul (1923–2008)

Romanian politician. A certified teacher, Mizil joined the Party in 1945. Between 1955 and 1989 he was a member of the Central Committee and occupied several important state posts. In the early 1950s he taught at the Ştefan Gheorghiu Party Academy. Between 1956 and 1968 he was head of the RCP Central

Committee Propaganda and Agitation Section. Between 1972 and 1981 he was deputy prime minister and from 1978 onwards minister of finance. Between 1981 and 1989 he was chairman of the Central Federation of Consumer Cooperatives.

Oberding, József György (1902–?)

Economist and university professor. He was an organizer of rural farmers' associations for the Transylvanian Economic Association (*Erdélyi Gazdasági Egylet*), a cooperative official and an editor of the *Szövetkezeti Értesítő*. He was also one of the founding members of the Transylvanian Hungarian Mortgage Bank (*Erdélyi Magyar Földhitelintézet*), and later secretary of the Alliance of Economic and Credit Cooperatives. In 1944 he was an honorary lecturer on cooperative policy in the Faculty of Economic Sciences at Ferenc József University. He was the author of numerous books on economic history and minority economic policy.

Pană, Gheorghe (1927–)

Romanian politician. He joined the Party in 1947. In the second half of the 1940s and first half of the 1950s he was an instructor of the RCP Central Committee. Between 1964 and 1968 he was deputy head of the Propaganda and Agitation Section. Between 1966 and 1968 he was first secretary of the Brassó/Braşov Region. Between 1969 and 1986 he was a member of the State Council. Between 1977 and 1979 he was minister of labor, and in 1980 mayor of Bucharest. In 1985–1986 he was minister of food administration. Between 1969 and 1989 he was a member of the RCP Central Committee, between 1969 and 1974 a member of the Central Committee Executive Committee, and then between 1974 and 1989 a member of the RCP Politburo.

Pârvulescu, Constantin (1895–1992)

One of the founding figures of the Romanian Communist Party and an active opponent of Nicolae Ceauşescu's policies. In 1961 he was banished from the Party on the charge of ideological deviationism, and then readmitted in 1972. He publicly accused Ceauşescu of putting his own interests ahead of those of the state.

Pataki, Imre (1932–)

Economist and politician. He completed his elementary school studies in his native village, and then continued studying at the Catholic Gymnasium in Csíkszereda. As an economist he played an active role in elaborating the local aspects of the 1968 administrative reform. He was a member of the delegation from Csíkszereda that met personally with Nicolae Ceaușescu in February 1968. After 1968 he performed organizing and managing work at the head of several economic enterprises. He was planning director for Harghita County, and later vice-chairman of the county popular council. In 1989 he was elected chairman of the National Salvation Front's organization in Harghita County.

Patilineț, Vasile (1923–1986)

Romanian politician. He joined the Communist Party in 1940, where at first he worked within the Union of Communist Youth. In 1945 he occupied a leading post in the Fehér County Party organization, later becoming first secretary of the Party committee in the Arad Region. Between 1950 and 1980 he was a member of the RCKP Central Committee. At the height of his career, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, he was also minister of construction, and later of mining and petroleum. He ended his political career as Romania's ambassador to Turkey.

Pauker, Ana (Hanna Rabinsohn)(1893–1960)

Romanian politician. Between the two world wars she joined the illegal Communist movement. In 1922 she was arrested. She was commissioned by the Comintern to work in Switzerland and later France. In 1935 she was once again arrested in Romania, and then in 1941 she was handed over to the Soviet Union. In 1944 she returned to Romania, and became secretary of the RCP, and then between 1947 and 1952 was minister of foreign affairs. In 1952 she was dropped from the Party leadership.

Pauker, Marcel (1896–1938)

Romanian intellectual and Communist leader and husband of Ana Pauker. He had close ties to the press. He waged a

political fight with Vitali Holostenko regarding the Ukrainian Communist doctrine. He also stated his opinion publicly at the Fourth Congress and for this reason was banished from the Party and sent to Magnitogorsk (Siberia).

