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# CUPRINS – SUMMARY – RÉSUMÉ

## ISTORIE

---

- EPIDEMIILE DE CIUMĂ DIN TRANSILVANIA (1600-1663). NOI DATE ŞI APRECIERI ÎN  
CONTEXTUL EPIDEMIC EUROPEAN (II)..... 9  
**MIHAI GEORGIŢĂ**  
PLAGUE ENDEMICS IN TRANSYLVANIA (1600-  
1663). NEW DATA AND ASSESSMENTS (II)
- ANII PETRECUŢI DE SIMION BĂRNUŢIU LA LICEUL DIN CAREI..... 45  
**MARTA CORDEA, VIOREL CÂMPEAN**  
THE YEARS SPENT BY SIMION BĂRNUŢIU AT THE CAREI HIGH SCHOOL
- COMBATAREA ALCOOLISMULUI ÎN CRIŞANA LA ÎNCEPUTUL VEACULUI AL XX-LEA .....53  
**IOAN CIORBA**  
COMBATING ALCOHOLISM IN CRIŞANA AT THE  
BEGINNING OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY
- ETAPA FINALĂ A CONDIŢIEI DE PRIZONIER A MAIORULUI GHEORGHE CARACAŞ..... 63  
**PETRE DIN**  
THE FINAL STAGE OF MAJOR GHEORGHE CARACAS'S  
CONDITION AS A WAR PRISONER
- FRONTIERE NAŢIONALE, FRONTIERE IDENTITARE SAU GRANIŢE CULTURALE DUPĂ  
MARELE RĂZBOI LA ROMÂNII DIN FOSTA UNGARIE .....75  
**DOREL MARC**  
NATIONAL BORDERS, IDENTITY BORDERS OR CULTURAL BORDERS AFTER  
THE GREAT WAR FOR ROMANIANS FROM THE FORMER HUNGARY
- CONSIDERAŢII PE MARGINEA VIEŢII ŞI ACTIVITĂŢII AVOCATULUI OCTAVIAN  
FELECAN (1867-1944), PREFECTUL JUDEŢULUI TURDA-ARIEŞ..... 101  
**RĂZVAN MIHAI NEAGU**  
CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE LIFE AND ACTIVITY OF THE LAWYER  
OCTAVIAN FELECAN (1867-1944), PREFECT OF TURDA-ARIEŞ COUNTY
- BISERICA ORTODOXĂ „SFINŢII MIHAIL ŞI GAVRIIL” DIN LOCALITATEA SÂNMICLĂUŞ  
– UN SIMBOL IDENTITAR AL COMUNITĂŢII ROMÂNEŞTI DIN JUDEŢUL SATU MARE ....107  
**PAULA VIRAG**  
THE ORTHODOX CHURCH „SAINTS MIHAIL AND GAVRIIL”  
FROM SANMICLAUS – AN IDENTITY SYMBOL OF THE  
ROMANIAN COMMUNITY FROM SATU MARE COUNTY
- CLIŞEE ETNICE ROMÂNEŞTI ŞI MAGHIARE ÎN 1989 ..... 119  
**SORIN MITU**  
ROMANIAN AND HUNGARIAN ETHNIC STEREOTYPES IN 1989

## ETNOGRAFIE

---

- TEMA COPILULUI ÎN CADRUL CERCETĂRILOR ȘCOLII MONOGRAFICE DIN ȚARA  
FĂGĂRAȘULUI.....129  
**CRISTIAN VEREȘ**  
CHILDREN IN MONOGRAPHIC RESEARCH FROM FĂGĂRAȘ COUNTY
- ULIȚA COPILĂRIEI. COPILĂRIA DIN SATUL SĂLĂJEAN AL SECOLULUI TRECUT .....153  
**OLIMPIA MUREȘAN**  
THE CHILDHOOD STREET. CHILDHOOD OF THE PAST CENTURY IN SALAJ COUNTY
- BOLILE COPILĂRIEI ȘI VINDECAREA LOR MAGICĂ..... 179  
**CAMELIA BURGHELE**  
CHILDHOOD DISEASES AND THEIR MAGICAL CURE
- UNIVERSUL COPILĂRIEI ÎN SATUL FĂGĂRĂȘEAN DIN PERIOADA INTERBELICĂ  
REFLECTAT ÎN „AMINTIRI DIN COPILĂRIE” DE ION GAVRILĂ OGORANU .....199  
**IOANA DOBRESCU**  
THE UNIVERSE OF CHILDHOOD IN THE VILLAGE OF FĂGĂRAȘ FROM THE INTERWAR  
PERIOD REFLECTED IN "MEMORIES FROM CHILDHOOD" BY ION GAVRILĂ OGORANU
- METAMORFOZA SACRIFICIULUI: DARUL ȘI OFRANDA..... 215  
**EUGEN ȚEPEȘ STROIA**  
METAMORPHOSIS OF THE SACRED: THE GIFT AND THE OFFERING
- INDUSTRIA CASNICĂ DIN BANAT.....223  
**MARIUS MATEI**  
THE HOUSEHOLD INDUSTRY OF BANAT
- VALOAREA DOCUMENTARĂ A FOTOGRAFIILOR DINTR-UN MANUSCRIS NEPUBLICAT.  
„MONUMENTE ISTORICE DIN N-V TRANSILVANIEI”, COLECȚIA IONIȚĂ G. ANDRON,  
ARHIVA MUZEULUI JUDEȚEAN SATU MARE .....229  
**MIHAELA GRIGOREAN**  
DOCUMENTARY VALUE OF PHOTOGRAPHS IN AN UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPT.  
“HISTORICAL MONUMENTS FROM N-W TRANSYLVANIA”, THE IONIȚĂ  
G. ANDRON COLLECTION, ARCHIVE OF THE SATU MARE COUNTY MUSEUM
- CONTRIBUȚII LA CERCETAREA PODOABELOR COSTUMELOR DE SĂRBĂTOARE  
MARAMUREȘENE ȘI ROMÂNEȘTI .....247  
**PAMFIL BILȚIU, MARIA BILȚIU**  
CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE RESEARCH OF THE ORNAMENTS OF  
TRADITIONAL COSTUMES (MARAMUREȘ, ROUMANIA)
- FOLCLORUL ÎNTUNECAT AL SĂLAJULUI: STRIGOI, VRĂJITOARE ȘI DRACI ÎN  
MENTALITATEA RURALĂ .....253  
**MĂLĂIA ANCA MARIA**  
THE DARK FOLKLORE OF SĂLAJ: STRIGOI, WITCHES,  
AND DEVILS IN RURAL MENTALITY

