

PERSPECTIVES ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE ROMANIAN-HUNGARIAN RELATIONS AND THE FRENCH-GERMAN RECONCILIATION MODEL

The issue of the foreseeable evolution of the Romanian-Hungarian relations can be addressed from several standpoints. It can be analyzed from the perspective of the impact it has on the two countries' *domestic politics*, especially considering the contentious aspects of the past and the way in which the related prejudices may threaten the process of democratic consolidation in both countries, the risks of being exploited by certain political powers for selfish reasons remaining considerable. The issue can also be approached from the perspective of the influence it has on *regional security*, by analyzing the evolution of the relations between the two countries since the changes in 1989, and the role geopolitics and the international organizations have had in this evolution. And lastly, the issue can be approached also from the perspective of the 1.5 million *Hungarians living in Romanian*, stuck in the middle and rapidly diminishing, and – in tight connection with this – the sustainability of the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Romanian society.

Argument

The initiative that brought to life the statements published in this volume is closest to the last approach mentioned above: at the bottom of this typically civil society initiative lie the commitment to the preservation of the cultural richness, and advocacy for the minority policy perspectives of the Romanian society, currently not too encouraging, at least as far as the Hungarian minority is concerned. This obviously does not mean that the initiators are indifferent to the impact the issue may have on democratic consolidation, or to its influence on regional security. On the contrary, one of the hypotheses that awaits disproof, but cannot yet be counted out as a possibility, is that the convenient resolution of the Romanian-Hungarian inter-state relations – and at the same time the consolidation of democracy in the two countries, as well as the strengthening of regional security – is actually *conditioned* by the diminution of the Hungarian minority in Romania and the gradual disappearance of this community as a political factor. The survey carried out with the joint effort of the Pro Europe League and the Ethnocultural Diversity Resource Center aimed to find out, among others, whether there are any spiritual resources in the evolution of the Romanian-Hungarian inter-state relations that may be able to provide a viable alterna-

tive to the rivalry of the nation-state logic, the emphatic manifestation of which projects quite determinedly this sort of “resolution”.

The two civil society organizations have observed that in the last 80 years the Romanian society has undergone a strong homogenization process from the ethnical, linguistic and cultural point of view. As a result, the percentage of the minorities as compared to the total population has dropped almost three times: while in 1930 they represented around 30%, by 2002 they dropped to approximately 10%. The causes of this process are, of course, complex: the persecution of Jews and the Holocaust, the ideology of collective guilt affecting the Germans after the end of WW II, and finally the anti-minority and homogenization measures – raised at the level of state policy during the decades of the Romanian national communism – all played a part. As the Jewish community, around the '60s and '70s, and the German minority after the wave of emigration of the '70s and '80s practically were reduced to symbolic numbers, now it seems that the turn of the Hungarians in Romania has come: in 2002, as compared to ten years ago, there were 200,000 fewer Hungarians in Romania, and the demographic trends and the determination to emigrate anticipated by experts indicate that the number of Hungarians in Romania will significantly drop further.

Undoubtedly, the dramatic diminution of the Hungarians in Romania is also due to the attraction exerted by Hungary. In addition to the developmental gap between the mother country and Romania – which on the short term led to the fact that many Hungarians in Romania now think that in Hungary with the same effort one can live a much better life, and amidst the better organized society, the more efficient state apparatus and the higher level of social services life standards are better –, it is an odd specificity of the situation that the attraction of the mother country is at present intensified by the European processes themselves. As a consequence of the fact that Hungary, as a member state of the European Union, has become part of the area that permits the free movement of the workforce, one must take into account that the migration of the Hungarian workforce towards west is leaving gaps behind in certain domains, and these gaps are most conveniently filled by the workforce originating from the national Hungarians that live in the neighboring countries. The signs of this trend are already evident, only a short while after Hungary's accession to the Union, and in the atmosphere created by the above described trend of migration nobody seems to be bothered by the fact that the practices of encouraging immigration of the Hungarians outside of Hungary, tacitly legitimized at the lower levels of the Hungarian state apparatus, are in a severe contradiction with the principles of Hungary's foreign policy, according to which the mother country is interested in supporting the fractions of the

Hungarian nation living in the neighboring countries, in their endeavor to endure and prosper on the land of their birth.³⁵

Although hard to measure with reliable instruments, the emigration strategies of Hungarians in Romania have lately been influenced also by the fact that the resources of political struggle seem to be exhausted: the fight for minority rights in the Parliament do not appear to lead – in the short term, at least – to the achievement of the goals that the political organization engaged to represent the interest of the Hungarians in Romania had outlined as indispensable for the long term preservation of the community: the reflection in the Romanian Constitution of the role the Hungarian community has, as a partner nation, in the state-building process; ethnically based territorial autonomy in the Szeklerland; cultural autonomy for those groups of Hungarians that do not live in compact communities; and the independent, state-supported Hungarian language university.

Undoubtedly, to counterbalance these trends that enhance the wish to emigrate, the combined effort of high level political will and influential factors would be necessary. In order to have such a coordination it would be necessary first of all that those who speak on behalf of the Romanian side should cease looking upon the Hungarians in Romania as a recurrent potential source of threat, and, accordingly, stop refusing the legitimate claims expressed by them, pretending that they are incompatible with the interest of Romanian state. All these would require, however, not less than some people in the right positions decide to take initiative in approaching the issue of doing away with prejudices that burden the Romanian-Hungarian relationships more methodically. One of the first objectives of such a more systematic approach would need to be, beyond doubts, to gradually counterbalance the obstinately reproducing circumstances which coerce new generations in both countries, apparently even after 1989, to rediscover, in the concepts forced upon them by the dominant view of history, that the Romanian-Hungarian problem is “unsolvable”. In the way, for instance, in which the programs organized by the Office Franco-Allemand pour la Jeunesse/Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk (OFAJ/DFJW)³⁶ have proved to be possible, for more than four decades now.

