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**The Hungarian–Romanian relations and the question of minorities
between 1940 and 1944**

Theses of the doctoral (PhD) dissertation

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1. The purpose of the dissertation

Our dissertation deals with the Hungarian–Romanian relations from the Second Vienna Award (30 August, 1940) to the Romanian flight from the war (23 August, 1944) and the question of minorities connecting tightly to the problem. Our starting point is the paradoxon that although the two countries were attached to the same alliance from November 1940, their joint to the three-power pact, to 23 August, 1944, their relationship reached its nadir during these four years. Their economic and cultural cooperation has ceased to exist in practice and although a formal diplomatic relation has still existed, both governments were waiting for a suitable opportunity to "get even" with the other either on a peaceful way (with a direct German–Italian intervention or during the conclusion of peace after the war) or a by war with each other.

The main purpose of our work is to subject the Hungarian–Romanian relations and the question of minorities between 1940 and 1944 to a deep and comprehensive examination between the relatively limited borders of our work; whose results could serve as the base of a possible monograph in the future. We have tried to initiate into the research an as broad source base as we can by the materials found in Hungarian and Romanian archives, diplomatic archives available, from the Hungarian and Romanian technical literature and remembrances of contemporary people.

2. The representation of the topic in the Hungarian and Romanian historiography

The relatively short time between 1940 and 1944 represents the most controversial and contradictory period of the Hungarian–Romanian relations in the twentieth century. This fact indicates that the historiography of the two countries has valued and values even now the consequences of the Second Vienna Award, the situation of the north-Transylvanian Romanian and the south-Transylvanian Hungarian minority, and the development of international relations in the period differently in most cases. It is also well-marked that this question has different importance in the Hungarian historiography than in the Romanian one. While it has not get to the foreground of modern historical reserch in Hungary at all (although the most comprehensive elaboration of the topic is linked to a Hungarian author), the state of Transylvania between 1940 and 1944 became one of the most popular topics of the party-

governed Romanian historiography in the 1980's. The increased interest of the Roman historiography shown towards the question has not faded even in the 1990's, after the abolishment of censorship.

The sole monographic elaboration of the topic to date is Dániel Csatári's book, *Forgószélben*, which was published in 1968. (Csatári Dániel: *Forgószélben. Magyar–román viszony 1940–1945*. Budapest, 1968, Akadémiai Kiadó). This book, along with Lóránt Tilkovszky's work, published a year earlier, which has a connection to our topic partially (*Revízió és nemzetiségpolitika Magyarországon, 1938–1941*. Budapest, 1967, Akadémiai Kiadó), is the typical example of that new critical and self-critical approach in Hungarian historiography which gained ground in the 1960's. Csatári condemns both the Hungarian and the Romanian nationalism in his book; his main goal is to avert the accusation of joint responsibility of the north-Transylvanian Hungarians. He has read through a huge volume of mainly Hungarian archivalia and press-matter, but at the same time, through no fault of his own, he was unable to elaborate the documents of the Romanian Foreign Archives, which became studiable much later, only in the 1990's. His work puts a particularly strong emphasis on the role of contemporary communist and labour movement, while the issues of Hungarian–Romanian relations are mentioned only tangentially or not at all. The lack of sources from Romanian archives and the author's struggle to "reveal" the nationalism of both governments often results in the fact that the explanation passes over the true reason of the certain processes. Despite its imperfection and the bounds of its attitude, which are explainable with the ideological restrictions of the period and the forced lack of elaboration of the Roman foreign sources, Csatári's work is regarded as the most comprehensive elaboration of the topic even to this date.

The works of the Romanian historian Aurică Simion from the 1970's (e.g. *Preliminarii politico-diplomatice ale insurecției române din august 1944*. Cluj-Napoca, 1979, Editura Dacia) are connecting to the topic only partially, however, they must be mentioned because of their richness of data and the intention of objectivity of their author. However, an entirely different tone characterized the Romanian works from the 1980's, when anti-Hungarism became one of the key features of the official propaganda. The fierce condemnation of the "fascist dictate of Vienna", along with the revelation of the 'crimes' of the 'Horthyst-fascist terror' in Northern Transylvania between 1940 and 1944, without the slightest trace of objectivity and facing their own past have become a popular topic of the party-governed Romanian historiography. Most writings of the time (e.g. Mihai Fătu – Mircea Mușat: *Teroarea horthysto-fascistă în nord-vestul României. Septembrie 1940 – octombrie*

1944. București, 1985) accused the north-Transylvanian Hungarian administration, by falsifying the facts, with 'organized genocide'; as modern terminology would express it. Mihai Fătu's and Mircea Mușat's book, with full of misinterpretations and historic falsifications, is a typical example of the use of historiography for propagandistic interests.