REFUGII ALE CREDINCIOȘILOR. ICOANE ȘI CRUCI DE BRONZ RUSEȘTI DIN  
COLECȚIA MUZEULUI MUNICIPIULUI BUCUREȘTI .....263

**NICOLETA BĂDILĂ**

REFUGES OF THE DEVOTIONALS: RUSSIAN COPPER ICONS AND CROSSES  
FROM THE COLLECTION OF BUCHAREST MUNICIPALITY MUSEUM

SIMPOZIONUL ȘTIINȚIFIC DESTINE  
FRÂNTE ÎN ÎNCHISORILE COMUNISTE  
– BĂDĂCIN, 27 SEPTEMBRIE 2024

---

IZOLAREA, DETENȚIA ȘI ASASINAREA ULTIMULUI SECRETAR GENERAL AL C.C. AL  
P.C.R. DIN PERIOADA ILEGALITĂȚII, ȘTEFAN FORIȘ. DEBUTUL PROCESULUI DE  
CANIBALIZARE A ELITEI COMUNIȘTILOR DIN ROMÂNIA (APRILIE 1944 – IUNIE 1946) ... 281

**AUGUSTIN ȚĂRĂU**

THE ISOLATION, DETENTION AND ASSASSINATION OF THE LAST  
SECRETARY OF THE C.C. OF P.C.R. FROM THE PERIOD OF ILEGALITY,  
ȘTEFAN FORIȘ. THE BEGINNING OF THE PROCESS OF CANNIBALIZATION  
OF THE COMMUNIST ELITE IN ROMANIA (APRIL 1944-JUNE 1946)

THE NOVEMBER ELECTIONS OF 1946 AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE  
COMMUNIST POWER IN ROMANIA IN EARL 1947 ..... 317

**VIRGILIU ȚĂRĂU**

ALEGERILE PARLAMENTARE DIN NOIEMBRIE 1946 ȘI CONSOLIDAREA  
PUTERII COMUNISTE ÎN ROMÂNIA, ÎN ANUL 1947

POLITICĂ ȘI DIPLOMAȚIE ÎN PRIMII ANI AI REGIMULUI COMUNIST DIN ROMÂNIA –  
„CABINETUL NEGRU” DE LA MINISTERUL AFACERILOR STRĂINE (1944–1947) .....333

**STELIAN OBIZIUC**

POLITICS AND DIPLOMACY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE  
COMUNIST REGIME IN ROMANIA – THE „BLACK CABINET”  
OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRES (1944–1947)