Péterfi, István (1906–1978)

University professor and public figure. He obtained a diploma at the Faculty of Natural Sciences at the University of Kolozsvár/Cluj. In 1959 he joined the Party. In 1968 he was appointed as chairman of the Council of Workers of Hungarian Nationality (MNDT) and vice-chairman of the Front of Socialist Unity. He was a deputy in the Grand National Assembly (1965–1978), an alternate member of the RCP Central Committee (1969–1972), and then a member of the Central Committee (1972–1978).

Petrovay, Tibor (1902–1964)

Economist and specialist writer. He graduated from the Roman Catholic Gymnasium in Székelyudvarhely (1920), and then obtained a diploma at the Commercial Academy in Kolozsvár/Cluj. In 1942 he was made a doctor at Ferenc József University. From 1923 onwards he was an official of the Alliance of Economic and Credit Cooperatives in Kolozsvár, and between 1933 and 1939 was managing editor of *Szövetkezeti Értesítő*. His writings on economics and the cooperatives were published in *Erdélyi Iskola*, *Erdélyi Tudósító*, *Erdélyi Múzeum* and *Hitel*. In his study “Kisebbségi magyar gazdaságpolitika” [Minority Hungarian Economic Policy] (*Hitel* [1936] 4) he outlined the development of Romanian Hungarian economic policy.

Petrulescu, S. (1900–1937; Vitali Holostenko)

Romanian-Ukrainian Communist politician. Author of the article presenting the results of the Fourth Congress (Kharkov, 1928). Secretary-general of the Communist Party of Romania between 1927 and 1931. He fell victim to the purges ordered by Stalin.

Piatakov, Georgii Leonidovich (1890–1937)

Bolshevik revolutionary and Communist statesman. During his lifetime he was an anarchist, and later worked with terrorists

as well. Together with Zinoviev and Bukharin he was also a contributor to the paper *Komunist*. The paper was banned and Piatakov fled to Sweden. In 1917 he returned home and joined the revolutionaries.

Plesiță, Nicolae (1929–2009)

General in the Ministry of the Interior. Born in Curtea de Argeș, he was an unskilled worker by occupation. He began his career in the youth Party organizations in Argeș County. From there he entered the ranks of the Ministry of the Interior. In 1960 he was deputy director of the Pitești Regional Directorate. Between 1962 and 1967 he was head of the Securitate's Kolozs/Cluj Regional Directorate. Later he became head of the First Directorate, which at the same time was equal to a deputy position in the Ministry of the Interior as well. At the end of his career he worked at the Center for Foreign Affairs Information. He was pensioned in 1990.

Popescu, Dumitru (1928–)

Romanian politician. Between 1965 and 1968 he was editor-in-chief of *Scântea*, and then between 1968 and 1971 a Central Committee secretary. Between 1971 and 1976 he was the chairman of the Council for Socialist Education and Culture. He was a member of the leadership of the Front of Socialist Unity, and until 1977 he led the committee responsible for the press and printed matter. Between 1981 and 1989 he was rector of the Ștefan Gheorghiu Party Academy.

Rakovsky, Christian Georgievich (1873–?)

One of the founding members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He was chairman of the government of Soviet Ukraine, and later Soviet ambassador to London and Paris. He filled an important role in the history of revolutionary Communism and revolutionary plutocracy. During the Stalinist purges he too was brought to trial, but managed to avoid a death sentence.

Răutu, Leonte (1910–1993)

Romanian politician. He studied mathematics, and joined the Party in 1931. For his illegal activity he spent several years in the infamous Doftana and Jilava prisons. After 1945 he was editor of *Scântea*. Between 1948 and 1981 he occupied several high Party posts: he was an alternate member of the Central Committee and the Politburo, and a member of the Central Committee Executive Committee. Between 1948 and 1956 it was he who headed the Department of Propaganda and Agitation and later the RWP Directorate for Propaganda and Culture. From 1965 onwards he was a Central Committee secretary. At the same time he was also responsible for the Ministry of Foreign Trade on behalf of the RCP Central Committee. From 1972 to 1981 he was rector of the Ștefan Gheorghiu Party Academy.