The three-volumed book *Erdély története* (Köpeczi Béla: Kitekintés: Erdély útja 1918 után. In *Erdély története*. Harmadik kötet. 1830-tól napjainkig. Szerk. Szász Zoltán. Budapest, 1986, Akadémiai Kiadó), which was published in 1986 and been attacked severely by the contemporary Romanian propaganda, offers an objective analysis, although it only sketches out the period. Not a single monograph similar to Csatári's work was written after the political transformation, however, a great deal of studies were published on the topic by Hungarian authors.

In the Romanian historiography of the 1990's, although the party-controlled governance has ceased to exist and censorship was abolished, nationalism remained as the most popular point of view. Still among their most preferred topics was the centuries-old fight for the political unity of the pan-Romanism or the 'always irredentist' Hungary. The majority of the works prefer the aspects of national 'martyrology' over the unbiased, scientific examination. (For example Petre Țurlea: *Ip și Trăznea. Atrocități maghiare și acțiune diplomatică românească. Studii și documente*. București, 1996, Editura Enciclopedică.)

An important addition to the study of the topic is Vasile Pușcaș's documentary publication from 1995. (*Transilvania și aranjamentele europene, 1940–1944*. Cluj-Napoca, 1995, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, Fundația Culturală Română.) Eight fundamentally important documents of the German 'conciliatory policy', which is connected the Hungarian–Romanian conflict, can be read in this book, which are dealing with the work of the so-called Altenburg–Roggeri Committee and the Hencke–Roggeri Committee, established in October 1940 and July 1942, respectively. The long introduction, whose several statements will be discussed in our dissertation, deals for the first time in the Romanian technical literature with the Bucharest Proclamation, signed in 15 September, 1941 and which declared the invalidity of the Second Vienna Award, and with its consequences.

The greatest Romanian expert of the topic today is Ottmar Trașcă, a historian from Kolozsvár. He published his excellent summary of the topic, to which he has used sources from Romanian, Hungarian and German archives, in the annuals of the 'A. D. Xenopol' Institute of History in two parts, in 2004 and 2005. (*Relațiile româno–ungare și problema Transilvaniei, 1940–1944*. I. In *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie „A. D. Xenopol”*. XLI, 2004. Iași, Editura Academiei Române, 311–349. o.; *Relațiile româno–maghiare și problema*

Transilvaniei, 1940–1944. II. In *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie „A. D. Xenopol”*. XLII, 2005. Iași, Editura Academiei Române, 377–408. o.) Trașcă, as opposed to most Romanian authors, knows the Hungarian technical literature relating to the topic and refers to it. His attitude is unbiased and objective, his conclusions are relevant in most cases. However, because of the genre of his work – it is an essay, not a monograph – the lack of 'completeness' is perceptible, for the author had to make selection even among the issues he thought as the most important ones. Beside the summary mentioned above, Trașcă has published a few important sub-studies relating to the problem, for example about the antecedents of the Bánffy–Mironescu and Bánffy–Maniu meetings in June 1943, which have significant importance in the Hungarian–Romanian relations during the Second World War. (Tratativatele româno–maghiare din prima jumătate a anului 1943. In *Studii istorice. Omagiu profesorului Camil Mureșanu la împlinirea vârstei de 70 de ani*. Îngrijit de Nicolae Edroiu. Cluj-Napoca, 1998, Presa Universitară Clujană, 475–499. o.)

3. The argument of the dissertation and its conclusions

The Second Vienna Award, declared at 30 August 1940, indicated the beginning of a new period in the history of Hungarian–Romanian relations, for the division of Transylvania has changed the 'role' of the two countries temporarily for a short time: Romania, who had rigidly defended the territorial *status quo* until then, began a more open revisionist policy towards Hungary, despite the strict prohibition of the Axis Powers who had decided on the Vienna Award. The Hungarian government has also regarded the new borderline a temporary one; and along with the keeping of Northern Transylvania it set the acquisition of the larger and richer southern territories as its long-run (covert) aim.