IULIU MANIU’S TRIAL AND PRISON YEARS FROM HUNGARIAN PERSPECTIVE .....355

**MARCHUT RÉKA**

PROCESUL LUI IULIU MANIU ȘI ANII DE ÎNCHISOARE  
DIN PERSPECTIVĂ MAGHIARĂ

ATTEMPTS TO FREE IULIU MANIU FROM GALATI PRISON BY HIS SISTER CORNELIA .... 371

**ANA-MARIA BORZ**

ÎNCERCĂRI DE ELIBERARE A LUI IULIU MANIU DIN ÎNCHISOAREA  
GALATI ÎNTREPRINSE DE SORA LUI, CORNELIA

IULIU MANIU, SIMBOLO DI RESISTENZA E UNITÀ NELL’ESILIO ROMENO .....379

**ANCA STÂNGACIU**

IULIU MANIU, SIMBOL DE REZISTENȚĂ ȘI UNITATE ÎN EXILUL ROMÂNESC

UN COLABORATOR APROPIAT AL LUI IULIU MANIU: DR. VIRGIL SOLOMON .....387

**CLAUDIU SECAȘIU**

VIRGIL SOLOMON – A CLOSE COLLABORATOR OF IULIU MANIU

THE ARREST OF THE BASILIAN SUPERIOR ATANASIE MAXIM IN 1948 .....	401
<b>IONUȚ VIDA-SIMITI</b>	
ARESTAREA SUPERIORULUI BASILIAL ATANASIE MAXIM ÎN 1948	
TEACHERS OF SALAJ IN COMMUNIST PRISONS. CASE STUDY: ZAHARIA BĂRDAȘU .....	409
<b>MARIN POP</b>	
ÎNVĂȚĂTORI SĂLĂJENI ÎN TEMNIȚELE COMUNISTE. STUDIU DE CAZ: ZAHARIA BĂRDAȘIU	
LIDERI SĂTMĂRENI TRECUȚI PRIN TEMNIȚELE SECURITĂȚII (I) .....	431
<b>CLAUDIU PORUMBĂCEAN</b>	
THE LEADERS OF SATU MARE JAILED BY THE SECURITATE	
FEMEI SĂTMĂRENE ÎN TEMNIȚE COMUNISTE.....	443
<b>MARTA CORDEA</b>	
WOMEN FROM SATU MARE IN COMMUNIST PRISONS	
PREOȚI GRECO-CATOLICI DIN JUDEȚUL SATU MARE ÎN ÎNCHISORILE COMUNISTE .....	455
<b>VIOREL CÂMPEAN</b>	
GREEK CATHOLIC PRIESTS FROM SATU MARE COUNTY IN COMMUNIST PRISONS	
THE SUDDEN ENDING DESTINY OF A TRUE PATRIOT: TIBERIU MOȘOIU. THE EXILE ....	465
<b>LAURA-DUMITRANA RATH BOȘCA</b>	
DESTINUL ÎNTRERUPT AL UNUI IUBITOR DE ȚARĂ: TIBERIU MOȘOIU. EXILUL	
ORGANIZAȚIA „AVÂNTUL TINEREȚII” DE LA ȘCOALA NORMALĂ DE CONDUCĂTOARE DIN BEIUȘ ÎN ÎNCHISORILE COMUNISTE.....	475
<b>CRISTINA LIANA PUȘCAȘ</b>	
THE „SOAR OF THE YOUTH” ORGANIZATION FROM THE CONDUCTOR SECONDARY SCHOOL OF BEIUȘ IN THE COMMUNIST PRISONS	
STUDENTS UNDER THE CONTROL OF SECURITY. THE „ION LUCA CARAGIALE” CASE INSTITUTE OF THEATRICAL ARTS AND CINEMATOGRAPHY (1954–1955).....	495
<b>GABRIEL MOISA</b>	
STUDENȚII SUB CONTROLUL SECURITĂȚII. CAZUL INSTITUTULUI DE TEATRU ARTĂ ȘI CINEMATOGRAFIE „ION LUCA CARAGIALE” (1954–1955)	
„ANII NIMĂNUI” TRĂIȚI DE GABRIEL ȚEPELEA. CONTRIBUȚII ISTORICO-LITERARE ...	507
<b>CRISTIAN-FLORIN NEGRU</b>	
“NOBODY’S YEARS” LIVED BY GABRIEL ȚEPELEA. HISTORICAL-LITERARY CONTRIBUTIONS	

## RECENZII

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DIN PETRE, <i>ISTORIE, IDENTITATE ȘI MENTALITĂȚI COLECTIVE ROMÂNEȘTI ÎN SECOLELE XVIII-XX</i> , EDITURA NAPOCA STAR, CLUJ-NAPOCA, 2024, 200 P. ....	519
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# IULIU MANIU'S TRIAL AND PRISON YEARS FROM HUNGARIAN PERSPECTIVE

MARCHUT RÉKA\*

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## PROCESUL LUI IULIU MANIU ȘI ANII DE ÎNCHISOARE DIN PERSPECTIVĂ MAGHIARĂ

**ABSTRACT:** *The Hungarian public today has either never heard of Iuliu Maniu, or if they have, they usually remember the massacres of the Maniu Guards. The root of this distorted image, which still persists today, is believed to lie in the time of Maniu's trial and his years in prison.*

*In this paper, I seek to answer the question of how the press and political public opinion of the time, guided by communist ideology, influenced the image of Maniu in the wider public; how did the Romanian and Hungarian political leadership create an enemy image of Maniu and what fault lines were created between the Hungarian and Romanian political and social communities?*

*I will show how ethnic identity was subordinated to political loyalties in the post-World War II Soviet-style state and the means used to construct the enemy image.*

*I base my research on the contemporary Transylvanian and Hungarian press and archival sources, primarily the documents of the Hungarian Embassy in Bucharest and the Peace Preparatory Department.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Iuliu Maniu, Hungarians in Romania, communist system, political impeachment, prison*

**REZUMAT:** *Publicul maghiar de astăzi fie nu a auzit niciodată de Iuliu Maniu, fie, dacă a auzit, de obicei își amintește de masacrele gărzilor lui Maniu. Se crede că rădăcina acestei imagini distorsionate, care persistă și astăzi, se află în perioada procesului lui Maniu și a anilor de închisoare.*