What has happened so far

However paradoxical it may seem, based on the above, it must be taken into account that the national interest of Hungary and Romania seem to be

³⁵ It is important to note here that this massive orientation towards Hungary of a significant fraction of the Hungarian minority in Romania may change if the economic situation of Romania improves.

³⁶ For details, see the study of Monica Robotin and Petra Szávics in the present volume.

in agreement for the first time in history: on the one hand, the demand for trained Hungarian-speaking workforce, and the fact, on the other, that the political goals of the Hungarians in Romania representing a significant political force cannot be – in the short term at least – made compatible with the nation-building strategy of the Romanian state, seem to strengthen an alternative apparently advantageous for all involved parties. Namely, that the solution would be the gradual, but essentially the mass-emigration of the Hungarians from Romania to Hungary. In this situation, both countries would manage to follow the logic of the nation-state for their own benefit: Hungary manages to maintain the homogeneity required by its status as a nation-state despite the negative demographic trends, while Romania succeeds to take further steps toward getting rid of the hard-to-manage consequences of cultural diversity – which goes hand in hand, as we have seen, with political mobilization –, and at the same time, toward an increased ethnic, linguistic and cultural homogeneity.

From the perspective of a civic initiative committed, on the one hand, to preserving the cultural diversity of the Romanian society, and to the endurance of the Hungarian minority in Romania, on the other, the following questions appear legitimate: Must we accept that the Romanian-Hungarian historical reconciliation is precluded as long as the Hungarian community in Romania represents an influential political power? Can we envision an alternative solution to the Romanian-Hungarian relations, which does not require, as a necessary condition, or does not render, as a result, the disappearance of the Hungarian minority in Romania?

Before we weigh the answers to the above questions that can be deduced from the statements of positions that are stated in the replies to the questions of the survey, it appears necessary to provide a brief outline of the history of Romanian-Hungarian relations since 1989. We will develop this brief summary around four categories of actors: we will concentrate on the major events of inter-state relations; the realm of the more widely understood politics, with reference to the reactions of various political actors; the initiatives of civil society; and the most significant moments of the intellectuals' dialogue.

Although it would certainly be a mistake to underestimate the merits of previous initiatives and the efforts of various actors, all in all, it can be concluded that most of what has been done so far to remove the prejudices that burden the Romanian-Hungarian relations is badly lagging behind the needs – both from the point of view of the conceptual perspective, and the efficiency of the initiatives. Certain moments in the evolution of the relations that will be presented in what follows are relevant proofs of the dimensions of prejudices and mutual suspicion that we must still take into account.

The most significant events in the evolution of inter-state relations were the polemics around the signing of the basic treaty in Timișoara in 1996, together with the turmoil around the Hungarian Status Law, and its echo

after the Orbán-Năstase agreement, signed in December 2001.³⁷ Although it cannot be perceived strictly as an inter-state event, two occurrences had significant roles in bringing the Romanian-Hungarian relation closer to normal: the role of DAHR in the coalition government during the 1996-2000 mandate, and Romania's becoming a member of NATO in 2003. Both events weakened the positions of those groups in Romania which since 1989 had persistently acted – and not always inefficiently – to turn the so-called “Hungarian threat” into political capital.³⁸

It is worth recalling, in this particular context, some of the events around the preparation of the basic treaty, also because in August 1995, in one of the deadlocks of the series of negotiations started in 1992, Romanian President Ion Iliescu tried to bring back on the agenda the issue of resolving the Romanian-Hungarian dissensions by making reference to the French-German model of reconciliation. As the analysts of the Center for International Studies in Bucharest pointed out, the way the President interpreted the model and tried to apply it in the context of the Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation differed radically from the spirit of the documents defining the French-German relations, more specifically the Declaration that the French foreign minister Robert Schuman made on the 9th of May 1950, which is considered to be one of the fundamental documents that led to the establishment of the European Community³⁹. While Schuman phrased his statement in the spirit of reconciliation with history, for the benefit of the common future, Ion Iliescu launched his call to reconciliation at a sharply anti-Hungarian event, the 55th anniversary of the Vienna Dictate in 1940, pointing out as a condition of the reconciliation that the issue of the

³⁷ It is important to recall, though it was less visible, the impact the cooperation between the interior and defense ministries of the two countries has had on the evolution of the inter-state relations, beginning with the early '90s, sometimes in flagrant contradiction with the atmosphere of the top level relationships. The various forms of cooperation have resulted in joint initiatives of the two armies, the normalization of customs and border-control, opening new points of transit of the frontier, etc, all with evident impact on the improvement of the relationship between the two nations as well.

³⁸ Our approach stays within the limits of those events that have a special significance from the perspective of the tripartite system of relations defined by the mother country – minority – majority nation, or were initiated by any of these parties. This obviously does not mean that the analysis intends to minimize the significance of the influence exerted on the evolution of the Romanian-Hungarian relation by the Council of Europe, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities or other international organizations. For more information about their role see István Horváth: *Facilitating Conflict Transformation. Implementation of the Recommendations of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities to Romania, 1993-2001*, Hamburg: CORE Working Paper 8, 2002.