Roman, Valter (1913–1983)

Engineer and politician. He was a member of the Party from 1931 onwards, and his illegal activity between the two world wars was decisive in the life of the RCP. As a member of the French Communist Party he took part in the Spanish Civil War as well. After 1945 he occupied various Party and state positions. Also considered one of the Party's influential ideologues, between 1965 and 1983 he was a member of the Central Committee. In the 1940s he directed the Propaganda Department, and then was a member of the editorial board of *Scântea*. He was minister of telecommunications and director of the Political Publishing House as well.

Rozvány, Jenő (1873–1938; Eugen Rozvan)

Politician, translator and political writer. He translated *The Communist Manifesto* and *Das Kapital* into Hungarian. From 1925 onwards he was the organizer of the Workers and Peasants' Bloc in the Bihar/Bihor Region. He would become a victim of the Stalinist purges.

Rykov, Aleksei Ivanovich (1881–1938)

Russian Bolshevik statesman and agricultural expert. He openly opposed Lenin's theses, but nevertheless would become

People's Commissar of Internal Affairs. He was one of the ideological founders of War Communism. He was sentenced to death in the Trial of the Twenty-One and shot.

Sencovici, Alexandru (1902–1995)

Illegal Communist, and from 1924 onwards Party member. After the Communist takeover of power he was deputy minister of labor, minister of light industry and later minister of consumer industrial goods.

Stalin, Iosif Vissarionovich (1878–1953)

Soviet revolutionary, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (All-Union Communist Party) and dictator of the Soviet Union. In 1943 he had himself named Supreme Marshal of the Soviet Union. Because of the purges that he carried out and his personality cult he was condemned even by his successors within the Party.

Stoica, Chivu (1908–1975)

Romanian politician. He joined the illegal Communist movement in the interwar period. In 1948–1949 he was minister of industry, and then between 1951 and 1955 minister of metallurgy. Between 1950 and 1954 he was vice-chairman of the Council of Ministers, and then its chairman between 1955 and 1961. Between 1969 and 1970 he was a member of the Defense Council of the Socialist Republic of Romania. Between 1945 and 1975 he was a member of the RCP Central Committee, between 1961 and 1969 a member of the Central Committee Secretariat, and between 1965 and 1969 he was chairman of the Central Committee Standing Council.

Stoica, Gheorghe (1900–1976)

Romanian politician. He also held several leading posts in various Party organs. He was first secretary of the Party organization in Bucharest, ambassador to Germany, head of the Administrative Division, and later head of the department/section responsible for the local autonomies and state administration.

Stöffel, Emerich (1913–)

Politician and journalist. He began his Party activity already in the years of illegality. In the 1950s he worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1956 he was sent to Nagyvárad/Oradea in order to observe the impact of the Revolution among the Hungarians living along the border. Between 1965 and 1974 he was a member of the RCP Central Committee, and then between 1974 and 1979 a member of the Central Auditing (Revision) Committee.

Sütő, András (1927–2006)

Writer and journalist. He began his writing and public career at a young age. He worked for several papers as a contributor or editor-in-chief: *Falvak Dolgozó Népe*, *Új Élet* and *Igaz Szó*. In addition to his work as a writer he also held political offices. He was a deputy in the Grand National Assembly, and a member of the regional and county Party Committees as well as an alternate member of the RCP Central Committee. On account of his public role, until the late 1970s he served as an important liaison between the Hungarian community of the Székelyföld and the Party's central organs. He was a member of numerous committees connected to the nationality question and was an active participant in important discussions on this issue.

Szabó, Gyula (1930–2005)

Transylvanian Hungarian writer. He completed his studies with a degree in Hungarian in Kolozsvár. From 1957 onwards he was editor of the prose column in the weekly *Utunk*.

Szász, János (1927–2007)

Writer, poet and journalist. He studied at the Humanities Faculty of Bolyai University in Kolozsvár. Between 1948 and 1957 he was the deputy editor-in-chief of *Utunk*, while between 1957 and 1968 he was columnist and reporter for *Előre*. His role in Transylvanian Hungarian cultural life further increased when he was elected as secretary of the Union of Romanian Writers in 1968.

Szilágyi, Dezső (1928–)

Transylvanian journalist. Between 1948 and 1956 he was editor-in-chief of *Dolgozó Nép*, and then between 1957 and 1989 of *Előre*.