*În această lucrare, încerc să răspund la întrebarea cum presa și opinia publică politică a vremii, ghidate de ideologia comunistă, au influențat imaginea lui Maniu în rândul publicului larg; cum au creat liderii politici români și maghiari o imagine dușmănoasă a lui Maniu și ce falii au fost create între comunitățile politice și sociale maghiare și române? Voi arăta modul în care identitatea etnică a fost subordonată loialităților politice în statul de tip sovietic de după cel de-al Doilea Război Mondial și mijloacele folosite pentru a construi imaginea inamicului.*

*Îmi bazez cercetarea pe presa contemporană transilvăneană și maghiară și pe surse de arhivă, în principal documentele Ambasadei Ungariei la București și ale Departamentului de Pregătire pentru Pace.*

**CUVINTE-CHEIE:** *Iuliu Maniu, maghiari din România, sistem comunist, demitere politică, închisoare*

Nobody talks about Iuliu Maniu as “our Gyuluka”<sup>1</sup> anymore, but “our Gróza Péter” as the “most Hungarian Romanian”<sup>2</sup> is still a vivid experience for the older Hungarian generation. It is a strange irony of historical memory that while today's Hungarian public opinion condemns the operators of the communist system and sympathizes with the victims of communism, Petru Groza still has a positive image

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\* The author is a historian by the HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences Institute for Minority Studies, Budapest, email: marchut.reka@tk.hu The study was carried out in the framework of the NKFIH project K 143767.

<sup>1</sup> „Gyuluka” is a cute nickname for the Hungarian version of the name Iuliu (Gyula). Before 1918, the name Maniu Gyula is mostly used in contemporary sources, but even after the change of empire, Hungarian sources often use the Magyarized name. The nickname „Gyuluka” was also used in the family, but it was also used in circles of friends and acquaintances. See: Marchut 2024a, pp. 53–64.

<sup>2</sup> The term „the most Hungarian Romanian” was not only applied to Petru Groza. The name was also given to Emanoil Gojdu, a Romanian politician and philanthropist from Hungary.

in the eyes of some of the older Hungarians, while Iuliu Maniu, who died in the prison cell in Sighetu Marmăției, is unknown or have a negative image of him. The root of this distorted image, which still persists today, is believed to lie in the time of Maniu's trial and his years in prison.

In this study, I seek to answer the question of how the press and political public opinion, guided by the communist ideology of the time, influenced the image of Maniu in the wider public; how did the Romanian and Hungarian political leadership create an enemy image of Maniu and what fault lines were created between the Hungarian and Romanian political and social communities?

After the wars, the issue of war crimes and accountability becomes an important question. This was also the case after the Second World War. In itself, this would not be a problem if there were individual accountability by revealing real past actions. But this was not the case, instead, ethnic, social and religious groups were stigmatised on the basis of collective guilt, both for revenge and for political gain, in order to stabilise the new system that was being built, in this case on the Soviet model. At the same time, the anti-era thinking, so often characteristic in history and in the present, came into operation, that the new system can be built and safely maintained at the price of dismantling the old system. Millions of people, including Hungarians, Romanians and Iuliu Maniu, fell victim to collective responsibility and anti-era thinking after the Second World War.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I would like to use two theoretical frameworks to introduce the topic under discussion. One approaches the topic from the perspective of ethnic identity and political loyalty, and the other examines the mechanism of the creation of the enemy image. In examining the former, I use David Brown's triple model as a basis, according to which there are three approaches to national identity: the primordialist, the situationalist, and the constructivist. The primordial element of identity is based on emotional loyalty to the community, the important components of which are language, religion, family, and culture. According to Brown, this is a fixed, fixed, well-defined identity. On the other hand, there is the situational identity element, which is shaped by the situations that arise, and interests are the driving forces in this; but as such it is a 'fluid', ever-changing identity. And the third element of identity, which becomes powerful and decisive in the period under discussion, is the constructivist identity, the basis of which is ideology, and it also includes the myths of the community, which ideologies shape, recreate or destroy based on their own interests.<sup>3</sup>

In our case, this is interesting from the point of view of looking at how in the Hungarian community the primordialist identity element is subordinated to the constructivist one, or in other words how the emphasis is shifted from ethnic identity to political loyalty, so I identify ethnic identity with the primordialist and political loyalty with the constructivist, with the obvious situationalist character of ethnic identity. The question is: has this shift in emphasis caused a fault line within the community, and how has this affected the relationship with Maniu?

The other theoretical framework is about the construction of the enemy image, which is not a recent phenomenon but an ancient topos that can have an identity-forming and identity-shaping character, motivate to fight and strengthen loyalty to one's own group. The image of the enemy is not constant, it can always be rewritten and reinterpreted, and it often goes hand in hand with the image of guilt, as we can see in the case of Maniu. In Hungarian political science, Márton Szabó has dealt in detail with the political opponent/enemy, or as he calls it, the "political stranger".<sup>4</sup> We can say that the enemy is conceptualized and manifested in the discursive space. In this space, there is room for stereotyping, for marking the opposition, for overgeneralization, for slander and emotional appeals. In addition, however,

<sup>3</sup> Brown 2000. The figure was formed by David Brown. See Brown 2000, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Szabó 2006