³⁹ In connection with this, see the study of Monica Robotin and Petra Szávics in the present volume.

Hungarian minority in Romania is accepted by the Hungarian party as a strictly domestic affair of Romania.⁴⁰

In comparison, the basic treaty signed in September 1996, and ratified shortly after that by the Romanian Parliament, represents an essential step forward. The text of the treaty lays down for the first time that the parties do not consider the issue of minorities as belonging to the jurisdiction of state sovereignty, but rather an aspect of inter-state cooperation. The treaty deals in detail with the rights and protection of minorities, in fact containing the entire framework of principles and concrete measures set forth in the French-German treaty of 1963, which the Office Franco-Allemand pour la Jeunesse/Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk (OFAJ/DFJW) has been working to translate into practice for the last 40 years.⁴¹

The Hungarian Status Law – the law of preferential treatment of members of the Hungarian communities living in neighboring countries –, as well as the polemics that resulted around it, represent a special chapter of the recent history of the Romanian-Hungarian relation. Narrowing it down to only one aspect, this complicated event – which occupies a special place in the history Hungarian political thought on the national issue – reflects the dissatisfaction of the main Hungarian political actors with the minority policy of governments in the neighbouring states, at the end of the first decade after the change, and expresses the lack of trust that the terms laid down in the basic treaties can be ever accomplished. As a country which, due to its economic development and successes in euroatlantic integration, felt its regional importance enhanced, Hungary formulated all these statements from the position of the initiator, for the first time in recent history, by taking unilateral political steps.⁴² The response of the Romanian side was commensurate. For instance, in an English publication that was coordinated by prime-minister Adrian Năstase, setting in motion an amazing apparatus, one can read that the bilateral relations which previously had been based on the spirit of the basic treaty and subsequently were hampered – the original text uses the word “déravage” – by the unilateral gesture of passing the preferential treatment law, were brought back “to the path of authentic bilateral dia-

⁴⁰ For further details about the position of the Center for International Research, see: Gabriel Andreescu: *Ruleta. Români și maghiarii, 1990-2000*, Iași: Polirom, 2001, 180-188.

⁴¹ The text of the two agreements is available in the Annexes. For the importance of Romanian-Hungarian basic treaty, see Corneliu-Liviu Popescu: „Protecția minorităților naționale prin tratatele de bază ale României cu vecinii săi”, in: *Studii Internaționale*, 1998/4, 46-54. See also Arie Bloed, Pieter van Dijk (eds): *Protection of Minority Rights Through Bilateral Treaties. The Case of Central and Eastern Europe*, The Hague–Boston–London: Kluwer Law International, 1999.

⁴² See Nándor Bárdi: *Tény és való. A budapesti kormányzatok és a határon túli magyarság kapcsolattörténete*, Pozsony: Kalligram Könyvkiadó, 2004, 147-208.

logue” by the *Statement of Mutual Understanding* signed by prime-ministers Orbán and Năstase in December 2001.⁴³

The Romanian-Hungarian inter-state and inter-governmental relations have since been considered outstandingly good by comparison to the last decades. That not everything is all right and that, in depth, despite appearances, there are serious contradictions in perspectives is best proved by Adrian Năstase’s latest open letter to Viktor Orbán in which the Romanian prime-minister blames the leader of the Hungarian political opposition in a rather sharp manner for his recent stance taken with regard to the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania.⁴⁴

⁴³ Adrian Năstase, Raluca Miga-Besteliu, Bogdan Aurescu, Irina Donciu: *Protecting Minorities in the Future Europe. Between Political Interest and International Law*, Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial, 2002, 198.

⁴⁴ The letter contains, among others, the following: “I do not want to give the impression that Romania has merits whereas others would have only deficiencies but I am disappointed to notice the confronting, nationalistic language of your messages from Tusnad, although today, in Romania, people, in spite of their ethnic origin, participate in a peaceful and open dialogue and are thinking in accordance with the European spirit. I am deeply disappointed to notice the radical orientation of your speech, the denial of the normality and of the ethnic harmony existing in Romania. I do not want, Mr. Orbán that Romania be praised at any rate but I cannot admit that the efforts that we have made so far are ignored or worse the assertion that they do not exist or there is no democracy in Romania. (...) It is unacceptable that the Magyar minority from Romania or any other minority become object of the political disputes from the related state in order to respond to some political ambitions. It is abnormal to sustain false themes about the interethnic relations in a neighboring state, even if apparently they bring political capital. Sooner or later, people will realize the frailty of such themes and will notice their strident aspects. Let us not forget that the initial draft of the Status Law of Magyars living in countries neighboring Hungary was rejected due to its strident nationalistic aspects that granted to minority a special status different from the majority status.” Source: the homepage of the Government of Romania, *Speeches, press conferences*; issued by the Government of Romania – Spokesperson of the Government, on 29.07.2004, at the following address: <http://www.gov.ro/engleza/presa/afis-doc.php?idpresa=2880&idrubricapresa=&idrubricaprinm=3&idtema=&tip=2&pag=1&dr=>

We do not know whether the open letter signed by the Romanian prime-minister received an official reply. On the homepage of FIDESZ one can read the following MTI news dated July 29, 2004: „On Thursday, Zsolt Németh, the leader of the FIDESZ fraction’s Foreign Affairs Cabinet stated that it was unusual that Romanian prime-minister Adrian Nastase made public the letter addressed Viktor Orbán before the addressee received it: “what the Romanian prime-minister did, ignoring the basic rules of diplomacy and publish a letter before the addressee receives it is unusual”. In his statement Zsolt Németh emphasized: in his opinion the Romanian prime-minister is wrong to accuse Viktor Orbán’s speech of domestic political campaigning. “Whether in the government or in opposition, FIDESZ has the same opinion that Viktor Orbán stated at Tusnad”.