Beside the territorial issues the unsolved problem of the condition of the south-Transylvanian Hungarian and the north-Transylvanian Romanian minorities put the heaviest burden on the bilateral relationship. Outrageous Hungarian atrocities (in Ördökgút, Ipp, Zilah, Bánffyhungyad; than later in Omboztelke and Vasasszentgotthárd) against the Roman population during the joining up to Northern Transylvania and the military government had a great part in the aggravation of the even then rather tense atmosphere between the two countries. In addition, hysteric mood, fear and even panic took possession of the north-Transylvanian Romanians even before the joining up, which ended in the spread of totally false and horroristic stories about the 'barbaric' Hungarian savageries. An instigating and spiteful, anti-Hungarian campaign has begun on superior orders in the Romanian press,

contributing greatly to inflame the tempers. In Berlin and Rome, the Romanian government has urged to take political advantages from these atrocities claiming that they form a coherent 'entirety'.

In Romania, in an atmosphere heavy with vengefulness, the dismissal and expelling of Hungarian employees from the country begun already on the following day of the Second Vienna Award, on the principle of 'Romania should belong to the Romanians'. As an answer, the Hungarian government expelled hundreds of north-Transylvanian Romanians under inhuman circumstances, in waggons from the territory of Hungary in early October 1940. The step has proven to be a failure and it contradicted the contemporary Hungarian governments' tolerant minority policy originating from Saint Stephen, which emphasized on the importance of the reconciliation of Transylvanian people.

The use of raw violence has long-term effects on minority policy and diplomacy. As for the first, expellings served as the beginning of a minority policy based on mutuality and retorsion, which lasted until August 1944 with variable intensity. On the field of diplomacy, the aggravation of minority issues in early October has contributed to the break of Hungarian–Romanian negotiations on liquidation and to the crystallization of that particular Romanian 'recognition', that the two Governments are unable to agree and only the intervention of the Axis Powers would end in positive results. This reversal of the Romanian government has covertly contained their aim which later was formulated openly as well. According to this all the absurd consequences of the 'dictate' of Vienna should be made clear to the Axis Powers, emphasizing on the fact that the decision is invalidated practically by Hungary, for it has violated its regulations with the prosecution of the north-Transylvanian Romanians.

The two countries' competition, which was begun on the summer of 1940, has been intensified for the favours of the Nazi Germany after the Second Vienna Award. Ion Antonescu has thought as follows: by appreciating its absolute loyalty to Hitler, Germany will return Northern Transylvania back to Romania. This, however, has been proven to be the same kind of illusory conception as the conviction of numerous representatives of the Hungarian military and political elite whereas the retention of the then-achieved revisionist results and the acquisition of Southern Transylvania (and West-Bánság) is achievable only with devoted pro-Germanism. With his obscure remarks and behaviour, Hitler manipulated both country's government, playing them off against each other, trying to bound them even more strongly to Germany.

Ion Antonescu gradually became one of the most reliable ally of Hitler since November 1940. Romania participated on the side of Germany with significant forces even from the beginning of the war broken out in the summer of 1941 against the Soviet Union and made much more sacrifice on the eastern front than Hungary until the spring of 1944. On a paradoxical way, Hitler rewarded Antonescu for his loyalty at that moment and in such manner that no real consequences could have resulted from his private announcement on 23 March, 1944, in which he rejected the Second Vienna Award, for the declaration has not get publicity and the Soviet troops had already reached Romania.

The Romanian government declared the invalidity of the Second Vienna Award much earlier, on 15 September, 1944, in memoranda addressed to each the German and the Italian government. They have explained their decision with such reason that the Hungarian government, according to Romanian leaders, had broken its obligations accepted in the arbitral decision with violent actions against the north-Transylvanian Romanians, so Romania is obliged to verify the invalidity of the decision. The mistimed and improperly prepared declaration was rejected by both governments, which was also the personal failure of its originator, Mihai Antonescu, deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs of Romania. Although the announcement had no direct consequences, (for example the Hungarian government remained uninformed about it until June, 1943), it has limited the chances of the Romanian diplomacy severely. For thereafter Romania – if it wanted to be consequent to its viewpoint – could not have engaged into negotiations with the Hungarian Government on the basis of the Second Vienna Award, and would have been interested only in the possibility of altering the borderlines. The negative attitude of the Romanian government against almost every Hungarian initiation to improve the bilateral relation is explainable with this unfortunate move as well.

There came a 'pause' in the political relationship of the two governments from June, 1941, lasting about half a year. The irreconcilable – or, under the pressure of the Axis Powers, at that time rather dormant – Hungarian–Romanian differences rose to the surface in March, 1942, and aggravated gradually in the following months. The course of events reached its zenith in the middle of 1942 (even a Hungarian–Romanian military conflict was on the brink of breaking out), then a temporary easing took place at the end of the year.