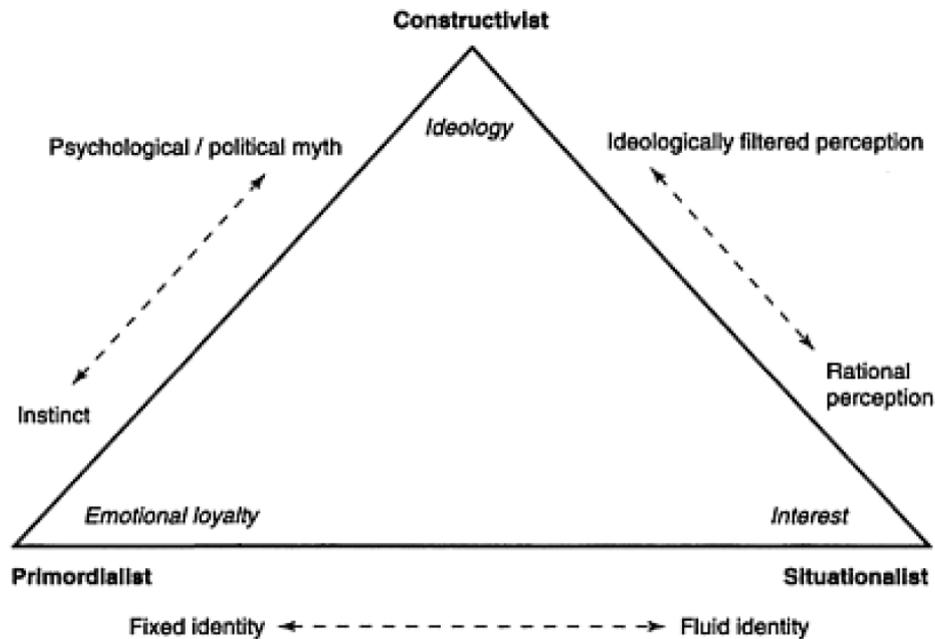


Figure 1 National identity—the three conceptual languages

there is also the criminalisation of political acts, whereby the actions of the enemy are rightly or wrongly portrayed as acts to be prosecuted under criminal law. The practical implementation of all this will be seen below.

### PUBLIC HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In order to put the issue in context, we need to point out the similarities and differences between the Hungarian and Romanian domestic political situations after the Second World War. Both countries emerged from the Second World War as losers, but while Romania switched to the side of the Allies on 23 August 1944, in Hungary, under German occupation since 19 March 1944, the governor Miklós Horthy's attempt to escape failed on 15 October. After the war, both countries were in armistice status, which meant that they were under the supervision of the Allied Control Committee. An important difference, however, was that while in Romania the communist takeover of all areas of state power took place immediately after the war, in Hungary there was a brief period, two years between 1945 and 1947, when coalition government was achieved and the party with the greatest mandate was the Independent Smallholders' Party in government. This meant that the building of a Soviet-style system also started later. The prosecution of war criminals began in both countries immediately after the war, but who was considered a war criminal differed significantly in the first year and a half to two years. The crackdown on political opponents began in Romania immediately after the war, in Hungary only from 1947.

The opposing political forces between the two world wars, the National Peasants' Party (PNT)<sup>5</sup> led by Maniu and the National Liberal Party (PNL)<sup>6</sup> led by Bratianu, expressed their common will on 20 June 1944, together with several other parties, to form the National Democratic Bloc, which wanted to leave the German federal system. The emerging communist regime, however, forged the conservative

<sup>5</sup> In Romanian: Partidul Național Țărănesc (PNT) The party was formed in 1926 through the fusion of the Romanian National Party, a conservative regional political group in Transylvania, and the Peasant's Party, centred in the Old Kingdom and Bessarabia.

<sup>6</sup> In Romanian: Partidul Național Liberal (PNL)

democrat Maniu and the liberal democrat Bratianu into a united front. Their parties became the so-called. Their parties became the so-called “historical” parties, symbolic enemies of the emerging dictatorial regime. In public discourse, the „historical” and the „democratic” forces were pitted against each other.

### IULIU MANIU AND THE MNSZ

In the post-World War II period, the only legal political organisation of Hungarians in Romania was the Hungarian People’s Union (MNSZ)<sup>7</sup>. In the beginning, it had three main tendencies: the right wing (István Decsy, Géza Nagy), the centre (Gyárfás Kurkó, Edgár Balogh, János Demeter, Lajos Csógör) and the left wing (László Bányai, Nándor Czíkó, Béla Csákány, Lajos Takács). However, in 1946, the representatives of the right wing were marginalized,<sup>8</sup> and in 1947, the centrists as well. There is no consensus among historians as to where the essential fault lines were drawn,<sup>9</sup> but by 1947 the organisation had become ideologically fully integrated into the new system that was emerging, a left-wing organisation that espoused communist principles. It was able to work in full harmony with Petru Groza, considered the „most Hungarian Romanian”, and believed that the future of Romania would be secured by the emerging Soviet-style power structure. The ideological harmony was not allowed to be disturbed by ethnic tensions and conflicts. They believed that minority grievances and aspirations should now be pushed to the background, because the primary goal was to build internationalism.<sup>10</sup> From this perspective, we can understand why Iuliu Maniu became one of the main enemies of the MNSZ and vice versa.