In addition to political events on the level of inter-state relations, there have been several initiatives, whether occasional or more or less regular ones, which directly or indirectly tried to influence the attitude of influential actors in the Romania, for the benefit of normalized Romanian-Hungarian relations. A special role among these was played by the initiatives of the American foundation Project on Ethnic Relations, which from 1993 on has organized several thematic meetings for representatives of the Romanian political elite and leading personalities of the Hungarian minority in Romania. It is worth mentioning the meeting in Neptun, in July 1993, where representatives of the two parties were invited by the organizers, within the framework of non-mandated negotiation, to make an attempt to bring the two positions closer. Although the event itself conveyed a very important message to the prejudice-laden Romanian public opinion, the participants

As he pointed out, by comparison, the approach of the Romanian prime-minister can be accounted for by the Romanian election campaign. "He wishes to strengthen the position of his party, badly affected in the local elections, by nationalism and anti-Hungarianism", he added. In connection with Romania's accession to the European Union, Zsolt Németh pointed out that the achievement of the Copenhagen criteria and meeting the condition of accession are not like achieving the five-year plans in old world. "The political criteria must be complied with all the time", he underlined. According to the politician, lately it has been proved, unfortunately, that the Romanian election law is anti-democratic and discriminatory. He added that in connection with this soon the Venice Commission will also state its position. Zsolt Németh also said that autonomy is the European instrument of minority rights protection, without which Romania's democratic development is incomplete. "You cannot wipe aside the unanimous wish of 1.5 million people", Zsolt Németh said, adding that FIDESZ has supported and is till supporting Romania's accession to the European Union. Source: http://www.szabad-europa.hu/online/menu/hirlap/legfrissebb/nemeth_0729.html On the same home page of FIDESZ, to a question posed to him in connection with this issue, Zsolt Németh said: „I must admit boldly that I simply do not understand and I don't know what the Romanian head of government was thinking about. In Hungary there is no election campaign at present and even if there was, the political organizations which usually take position to defend the interests of Hungarians abroad are by now mostly marginal powers. So the MIEP and similar forces cannot really increase the mass of their supporters by mentioning the case of Hungarians abroad; on the contrary, according to analysts the anti-Hungarian rhetoric abroad is much more efficient during campaigns. We witnessed this when in 2002 the socialists mentioned in the campaign the threat of 23 million Romanian immigrants, or like now, when they say dual citizenship undermines the Hungarian social service system. In comparison with this, the fact is that in Romania there is a campaign which is extremely important to Nastase since he announced that he would like to be president and he has visibly been using the rhetoric that characterizes nomenclature-parties. As I see it this is what the point is in this letter.” Source: http://www.szabad-europa.hu/online/menu/hirlap/interju/nemeth_0905.html.

on both sides remained isolated within their political organizations, and for the Hungarian side the “event in Neptun” has since been congruent to the concept of unprincipled compromise in the public thinking of the minority.

The hardships inherent to bringing the two positions closer were also revealed by the negotiation in Atlanta in February 1995, held at the Carter Center, attended by high rank representatives of the Romanian political elite and of leading personalities of the Hungarian minority in Romania. The negotiation, in which the American ex-president Jimmy Carter tried to mediate, ended without results and sharply revealed the incompatibility of interests.

Besides these two not very efficient initiatives, Project on Ethnic Relations has organized several useful discussions on various topics for journalists, experts, public servants, and facilitated the emergence of pre-electoral agreements which aimed at squeezing out the nationalist rhetoric from election campaigns.

The public actors and, in general, the public opinion were also the target of the influence exerted by Romanian civil organizations such as the Group for Social Dialogue (GDS) and the Romanian Helsinki Committee (APADOR-CH) in Bucharest, the Pro Europe League based in Tg. Mures, the Association for Interethnic Dialogue, The *Korunk* Friends’ Association and the Ethnocultural Diversity Resource Center, all three based in Cluj.

GDS, after a first memorable meeting in November 1992, returned to various aspects of the Romanian-Hungarian problem on several occasions, ensuring the publicity for a balanced – but not always satisfactory for the Hungarian expectations – approach of the debate in a prestigious Romanian weekly, 22.

APADOR-CH contributed to shaping the views of the actors with well-documented expert analyses given to publicity at important turning points of the recent history of Romanian-Hungarian relations.

For the removal of prejudices that burden the Romanian-Hungarian relations, the Pro Europe League has had probably the most methodical approach and the most consistent initiatives: organizing conferences, round table discussions, summer universities and producing a whole series of publications on various aspects of the issue. Between 1990 and 1997, the League was co-organizer of the Bálványos (later Tusnad) Summer University, which started as a much promising forum of dialogue between Romanian and Hungarian politicians, but lately – as a consequence of the gradual expansion of the power-demonstrating conduct of the participants from Hungary – it has lost this function and has turned into one of the important traditional events of Hungarians in Romania, attended by a steadily diminishing number of Romanians.