Tagore, Rabindranath (1861–1961)

Poet, community organizer and pacifist. The writer Ferenc Balázs in his book *Bejárom a kerek világot* [I Wander the Wide World] recounts his personal meeting with Tagore and the latter's impact on him.

Takács, Lajos (1908–1982)

Lawyer, politician and professor. He joined the Party in 1945. Between 1944 and 1946 he was a member of the Central Executive of the MNSZ. From 1947 onwards he was a member of the Political Secretariat and from December 1948 onwards of the Politburo. He taught at the University of Bucharest and at Bolyai University, of which he was also the rector between 1956 and 1959. Between 1961 and 1975 he was a member of the State Council. He also filled several important state posts connected with the minority question: deputy undersecretary, and a member of the bureau of the Council of Workers of Hungarian Nationality (1968–1982). Between 1966 and 1977 he was an alternate member of the RCP Central Committee.

Tănase, Gheorghe (1928–)

Romanian politician. After his vocational school studies he studied in various Party courses and Party schools. He entered the Party in 1947. He filled posts in various factory Party organizations, and then from 1953 onwards he continued his career in Bucharest. Between 1957 and 1965 he was a regional instructor for the Central Committee, and later its top leader. His career rose spectacularly after Ceaușescu's assumption of power (1965): between 1968 and 1982 he was first secretary of Vaslui County, and then filled this same post in Ialomița and Bákó Counties.

Teitelbaum, Joel (1887–1979)

Orthodox rabbi in Szatmárnémeti and New York. Talmudic scholar, member of the Hasidic Teitelbaum dynasty and a fierce opponent of Zionism.

Teleki, Béla, Count (1899 – 1969)

Jurist, landowner and parliamentary deputy, and after the Second Vienna Award the most prominent personality in Northern Transylvanian Hungarian political life. He was chairman of the Transylvanian Party and the EMGE in Northern Transylvania. In addition, he was a member of the major Transylvanian economic organs as well, such as the Transylvanian Economic Council (Erdélyi Gazdasági Tanács), the OFI in Kolozsvár, and the “Alliance” Center of Economic and Credit Cooperatives. In the autumn of 1944 he was a supporter of the attempt led by Miklós Horthy to withdraw from the war. As a member of the coalition-based Transylvanian Hungarian Council he prevented atrocities against the Romanians. In 1944 he was captured by the entering Romanians. After his release he immigrated to the United States.

Teleki, Pál, Count (1879–1941)

Politician, geographer, university professor and member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He was a member of the Hungarian peace delegation at the Paris Peace Conference. He served as minister of foreign affairs and of public education, as well as prime minister of Hungary in 1920–1921 and again between 1939 and 1941. Following the Second Vienna Award, he assumed the lion’s share of elaborating, launching and directing the principles of the Northern Transylvanian reintegration process. He belonged to the anti-Soviet and anti-German camp in foreign policy. In 1941 he concluded a treaty of eternal friendship with Yugoslavia. Hitler forced him to repudiate this, because of which he chose to commit suicide.

Tóth, Sándor (1919–2011)

Professor of philosophy. During the 1950s he took part in the relaunch of the journal *Korunk*, and would later become a

member of the editorial board. Alongside Zádor Tordai he was co-author of the samizdat *Jelentés Erdélyből* [Report from Transylvania] (Paris, 1977, 1987). He was author of the book *Quo vadis Románia?* After completing a degree in philosophy at Bolyai University he taught the history of philosophy there until his retirement in 1985, and was a candidate in philosophical sciences. In the 1950s he took part in relaunching the journal *Korunk*, and in 1957 he became a member of the editorial staff of the journal's new run as well, where he dealt mainly with conceptual and strategic questions. Between 1963 and 1980 he was a correspondent for the journal. In 1988 he resettled in Hungary, and from 1989 onwards he was honorary university professor of the Sociological Institute at the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. Among other things, he was interested in the questions of minority intellectual and political life between the two world wars, in addition in several of his philosophical studies he turned against earlier dogmatic Marxist interpretations. During his residence in Hungary he dealt mainly with the past of the failed regime, nationalism and rethinking the concept of nation.