Both governments have gone on with their minority policy based on mutuality, started at the autumn of 1940. German–Italian officers' committees – established in January, 1941 –, seated in Brassó and Kolozsvár, were ensuring the legal defence of the south-Transylvanian Hungarian and the north-Transylvanian Romanian minorities. They operated with low

efficiency, however, their mere existence has increased the sense of security of minorities. It is generally verifiable that German–Italian efforts for appeasement had quieting effects in Transylvania and served as a retarding force to reduce the abuses of the Hungarian and Romanian authorities against minorities. The investigations of the so-called Hencke–Roggeri committee, established in June, 1942, which had a great share in upsetting the plan of the Romanian government to systematically famish the south-Transylvanian Hungarian population in May, 1942, serve as a support for the statement above.

The ideas of the Hungarian and Romanian government about minority policy were fundamentally different. Hungarian prime ministers Pál Teleki, László Bárdossy and Miklós Kállay professed, although with different tones, Saint Stephen's tolerant minority policy, whose ultimate aim was to have the primacy of Hungarians in the Carpathian-basin recognized. The Antonescu-regime's minority policy was inspired – in conjunction with Hitler's ideas as well – with the plans of ethnical cleansing and the creation of a homogenous national state. They regarded population exchange as the 'ideal' solution; and Sabin Manuilă, Vasile Stoica and others have elaborated concrete plans to execute it.

After the Battle of Stalingrad some kind of 'reversed competition' started behind the scenes between the two countries. Their common aim was to achieve better conditions of peace from the Western Great Powers and to join the Allies as early as possible. Even before this moment preparation has begun in both countries for the peace conference after the war. In Hungary, the governance of the peace arrangement was entrusted to the political department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1943, which was led by Aladár Szegedy-Maszák since July. The underlying principle of their task was outlined by him at the end of 1942, expecting for an Anglo-Saxon victory. The so-called Peace-arrangement Bureau worked until the German occupation in March, 1944. A great deal of peace-ideas contained elements of integral revision or the similar great revision. However, there were more realistic ideas as well, for example by the Social-Democratic Party and István Bibó, which have broken with the state principles of Saint Stephen.

In Romania, Mihai Antonescu established the Peace Bureau in June 1942. The defeat at Stalingrad indicated a break in the work of the organization, which was led by Mihai Antonescu, who had believed in a German victory until that moment. It held its final session in 26 August, 1943; however, the works were continued in the first half of 1944 with changing intensity. The notions of the Antonescu regime about peace were based on the idea of anti-Slavism and anti-Bolshevism, and they were imbued with Hitler's vision about a 'new Europe'. Mihai Antonescu believed in a compromise-like peace arrangement after the Battle

of Stalingrad, while, for example Vasile Stoica, the actual guider of the peace arrangement or Iuliu Maniu, one of the most eminent politicians of the opposition, in an Anglo-Saxon victory. However, their common aim was the abolishment of the Second Vienna Award and the restoration of their country's territorial integrity.

There was a relative calmness in the two countries' relation in the first half of 1943: signs of easing has appeared and tension has decreased perceptibly. The arrangement of opposition and the rapprochement of the two countries – with anti-Soviet, and (secretly) anti-German intention – was officially initiated by Mihai Antonescu at the end of 1942, after the catastrophic Romanian defeat at Stalingrad in autumn. His decision was motivated by his fear from the then relatively intact Hungarian army. However, as soon as the directly threatening 'Hungarian danger' was beginning to fade away, so lessened the Romanian enthusiasm toward reconciliation; and negotiations between Bánffy Miklós and Gheorghe Mironescu in July, 1943 ended in a complete failure. Iuliu Maniu's initiation has ended in a similar way; he would have liked to contact Bethlen István secretly. As the military and political situation for Romania – compared with Hungary - has turned towards the better, the possibility of a Romanian-Hungarian compromise has lost its actuality in Bucharest for the summer of 1943. So the relation of the two countries for July, 1943 returned to its 'usual' routine of before December, 1942; and – relating to the period lasting until 23 August, 1944 – no significant improvements have taken place further on in this respect.

The absolutely pro-German Sztójay-government regarded the undiminished continuation of the war as its utmost task; hence evolved the conciliatory tone toward Romania and the intention to normalize the relationship between the two countries. However, the Romanian government has reacted distantly to the attempts for rapprochement because Romania hoped – and not without any basis – that the invalidation of the Second Vienna Award is just a matter of time, whichever side may come off victorious. Eventually the Romanian conversion to the side of the Allies on 23 August, 1944 has great role in their decision for Romania in the question of Transylvania, although the new borderline was fixed only afterwards.

4. Publications of the author on this subject

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