In the mid-1990s, The *Korunk* Friends’ Association initiated a series of sociological surveys aiming to reflect, by using quantitative research methods, the main indicators of the evolution of the Romanian-Hungarian relations. The initiators of the surveys intended to influence with the results the actors engaged in the Romanian-Hungarian debates and to prevent the dominance of those perspectives which exploit the shortage of reliable informa-

tion. The surveys targeted nationally representative samples and were repeated three times between 1994 and 1996. The results clearly revealed the differences between ethno-political options supported on the one hand by the Romanians, and on the other hand by Hungarians in Romania.⁴⁵

The aims formulated in the mid-1990s by The *Korunk* Friends' Association have been followed since 2000 by the Ethnocultural Diversity Resource Center, which initiated a series of publications that bring to the general public the results of various researches on different aspect of the issue.⁴⁶

The dialogue between Romanian and Hungarian intellectuals after 1989 is uniquely spectacular, though in terms of results it is rather modest. Its history starts with the conference on "Romanian-Hungarian dialogue. Intellectuals for the historic reconciliation", organized in Budapest, on 19-20 March 1990, where distinguished intellectuals from both sides committed themselves to the case of bridging the historical gap between the two nations.⁴⁷ It was one of the strange twists of history that the violent bloodshed in Tg. Mureș – the only serious inter-ethnic conflict in post-communist Central-East Europe, claiming also human lives – was unfolding in parallel with the conference. The way in which the news from Tg. Mureș put an end to the conference organized in Budapest delayed for a long time the re-

⁴⁵ See Gabriel Bădescu–Mircea Kivu (ed): *Barometrul relațiilor etnice 1994-2002. O perspectivă asupra climatului interetnic din România*, Cluj-Napoca: CRDE, 2004 (in print).

⁴⁶ The publication of the Center are: Lucian Nastasă–Levente Salat (eds): *Relațiile interetnice în România postcomunistă – cartea albă a conferinței "Modelul românesc al relațiilor interetnice. Ultimii zece ani, următorii zece ani*, București, 7-8 iulie, 2000", Cluj-Napoca: CRDE, 2000; Andreea Andreescu–Lucian Nastasă–Andreea Varga (eds): *Minorități etnoculturale. Mărturii documentare. Țigani din România (1919 – 1944)*, Cluj-Napoca: CRDE, 2001; Viorel Anăștoaiei–Daniela Tarnovschi (eds): *Proiecte pentru Romii din România, 1990-2000*, Cluj-Napoca: CRDE, 2001; Andreea Andreescu–Lucian Nastasă–Andreea Varga (eds): *Minorități etnoculturale. Mărturii documentare. Maghiarii din România (1945-1955)*, Cluj-Napoca: CRDE, 2002; Gabriel Andreescu: *Extremismul de dreapta în România*, Cluj-Napoca: CRDE, 2003; Ioaneta Vintileanu–Gábor Ádám (eds): *Poliția și comunitățile multiculturale din România*, Cluj-Napoca: CRDE, 2003; Andreea Andreescu–Lucian Nastasă–Andreea Varga (eds): *Minorități etnoculturale. Mărturii documentare. Evreii din România (1945-1965)*, Cluj-Napoca: CRDE, 2003; Lucian Nastasă–Levente Salat (eds): *Maghiarii din România și etica minoritară (1920-1940)*, Cluj-Napoca: CRDE, 2003; Andreea Andreescu–Lucian Nastasă–Andreea Varga (eds): *Minorități etnoculturale. Mărturii documentare. Maghiarii din România (1956-1968)*, Cluj-Napoca: CRDE, 2003; Monica Robotin–Levente Salat (eds): *A New Balance: Democracy and Minorities in Post-Communist Europe*, Budapest: LGI/OSI 2003.

⁴⁷ The list of participants included: Mircea Dinescu, Ioan Alexandru, Dan Petrescu, Smaranda Enache, Gabriel Liiceanu, Domokos Géza, Cs. Gyimesi Éva, Kányádi Sándor, Demény Lajos, Pálfalvi Attila, Tabajdi Csaba, Csóori Sándor, Cseres Tibor, Bodor Pál, Pomogáts Béla, Köteles Pál.

inclusion of the issue of the Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation in the agenda of the intellectuals' debate.⁴⁸

In the mid-1990s we find the above-mentioned *Korunk* Friends' Association in the role of promoter of the intellectuals' dialogue trying to mediate the thus far predominantly isolated Romanian and Hungarian public by publishing a series of an anthology in Romanian (*Cumpăna*), which included some of the most important products and documents of the contemporary Hungarian intellectual life in Romania, and by issuing on a regular basis digests monitoring both the Romanian and Hungarian press (*Magropress* and *Sajtófókus*), for those who, due to language barriers, cannot follow the content of the respective media. The association also organized a few significant meetings in Cluj, Bucharest and several locations in Hungary, one of the latest being also honored by presence of the Hungarian President.

An interesting chapter in the history of Romanian-Hungarian intellectuals' dialogue was the activity between 2000 and 2002 of the *Provincia* group, which for a brief period of three years provided space for high quality exchange of opinion in two journals with identical content, published in parallel in Romanian and in Hungarian languages. The way the brief history of this publication ended is a sad proof of the various barriers – pertaining equally to diverging opinions, and a shortage of available material and human resources – which must be taken into account by the initiatives serving the case of Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation, in terms of resources that can be mobilized.