Trofin, Virgil (1926–1984)

Romanian politician. He joined the Party in 1945. Between 1965 and 1971 he was secretary of the Central Committee of the Union of Communist Youth, while between 1969 and 1974 he was a member of the Defense Council of the Socialist Republic of Romania as well. Between 1972 and 1974 he was vice-chairman of the Council of Ministers and minister of internal trade. Between 1974 and 1977 he was first secretary of Brassó/Braşov County, and then in 1977–1978 minister of forest economy. Between 1965 and 1971 he was a secretary of the Central Committee, between 1969 and 1974 a member of the Central Committee Executive Committee, and then between 1974 and 1984 a member of the Central Committee Political Executive Committee (CPEX).

Ürmössi, József (1879–1953)

Unitarian minister, cooperative organizer in the villages of the Homoród Valley. He was a member of the board and vice-chairman of the Hangya Cooperative Center, and a Unitarian episcopal secretary.

Venczel, József (1913–1972)

Sociologist, university professor and writer, an outstanding figure of interwar Transylvanian Hungarian sociology. He carried out his work mainly in the areas of rural sociology, demography and sociological research methodology.

Vereş, Nicolae (1924–1988)

Transylvanian politician. He joined the RCP in 1946. He occupied various posts in rural organizations (Brassó/Braşov, Dicsőszentmárton). Between 1965 and 1968 he was first secretary of the Mureş Hungarian Autonomous Region, and of the Party committee of Maros County between 1968 and 1973 and between 1978 and 1984. He was ambassador to Libya and Hungary. He was a member of the RCP Central Committee between 1965 and 1984.

Vita, Sándor (1904–1993)

Transylvanian Hungarian publicist and sociologist. He was an official in the Transylvanian Economic Association (*Erdélyi Gazdasági Egyesület*), the EMGE and the cooperative network, the editor of *Szövetkezeti Értesítő* and a contributor to *Hitel*. After 1940 he was a parliamentary deputy of the Transylvanian Party. With Béla Teleki and Imre Mikó he was arrested by the NKVD. He was the author of numerous studies on cooperative and minority economic policy.

Vlad, Constantin (1926–)

Romanian politician. He joined the Party in 1947. Between 1958 and 1962 he was deputy chair and later chair of the Department of Philosophy at the Ştefan Gheorghiu Party Academy. Between 1966 and 1971 he was the deputy head of the Central Committee Propaganda and Agitation Section.

Voicu, Ștefan (1906–1992)

Romanian journalist and politician. Having completed the commercial college and later the Ștefan Gheorghiu Party Academy, from 1923 onwards he was a member of the RCP. He was an activist in the Union of Communist Youth in Bucharest, and was arrested several times between the two world wars. In 1933 he was first secretary of the RCP regional organization in Moldova. He was a member of the Central Committee between 1960 and 1984. In 1946 he was editor-in-chief of the Party's national daily newspaper, *Scânteia*, and then of the paper *Era socialistă*. He was also vice-president of the Academy of Political and Social Sciences.

Weinberger, Mózes (Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger) (1908–2010)

Neolog rabbi in Kolozsvár and New York.

Wolff, Karl (1849–1929)

Journalist, businessman and politician. After returning home after studying law and chemistry in Kolozsvár, Vienna and Budapest and working for a period as a journalist in Vienna, he was a parliamentary deputy in the Hungarian Parliament in the 1870s, later becoming founder and editor of the leading Saxon public daily, the *Siebenbürger Deutsches Tageblatt* in Nagyszeben/Oradea. In 1883 he was elected to the board of the *Hermannstädter Allgemeine Sparkasse*, and then from 1885 to 1919 he was its manager. In his capacity as a journalist and bank director he attempted to attract German capital to industrialize Transylvania, and he also excelled in urban development, as well as in the elaboration and implementation of urbanization programs. His work embraced the areas of urbanization, tourism and foreign trade (hydroelectric works, electrical current, trams, railway construction, swimming pools, health resorts, river regulation, and foreign trade routes to be developed towards the Balkans), as well as credit and economic organizations. He was a bank director (1885–1919), chairman of the Saxon Raiffeisen Cooperative Center, and curator of the Lutheran Church, as well as chairman of the Saxon People's Party.