The National Peasant Party (PNT) identified the Hungarian population with the MNSZ, but just as the Romanian Communist Party (PCR)<sup>11</sup> was seen as being motivated by internationalism and Soviet interests, the MNSZ was also seen as having irredentist aims, and as the latter two were allied, the PNT accused the PCR of being a Hungarian bourgeoisie. But the PNT was not united either. It was also divided into at least two parts. The conservative branch was united under the presidency of Maniu, with supporters mainly in Transylvania. The more radical branch was represented in the government. Most of the old peasant party members were clustered around the passive Ion Michalache and Nicolae Lupu.<sup>12</sup> It could also be said that the party had a Transylvanian and a Regatian leadership, which only Maniu’s undisputed authority could unite.<sup>13</sup> Maniu told a press conference for foreign journalists on 20 September 1945 that “even the last person in Romania knows that this government is supported by Hungarian fascists left over from the time of the Horthist regime”.<sup>14</sup> From an official Romanian Hungarian perspective, an equals sign was placed between the Maniu Guards and Maniu.

The Romanian communist press drew attention to the fact that no equivalence could be drawn between the Hungarian people and the Hungarian “fascists” and protested against the massacres carried

<sup>7</sup> In Hungarian: Magyar Népi Szövetség (MNSZ), in Romanian: Uniunea Populară Maghiară (UPM). This left-wing political party was active in Romania between 1934 and 1953. Until 1944 its name was Union of Hungarian Workers of Romania (Magyar Dolgozók Országos Szövetsége – MADOSZ).

<sup>8</sup> The sharpest contrast was in the border issue. The right wing did not want to accept the established borders, while the left wing accepted the status quo. There were also sharp differences in the leadership, but entire county and district sections also declared that they do not agree with the MNSZ’s position on territorial issues, and many members announced their withdrawal from the Association. See: Report of Dr. Dezső Hirsch, ministerial advisor, Budapest, January 25, 1946. National Archives of Hungary Central Archive (MNL OL) XIX-J-1-a Békeelőkészítő Osztály iratai [Peace Preparation Department Papers] Box no. 60, IV-131 item, f. 45.

<sup>9</sup> The differences of opinion on this issue are presented by Kovács 2023.

<sup>10</sup> About the MNSZ see also: Lönhárt 2008; Nagy, Olti 2009

<sup>11</sup> In Romanian: Partidul Comunist Român (PCR)

<sup>12</sup> Román feljegyzés [Romanian note] MNL OL XIX-J-1-a Box no. 60, IV-131 item, f. 232.

<sup>13</sup> Confidential report of the Hungarian Legation in Bucharest to János Gyöngyösi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, January 10, 1947, MNL OL XIX-J-1-a Box no. 60, IV-131 item, f. 455-457.

<sup>14</sup> Scurtu 1994, p. 365.; Nagy, Olti 2009, p. 36.

out by the Maniu Guards in Transylvania. The PCR thus launched a press campaign against its main rival, Maniu. The *România Liberă* columnist asked whether Maniu was aware of these atrocities. The Transylvanian Hungarian press, *Világosság* edited in Cluj and the daily *Népi Egység* published in Braşov adopted or presented the statements of the Romanian left-wing press sympathetic to the Hungarians, and at the same time published anti-Hungarian articles appearing in the peasant party papers (*Patria*, *Dreptatea*). And there were many of them. In the issue of *Patria* on March 19, 1946, the editorial entitled „Fire under the ashes” was published, in which it was written that the attacks against Maniu in Cluj<sup>15</sup> are not the work of the Romanian people, because the Romanian people do not hate Maniu, but are attacked by those groups, “who were dazzled by the idea of the dominance of the Saint Stephen’s crown.”<sup>16</sup>

Hungarian diplomatic life was also strongly ideologically driven. According to reports from the Hungarian Legation in Bucharest, the “Maniuiists” were responsible for all anti-Hungarian atrocities, and we read that anti-Hungarian sentiment was also fomented by the “historical” parties.<sup>17</sup> As a result, Iuliu Maniu became the primary target of the Hungarian press for the leaders of the MNSZ, even though Maniu had the greatest support in the Hungarian-inhabited regions.<sup>18</sup> This disproves two things at once: it disproves that Hungarians in Transylvania were united in the ideological line of the MNSZ, and it also disproves that Hungarians as a whole held Maniu responsible for the atrocities committed by Maniu Guards.

That there was as much of a rift among Hungarians as among Romanians is illustrated by the following quote from the newspaper *Szabad Szó* published in Târgu Mureş: “When the Romanian reaction attacks the Groza government, it is waging a campaign of worker bloodshed and anti-Hungarian assassinations, while at the same time the Hungarian reaction, in line with it, slanders the government and attacks our mass organization, which is fighting to redress its grievances, in the back. We cannot tolerate the betrayal of the interests of our people by these mourning Hungarians of Maniu for selfish landlord and other interests, under the guise of national salvation.”<sup>19</sup> The quote is from the manifesto of the Central Administrative Committee of the MNSZ addressed to the Hungarians of Romania. An article in the January 5, 1946 issue of *Világosság*, entitled “Maniu’s Soul Fishermen”, condemned the Hungarian “gentlemen” who were negotiating with Maniu.<sup>20</sup>

### „MANIU’S HUNGARIANS”

And who were “Maniu’s mourning Hungarians”? Among others, Ferenc Nagy, the Hungary’s Prime Minister from the Smallholders Party and supporters of bourgeois democracy. Before the 1946 elections, the MNSZ observed with concern that pro-smallholder agitation was taking place in some regions and that they were encouraging people to vote for the Maniu party. In these regions, the Maniuses also launched powerful propaganda.<sup>21</sup> The MNSZ carried out anti-Maniu propaganda. László Bányai, who belonged to the left wing of the organisation, drew the attention of the leadership at the Braşov general assembly held between 18 and 20 March 1946 to the fact that Maniu had also negotiated with

<sup>15</sup> On the walls of the streets of Cluj Maniu was plastered with various obscene expressions. See: MNL OL XIX-J-1-a Box no. 60, IV-131 item, f. 18.