One of the latest memorable chapters of the intellectuals' dialogue is connected to the name of Tamás Gáspár Miklós, a well-known philosopher and well-respected public figure who left Transylvania and settled in Hungary sometime in the early 1980'. In February 2001, Tamás Gáspár Miklós sent a letter to his "Romanian friends", which was published in a prestigious Romanian weekly (*Dilema*) and in which he pointed out all the issues that in his opinion still prevent the the Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation from becoming a matter of fact. The letter raised an interesting response from leading contemporary Romanian intellectuals, which, as a whole, was probably the most convincing evidence of the gap which still persists between the Romanian and Hungarian perspectives.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ See István Horváth: *I.m.*, 26-27, and Gabriel Andreescu: *I.m.*, 36-38. It is important to note here, however, that the above statement on the uniqueness of the clashes in Tg. Mureș refers to the importance of the political implications of the event. For a more detailed perspective on ethnic conflicts, see chapter 1 (Documente privind conflictele intracomunitare desfășurate în perioada 1990-1995) in: Ioaneta Vintileanu-Gábor Ádám (eds): *Politița și comunitățile multiculturale din România*, Cluj Napoca: CRDE, 2003.

⁴⁹ The letter received replies, among others, from Andrei Pleșu, Theodor Baconsky, Pavel Câmpeanu, Zigu Ornea, Mircea Iorgulescu, Andrei Cornea and Victor Neumann. The overwhelming majority of the stances taken by the replyers firmly rejected Tamás Gáspár Miklós's evaluation of the situation.

What would be necessary

Although the above inventory was not intended to be complete, the listed facts prove sufficiently that the initiatives between 1990 and 2002 were far from being enough to remove the prejudices that burden the Romanian-Hungarian relations. It can be concluded that there has been no initiative so far which managed to maintain the framework of dialogue for a longer period of time, or succeeded in offering a more orderly approach to the removal of divergent views. After the initial euphoria characteristic for the first few months of 1990, the events that served the purpose of bringing closer the two nations became rare in the second half of the 1990s, and even rarer in the last third of the decade, the circle of participants shrinking steadily. Those few who remained committed to the cause acted in various circumstances as if reached the tacit conclusions that for the sake of keeping the appearance of dialogue issues that should be most debated for overcoming the divergent opinions *must be* methodically avoided.

If, taking into account the above, we analyze the the spiritual horizon and the content of the answers received within the survey initiated by the Pro Europe League and the Ethnocultural Diversity Resource Center, we find the following:

1. Considering the entire range of the received answers, it is surprising to see the lack of balance in the distribution of responses: though the two sub-samples were comparable, the Romanian respondents are clearly outnumbered by Hungarians who accepted the invitation to express their opinions. Beyond this, it is interesting to note that while valuable answers were received from both Romanian and Hungarian personalities in high governmental positions, the leading representatives of the main political organization of the Hungarian minority in Romania did not have any opinion to share with regard to the topic.

2. If we consider the spiritual horizon of the received answers, the following comprehensive image may be outlined:

2.1. the Romanian replies, with a few exceptions, are characterized by polite, but somewhat distantly expressed good intentions; the tone of the opinions is permeated by moderate optimism which seems to convey the message: “we know that time is working for us”;

2.2. in most statements of the Hungarian respondents there is significantly more factuality, the questions are generally not avoided, but – as a result – the answers are more pessimistic and in several small details the typical Hungarian prejudices that burden the Romanian-Hungarian relations are manifest; several Hungarian positions are also marked by the superficial knowledge of the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania, which results in the lack of feasibility of an important part of the otherwise good-willed suggestion;

2.3. the opinions expressed by Hungarians in Romania are marked by a general lack of perspective and, as a consequence, these answers are some-

times radical and judge the conditions of improving the Romanian-Hungarian relations rather unilaterally.

3. The following analysis of the content of the received answers will group the information extracted from the replies around four questions: (1) what arguments can be brought to support the necessity of initiatives to enhance the dynamics of the Romanian-Hungarian relations?; (2) what circumstances prevent at this time the development of more intense Romanian-Hungarian relations?; (3) what initiatives could make the bilateral relations more dynamic?; (4) what is the respondents' opinion about the applicability of the French-German reconciliation model in the context of the Romanian-Hungarian relation?

3.1. The following arguments were mentioned in support of the increased dynamics of the relations:

– The geopolitical argument, namely both sides' interest in Euro-Atlantic integration (Dan Berindei, Gál Kinga, Mircea Geoană, Márton Árpád, Anton Niculescu, Ioan-Aurel Pop, Rais Wallner István, Somai József);

– The geographic arguments, the fact of neighborhood and the partial overlapping of the Hungarian- and Romanian-inhabited areas (Gál Kinga, Kántor Lajos, Lendvai L. Ferenc, Ioan-Aurel Pop, Somai József, Szabad György);

– The fact that 1.5 million Hungarians live within the borders of Romania, and the resulting common interest in the convenient solution of the situation for all parties involved (Gabriel Andreescu, Haller István, Németh Zsolt, Ioan-Aurel Pop, Somai József);

– Common interest regarding the security of the region (Vasile Dâncu, Gál Kinga, Mircea Geoană, Haller István, Tóth Gy. László);

– Common economic interests (Vasile Dâncu, Enyedi György, Mircea Geoană, Márton Árpád, Anton Niculescu, Rais Wallner István, Szabó Vilmos);

– The common past and the partly common cultural heritage (Bárdi Nándor, Vasile Dâncu, Ioan-Aurel Pop, Tóth Gy. László);

– Common environmental protection and the common interest related to the infra-structural development of the region (Márton Árpád, Tóth Gy. László);

– The value of multiculturalism and the interest connected to preventing emigration (Kelemen Attila, Victor Neumann).