THE AUTHORS

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After graduating in history from the Department of Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Eastern European History at the University of Szeged, in 1987, he lectured at his old university in 1990–1996 on the minority question and the interwar history of Middle Europe. He was on the staff of the László Teleki Foundation's Central European Institute from 1997 to 2006. Since 2007 he has continued his work at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Ethnic and Minority Studies. He edits the journals *Regio* and *Múltunk*, and the book series *Sources for the History of the Romanian Hungarian Minority*. He is academic head of the *adatbank.ro* Internet portal. His main research fields are as follows: comparative minority studies; compilation of databases on the minorities of Central Europe; analysis of policy toward Hungarians and minorities; changes in the image and constructions of their own societies held by minority elites, notably the Hungarian minority of Romania between the two world wars.

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She obtained a diploma in history at Babeş-Bolyai University in Kolozsvár in 2012. She is presently a master's student there and a recipient of the university's merit scholarship. Her areas of research include twentieth-century Romanian Hungarian historiography, Western historiography (the *Annales* School, positivism), and the mutual effects of the Romanian sociological schools. She was a prize-winner at the Transylvanian Students' Scientific Conference in 2011 and 2012. The results of her research have appeared in the journal *Magyar Kisebbség* and *Korunk*.

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He was educated at the University of Bologna, where he obtained a PhD in modern European history with his thesis on Stalinist nationality policy in Romania. Since 2005 he has been a contracted lecturer at the same university, and since then has also become a research fellow at the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He has published three monographs: *Transilvania rossa. Il comunismo romeno e la questione nazionale, 1944–1965* [Red Transylvania. Romanian Communism and the National Question, 1944–1965] (Rome: Carocci Editore, 2007); *Sztálin a székelyeknél. A Magyar Autonóm Tartomány története, 1952–1960* [When Comrade Stalin came to the Szeklers. A history of the Hungarian Autonomous Region] (Csíkszereda: Pro-Print Kiadó, 2008); *Un altro Novecento. L'Europa orientale dal 1919 ad oggi* [Another Century. A History of Eastern Europe since 1919] (Rome: Carocci, 2011). He has also co-edited two volumes, and several of his articles and reviews have appeared in Italian, Hungarian and international scholarly publications (*Communisme, Cambridge Historical Journal*, and *East European Politics and Societies*).

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He obtained a teaching degree in Hungarian and French at Babeş-Bolyai University in Kolozsvár in 1978, and later worked as a teacher, journalist and sociologist. In 2001 he earned a doctorate on an ethnological subject (the Millenarian Movement in the Székelyföld in 1949). Since 2002 he has been a docent at the Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania. His book *Fejezetek Románia 20. századi társadalomtörténetéhez* [Chapters on the Social History of Romania in the Twentieth Century] appeared in 2009 and another, *Amire vágyunk, amitől félünk, amit remélünk (vallás-antropológiai tanulmányok)* [What We Desire, What We Fear, What We Hope For (Studies in Religious Anthropology)], in 2010.

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He is a historian and researcher. He completed his studies in history at Babeş-Bolyai University in Kolozsvár between 1998 and 2002. In 2003 he obtained a master's degree in Jewish Studies at this same institution. He defended his doctoral dissertation, entitled *A kolozsvári zsidóság a két világháború között* (The Jews of Kolozsvár between the Two World Wars), in 2011. Since 2007 he has been a researcher at the Romanian National Minority Research Institute in Kolozsvár. His specializations are the history of the Transylvanian Jews in the twentieth century and the Zionist movement in Transylvania. His major publications have appeared in his own books, as well as in Romanian, Hungarian and American periodicals and volumes of studies.

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He completed his BA studies in history in the Faculty of History and Philosophy at Babeş-Bolyai University between 1995 and 1999, then obtaining an MA from the Master's Program in Contemporary History and International Relations. He works as an instructor in the Department of Contemporary History and International Relations at Babeş-Bolyai University (research assistant, 1999–2001, associate instructor, 2001–2006, and assistant professor, 2006 to the present). He defended his doctoral dissertation, entitled *A Magyar Népi Szövetség a romániai kommunista rendszer kiépítésének időszakában (1944–1948)* [The Hungarian Popular Union in the Period of the Communist Regime's Installation in Romania], in December 2005. He is the