<sup>16</sup> *Az erdélyi magyarság politikai helyzete 1946. május havában* [The political situation of Transylvanian Hungarians in May 1946] MNL OL XIX-J-33-a Bukaresti Nagykövetség iratai [Papers of the Hungarian Legation in Bucharest] Box 43 Bukarest 1946 – 1948 Külpolitikai, belpolitikai tájékoztatók [Foreign affairs, domestic affairs briefings] f. 448.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem* f. 426–433.

<sup>18</sup> Nagy, Olti 2009, p. 37.

<sup>19</sup> *Az MNSZ központi intézőbizottságának kiáltványa az ország magyarságához* [Manifesto of the central management committee of the MNSZ to the Hungarians of the country], *Szabad Szó* (*Marosvásárhely*), November 21, 1945, p. 1. Published also: Vincze 2003, pp. 34–35. and Nagy, Olti 2009, p. 214.

<sup>20</sup> *Maniu lélekhalásai* (Maniu’s Soul Fishermen), *Világosság*, January 5, 1946, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> Nagy, Olti 2009, p. 300.

some “reactionary Hungarian gentlemen”, promising them press support and money.<sup>22</sup> Maniu also allegedly promised that a Hungarian section would be set up within the PNTȚ.<sup>23</sup> The president of the MNSZ, Kurkó Gyárfás, addressed this plan in his speech on January 9, mentioning that the party is trying to win over Hungarians by offering ministerial portfolios and other concessions and thus break the unity of the MNSZ.<sup>24</sup>

Maniu held negotiations with a group of the MNSZ, whose members were Ádám Teleki, Pál Szász, Unitarian Bishop Miklós Józán, Alajos Boga and Miklós Bethlen.<sup>25</sup> They also enlisted the support of the Independent Smallholders’ Party of Hungary. In addition to the above-mentioned persons, the PNTȚ delegation also negotiated with Béla Teleki, Pál Auer, Áron Tamási, Béla Demeter and Dezső Sulyok.<sup>26</sup> Maniu also used his good relations with the American journalists Erthridge and Markham to make the case.<sup>27</sup> The poet and writer Albert Maksay, who was a student at the University of New Will in the United States between the two world wars, knew these journalists well. Maksay also acted as an intermediary between the MNSZ and the PNTȚ. Maniu commissioned Markham to win the case of the three Transylvanian bishops.<sup>28</sup> But all these attempts were fruitless, because the pressorgans of the PNTȚ were writing strongly anti-Hungarian articles and some representatives of the PNTȚ have made similar statements.<sup>29</sup>

It was also believed that Maniu had sent a letter to the Social Democrats to run in the election on a joint list. This letter was read out at the extraordinary congress of the Social Democrat Party (PSD)<sup>30</sup> on 10 March 1946, but it was later found to be a forgery, but the PCR managed to get General Secretary Constantin-Titel Petrescu to resign from the PSD, thus putting a leader loyal to the Communists at the head of the PSD.<sup>31</sup> The MNSZ, on the other hand, only wanted to oppose Maniu in a prudent manner: “Propaganda against Maniu should not only be carried out with teasing. We have to convince our people with arguments. We leave it to the Romanian democracy to scold Maniu. Let us eliminate all illusions about Maniu from our people with conviction.”<sup>32</sup>

A very interesting episode took place in May 1947, when Petru Groza visited Budapest with several government officials and was received by Ferenc Nagy.<sup>33</sup> At that time Robert Major,<sup>34</sup> a journalist for the newspaper *Kis Újság*,<sup>35</sup> arrived in Bucharest with a committee on behalf of Franz Nagy. He came with letters of recommendation from Nagy Ferenc and made contact with Manist circles.

<sup>22</sup> Nagy, Olti 2009, p. 301–302.

<sup>23</sup> Report of Dr. Dezső Hirsch, ministerial adviser, Bucharest, January 10, 1946, MNL OL XIX-J-1-a Box no. 60, IV-131 item, f. 57.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>25</sup> DJANC Fond Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj [Fond Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj], dosar 635/1945–1947, nota nr. 181/K from April 9, 1946, cited by Lönhart 2008, p. 243.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>27</sup> On the activities of American journalists see: Burger 2000.

<sup>28</sup> *Revízió vagy autonómia* [Revision or autonomy] 1998, p. 124.

<sup>29</sup> DJANC Fond Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj [Fond Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj], dosar 635/1945–1947, nota nr. 181/K from April 8, 1946, cited by Lönhart 2008, p. 243.