3.2. Among the circumstances that prevent the improvement of the relations the respondents mentioned the following:

– The offences and frustrations endured by the Romanian community before 1918 and the Hungarians after that; the Trianon syndrome (Bárdi Nándor, Dan Berindei, Vasile Dâncu, Kelemen Attila, Ioan-Aurel Pop);

– Nationalism, mutual ignorance, sentiments of inferiority or superiority on both sides (Enyedi György, Gál Kinga, Jankó Szép Sándor, Kántor Lajos, Kürti László, Lendvai L. Ferenc, Victor Neumann, Anton Niculescu, Somai József, Szabó Tibor, Szabó Vilmos, Szájer József, Tóth Gy. László);

– The nationalist parties and political “entrepreneurs”, who are interested on both sides in maintaining the tense relations (Gabriel Andreescu, Vasile Dâncu, Mircea Geoană, Kántor Lajos, Ioan-Aurel Pop, Somai, Szabó Tibor, Tóth Gy. László);

– The small number and the relative inefficiency of initiatives fostering mutual knowledge and authentic collaboration (Dan Berindei, Enyedi György, Gál Kinga, Haller István, Rais Wallner István);

– Historical events that are interpreted in contradictory ways (Jankó Szép Sándor, Lendvai L. Ferenc, Victor Neumann);

– The unsettled aspects of the situation of Hungarians in Romania (Dénes László, Kende Péter, Márton Árpád);

– The mutual mistrust (e.g. Szabad György), and the fear of Hungarian irredentism on the side of the Romanians (e.g. Kende Péter);

– The lack of balance in the interests of the two sides (Bárdi Nándor, Dan Berindei, Horváth István);

– A marked tendency on both sides to isolate oneself in one’s believed truths (Demény Péter).

3.3. The respondents suggested the following measures to enhance the intensity of the relations:

– Compiling a thorough inventory of the problems that burden the relations (Bárdi Nándor, Haller István);

– Doing away with the ethnocentric historical perspective that perpetuates the mutual enemy image on one⁵⁰ or both sides (Dénes László, Haller István, Márton Árpád, Victor Neumann, Ványolós A. István, Daniel Vighi);

– The influence on public thinking on both sides, the development of closer relations based on European values and the squeezing out of nationalism (Haller István, Ioan-Aurel Pop, Rais Wallner István, Daniel Vighi);

– Extending the exchange visits to various layers of the society (Demény Péter, Dénes László, Haller István); more intense collaboration between the governmental and local institutions (e.g. Enyedi György); extended cultural exchanges for better reciprocal knowledge (Mircea Geoană, Jankó Szép Sándor, Kántor Lajos, Kürti László, Szabad György, Tóth Gy. László, Daniel Vighi); collaboration between various scientific societies, experts and institutions (Enyedi György, Szájer József, Tóth Gy. László); collaboration to enhance the dynamic of a common labor market (Kürti László, Somai József); collaboration in tourism (Mircea Geoană, Somai József); development of a bilateral strategy for more efficient environment protection (e.g. Tóth Gy. László); organizing common sport events (Szabad György); encouraging collaboration between the youth (e.g. Enyedi György); taking advantage of the bilingualism of the Hungarians in Romania for enlarging the forms of col-

⁵⁰ Certain answers bear a clear-cut bias in the issue of prejudices, in the sense that the initiatives aiming at removing them are viewed as being necessary only on the other side.

laboration (Enyedi György); encouragement of cross-border collaborations in various fields of everyday life, which are ignorant of ethnic cleavage and therefore do not reinforce or reproduce them (Bárdi Nándor, Horváth István);

– The convenient resolution of the situation of the Hungarians in Romania, which can lead to a deeper appreciation of Romanian citizenship on behalf of the members of the Hungarian minority; in such circumstances the improvement of the minority's situation would not be excepted only from Hungary; the predominant Budapest-orientedness of the members of the Hungarian community in Romania would gradually decline (Bárdi Nándor, Dénes László, Somai József, Rais Wallner István);

– The reciprocity of bilingualism in areas of Romania also inhabited by Hungarians, the reflection of this principle in educational policies and in school practices (Jankó Szép Sándor);

– More transparent Hungarian foreign policy which consistently supports Romania's accession to the Euro-Atlantic structures (Szabó Vilmos).

3.4. As concerns the applicability of the French-German reconciliation model in the context of the Romanian-Hungarian relations, the stances taken can be grouped according to the following criteria: (1) some respondents offered arguments against the parallel between the two situations and/or named alternative models which they considered more appropriate or more efficient for the context of the Romanian-Hungarian relations; (2) some respondents pointed out the similarities between the two situations and, accordingly, sustained the at least partial applicability of the model; and finally (3) most emphasized the differences and voiced their doubts concerning the applicability of the model; in this last category many respondents adopted the position that the Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation calls for a specific path which cannot be paralleled to anything else. In the following, we will summarize the arguments expressed in the answers grouped in the above categories⁵¹:

3.4.1. The respondents argued for the inappropriateness of the parallel, and the need for alternative models in the following ways:

– The multi-century coexistence of the French and the Germans in Switzerland, based on mutual acceptance and cooperation, is a more appropriate model in the context of the Romanian-Hungarian relations than the French-German reconciliation (Bárdi Nándor, Lendvai L. Ferenc, Tóth Gy. László);

– The settlement of the Austrian-Italian relations and the South-Tirol arrangement would more probably lead to results in the context of the Romanian-Hungarian relations, too (Bárdi Nándor, Németh Zsolt);

⁵¹ It is important to note that these categories do not exclude each other: some statements, due to their complexity, can be brought as examples for all three categories.