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He completed his secondary school studies at the Elek Benedek Teacher Training School in Székelyudvarhely. In 2002 he obtained a diploma in history, and then in 2002–2003 took part in master’s training at Babeş-Bolyai University in Kolozsvár/Cluj. In 2011 he obtained a doctorate at the Nicolae Iorga Institute of Historical Sciences of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest. Currently he works at the Gheorghe Şincai Sociological Research Institute of the Romanian Academy in Marosvásárhely. His fields of research include the following: nationality policy in Romania in the second half of the twentieth century; Romanian-Hungarian relations; the history of Eastern Europe; the change of regime in 1989. His works that have appeared thus far include the following: *Aranykorszak? A Ceauşescu-rendszer magyarságpolitikája 1965–1974* [A Golden Age? The Hungarian Policy of the Ceauşescu Regime, 1965–1974] (Csíkszereda: Pro-Print Könyvkiadó, 2010; with Denisa Bodeanu, *Az elnémult harang. Egy megfigyelés története. Pálfi Géza élete a Securitate irataiban* [The Silenced Bell. The Story of an Observation. The Life of Géza Pálfi in the Files of the Securitate] (Csíkszereda: Pro Print Könyvkiadó,

2011), also in Romanian: *Clopotul amușit. Pálfi Géza-o viață supraveheată de Securitate* (Miercurea-Ciuc: Editura Pro-Print-CNSAS, 2011).

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He is a sociologist. Originally a geological technician by training, he is a founding member of KAM: The Center for Regional and Anthropological Research in Csíkszereda/Miercurea-Ciuc. He has worked on the following major topics of research: an examination of the local impact of guest workers from the Székelyföld who have gone to Hungary; religious and ethnic identity between the two world wars in a village along the Homoród; changes in lifestyles in the Székelyföld in the era of socialism (research using oral history methods); Roma-Hungarian relations in the village environment of the Székelyföld; socio-economic changes in rural regions after 1989; processes of impoverishment in the Székelyföld; regime and society in the 1950s along the Homoród Rivers (social and political changes of the era of collectivization, 1949–1962); the modernization attempts of the Hungarian state in the Székelyföld between 1940 and 1944. His own works include the following: *Csendes csatatér. Kollektivizálás és túlélési stratégiák a két Homoród mentén, 1949–1962* [Quiet Battlefield. Collectivization and Survival Strategies along the Two Homoród Rivers, 1949–1962] (Csíkszereda: Pro-Print, 2001); *Falusi láttelepek* (1991–2003) [Village Diagnoses, 1991–2003] (Csíkszereda: Pro-Print, 2004); *Kivizsgálás. Írások az állam és a társadalom viszonyáról a Székelyföldön, 1940–1989* [Examination. Writings on the Relationship of State and Society in the Székelyföld, 1940–1989] (Csíkszereda: Pro-Print, 2008).

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He is a minister by calling. Since the 2011–2012 academic year he has been a doctoral student at Babeş-Bolyai University. He completed his studies at the Unitarian Minister Training Faculty of the Protestant Theological Institute (2000–2005), as well as at the Faculty of History and Philosophy at Babeş-Bolyai University (1998–2002). His publications include the following: “Vissza- és elrománosítási kísérletek a székelyföldi unitárius egyházközségekben” [Attempts at (Re-)Romanianization in the Unitarian Congregations of the Székelyföld], *Magyar Kisebbség* 1–2 (2008): 186–253; “Impériumváltás (1918–1920) az Unitárius Egyház angol-amerikai kapcsolatainak tükrében” [The Change in Rule (1918–1920) as Reflected in the Anglo-American Ties of the Unitarian Church], *Regio* 4 (2010): 33–71; “Paradigmaváltó kisebbségi sors. Az Unitárius Egyház gazdaság szervező stratégiái és tevékenysége 1920 és 1940 között” [Paradigm-Shifting Minority Fate. The Economic Organizing Strategies and Activity of the Unitarian Church between 1920 and 1940], *Keresztény Magvető* 1 (2011): 26–47, and *ibid.*, 2 (2011): 115–129.