– The Åland Islands model provided by the Finnish-Swedish relations could be a better example to follow for the Romanian-Hungarian relations (Haller István, Kende Péter, Jankó Szép Sándor);

– The evolution of the Romanian-Hungarian relations cannot be compared to the French-German historical reconciliation because the situation evolves in accordance with its specific and unrepeatable logic, so in fact we can talk about the model of the Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation (Vasile Dâncu, Szabó Tibor); or such a model should be invented by a common effort of those interested: Hungarians and Romanians (Gál Kinga, Németh Zsolt Szájer József);

– The French-German reconciliation cannot be a model because it is, in fact, nothing more than a myth; it is the model not of reconciliation, but of avoiding the problems, hiding them, the model of the “let bygones be bygones” type of solution (Dénes László, Kürti László);

– The parallel between the two models has no base in reality; the effort only gives voice to wishes (Kántor Lajos); or its not more than mere political trick (Anton Niculescu).

3.4.2. The following arguments were brought in support of the analogy between the two situations and, accordingly, in support of the partial applicability of the French-German reconciliation model in the context of the Hungarian-Romanian relations:

– The common geopolitical of interests of the two sides, regional stability as a stake, can be used as evidence for the analogy between the two situations (Gabriel Andreescu, Gál Kinga, Mircea Geoană);

– The settlement of the Romanian-Hungarian relations can be interpreted as a condition of the European Union’s successful expansion to the East, and the stability of the Central-Eastern European region (Mircea Geoană, Victor Neumann, Szabad György, Szabó Vilmos);

– The analogy is justified, though the reconciliation between Romania and Hungary is still in full process; the reconciliation has to be based on the fair implementation of the bilateral treaty signed by the parties in 1996 (Ioan-Aurel Pop, Dan Berindei).

3.4.3. The respondents identified the following arguments in support of the differences between the two situations, and, accordingly, the inapplicability of the model:

– Unlike the French-German relations, the real stake in the Romanian-Hungarian relations is of domestic policy, being closely related to the situation of the Hungarians in Romania (Gabriel Andreescu, Gál Kinga);

– While France and Germany are two influential states of Europe, and the settlement of their relation was of commensurate importance, Romania and Hungary are Central Eastern European countries with little influence, and the evolution of their relations does not have an outstanding importance from the entire European perspective (Bárdi Nándor, Enyedi György, Kende Péter);

– The French-German model is inapplicable in the Romanian-Hungarian context because the traditions, the history of mentalities and of political culture of the region are different (Vasile Dâncu, Dénes László, Rais Wallner István);

– The differences in the regions that are the object of discussion in the two situations, Alsace-Lotharingia and Transylvania: the sizes of the minorities living in the two areas are incomparable (Márton Árpád, Németh Zsolt, Szájer József); the two regions have quite different identity structures (Németh Zsolt, Victor Neumann, Tóth Gy. László);

– The differences between the duration and the nature of the two conflicts: the French-German conflict has a shorter history than the Romanian-Hungarian one, and its basis was their rivalry for supremacy in Europe; reconciliation was achieved in circumstances that cannot be considered in parallel with the evolution of the Romanian-Hungarian relations (Gál Kinga, Horváth István, Németh Zsolt, Szabó Tibor, Ványolós A. István);

– In the present of the Romanian-Hungarian relations there are no actors comparable to those that made the French-German reconciliation possible, placing the interests of Europe beyond the national interests (Jankó Szép Sándor).

Conclusions

The image that emerges from the answers is, in the opinion of the initiators of the present edition, highly illustrative. It can be stated, with slight exaggeration, that while most of the respondents on behalf of the Hungarians oppose the parallel, or at least formulate their positions in terms of lack of trust in the possibilities provided by the model, the Romanian respondents consider the issue of Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation resolved. This results in the opinion shared by both parties that the issue, as it was formulated by the initiators of the survey, is not worth being dealt with.

It seems obvious that both those speaking on behalf of the Hungarians, and the Romanians apparently ignored that the history of the French-German reconciliation did not close on January 22, 1963, by signing the French-German Treaty of Collaboration. On the contrary, the actual work only began afterwards, and though less intensely, it still continues today, four decades later. During the four decades between the beginning and now, highly committed inter-governmental collaboration occurred, which led to the mobilization of sizable resources on both sides, affecting generations after generations of youth, and shaping their perspective on the future of the French-German relationships.

In the opinion of the initiators of the present volume and of the survey that preceded it, it is hardly necessary to have a more convincing proof than the several important observations summarized in the above list for the need for an undertaking comparable, in the context of the Romanian-Hungarian relations, to the work the Office Franco-Allemand pour la Jeunesse/Deutsch-

Französisches Jugendwerk (OFAJ/DFJW) has carried out in the history of the French-German reconciliation for over four decades.

Our initiative aims to serve this purpose. It can only be hoped that this initiative will find its echo, and that the cause will find an appropriately influential proponent before the unsettled nature of the Romanian-Hungarian relations is removed from the agenda by the massive emigration of the Hungarian minority from Romania.

Levente SALAT

Cluj, September 2004