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She completed her studies in history and philosophy at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj, where she later went on to obtain her doctorate (1998). She is presently an associate professor. She earned her tenure at the University of Debrecen in 2011. Her primary fields of research are the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century history of Transylvania, social and political history

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the Parliamentary Debates of Interwar Romania], in *Partide politice și minorități naționale din România în secolul XX*, vol. IV (Sibiu, 2009), pp. 109–131; “Acquiring Key Competences through Heritage Education (Aqueduct),” *Colloquia. Journal of Central European History* XVII (2010): 205–210.

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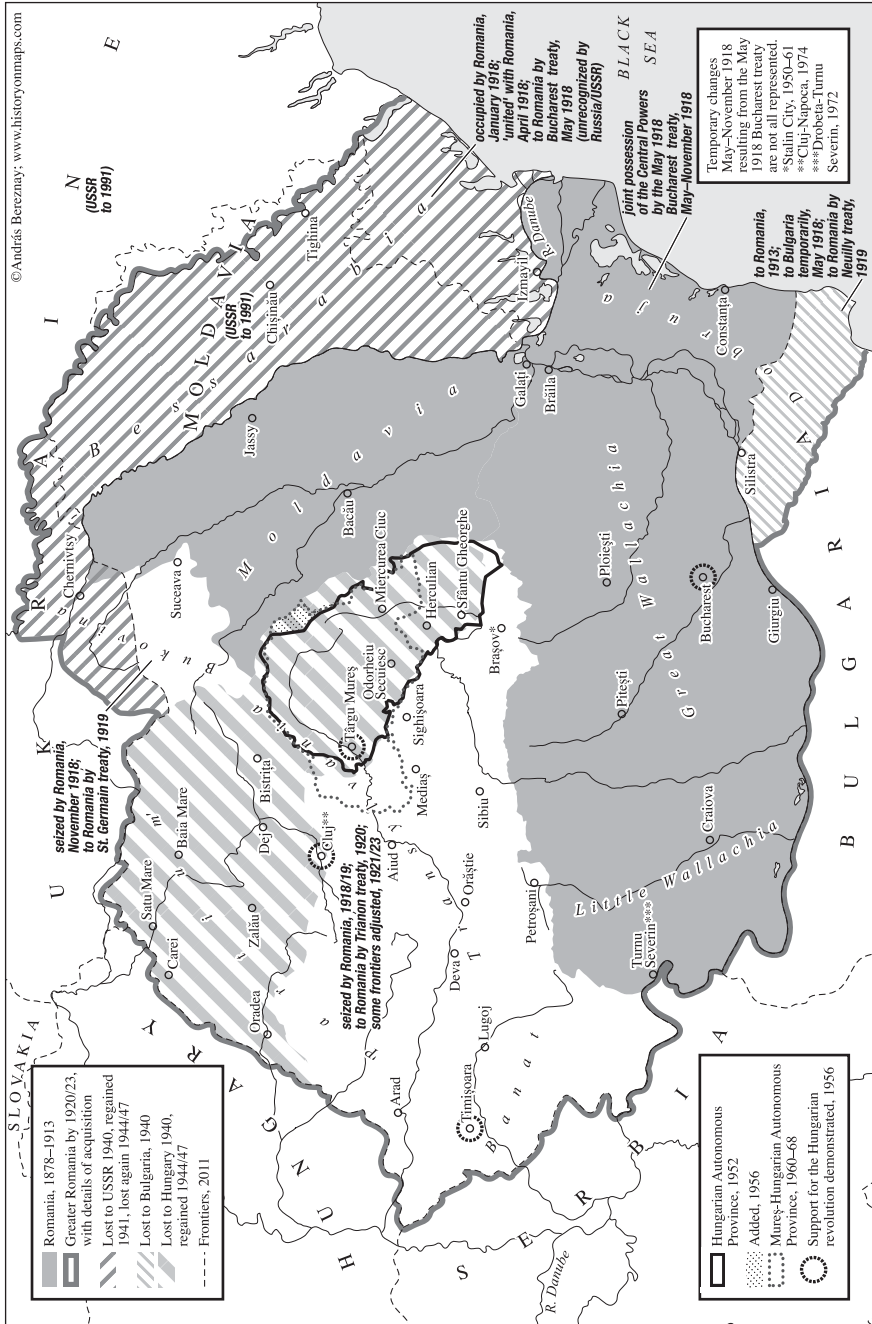
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