<sup>30</sup> In Romanian: Partidul Social Democrat (PSD)

<sup>31</sup> On the events of the congress, read István Lakatos’s memoirs. Lakatos 2007.

<sup>32</sup> László Bányai at the meeting of the Central Institutional Committee of the MNSZ in Braşov. See also: Nagy, Olti 2009, p. 472.

<sup>33</sup> The visit took place between May 2 and 5 after the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty (February 10, 1947). Also present with Petru Groza were: Ion Pas, Minister of Arts, Octav Livezeanu, Minister of Propaganda, Emil Bodnăraş, secretary-general of the „Council of Ministers“ presidency and Mihai Sadoveanu, writer, member of the Romanian Academy. See also: *Bic*, 2022, pp. 266–270.

<sup>34</sup> Róbert Major was a member of the Hungarian committee that arrived in Bucharest in mid-May 1947 to settle the CASBI case. According to Bogdan Iosif (József Salamon), Róbert Major also travelled to Cluj, where he held talks with Edgar Balogh, Lajos Juhász and others. See: Nagy, Olti, 2009, p. 411.

<sup>35</sup> The *Kis Újság* was the daily newspaper of the Independent Smallholders Party.

Major also went to Cluj with the recommendation to the central management of the MNSZ. He made the following statements:<sup>36</sup>

“1. The MNSZ must turn towards Maniu, for the future lies with the P.N.Ț.

2. Maniu no longer has any conflict with Hungary – since Hungary renounced revisionism –, so there is no obstacle in the way of the collaboration of small agrarians with P.N.Ț.

3. Maniu would provide the MNSZ with many more parliamentary seats in a possible new election, if this collaboration were realized.

4. If this plan were realized, Hungary would provide the MNSZ with financial aid, and it would easily be possible to give the MNSZ a considerable sum, also from a “Swedish loan”. [...]

5. He stated that this new orientation would meet not only the sympathy of the Western powers, but also of the U.S., who is not guided by political principles, but by the conjuncture of immediate needs, just made a pact with Hitler,<sup>37</sup> why not make an agreement with Maniu, if he sees that he is “stronger”.

It stirred up a huge storm within the MNSZ, and they distanced themselves from it, although it is clear from the minutes of the party meeting that their position was not unanimous.

### THE MANIU GUARDS

And now let's turn to the Maniu Guards for a few thoughts. First of all, I would like to point out that I am not talking about the Guards that were established in 1934,<sup>38</sup> but about those that were formed in Brasov in the fall of 1944 under the leadership of Gavrița Olteanu, paramilitary organizations that consisted of Romanian officers and non-commissioned officers in the recaptured Transylvania. We need to talk about this episode even if we know: “it's a cruel and bloody history, no matter what you write about, you're suspected of taking someone's side” – as the historian Marius Oprea put it.<sup>39</sup> As we mentioned in the introduction, we just want to underline: the image of the Hungarians about Maniu was/is still largely determined by the massacres of the Maniu Guards. What Ip and Treznea<sup>40</sup> meant to the Romanians after the Vienna Award, Szárzajta,<sup>41</sup> Egri, Csíkszentdomonkos<sup>42</sup> meant to the Hungarians after the Romanian Act in 1944. Only apparently the contradiction is the above mentioned fact that the vast majority of Hungarians did not admit, as the MNSZ did, that Maniu and the Maniu Guards were the same.<sup>43</sup> The Hungarians living at the time had personal experience and knowledge about Maniu, and posterity only has the memory of what communist propaganda painted by its politicians, journalists, intellectual elites and, unfortunately, later historians. The Hungarian press of the time,<sup>44</sup> both in Hungary and

<sup>36</sup> Report on the activity of Robert Major, correspondent of the newspaper „Kis Újság“ during his visit to Bucharest, May 1947 – see: Maghiarii din România, 2002. Document Nr. 152, pp. 505–506.

<sup>37</sup> A reference to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 23 August 1939, a German-Soviet non-aggression treaty.

<sup>38</sup> About these Guards see: Borz 2023, p. 131.

<sup>39</sup> Oprea 2021, <https://www.mediafax.ro/editorialistii/istoria-fara-perdea-atunci-cind-si-ingerii-pling-povestea-lui-gavrița-olteanu-si-a-garzilor-iuliu-maniu-sau-sumanele-negre-20150330> (downloaded: October 29, 2024)

<sup>40</sup> After the Second Vienna Award on September 5, 1940 Hungarian troops led by the governor Miklós Horthy stepped across the Trianon borders. The ethnic Hungarian population welcomed the Hungarian troops and regarded the separation from Romania as a liberation. The ethnic Romanians were more filled with fear. In Ip, comitat Sălaj, two Hungarian soldiers died in an accidental explosion. Rumors quickly spread that Romanians had killed them, and Hungarian troops were sent to the city to investigate. The Hungarian troops committed cruel massacres against the Romanian population in Ip, Treznea and several other settlements in Northern Transylvania. See also: Țurlea 1996; Illésfalvi 2005; Sárándi 2023.

<sup>41</sup> Benkő 2011.

<sup>42</sup> Egri 2010; The White Book 1995; L. Balogh 1997.

<sup>43</sup> A local example: From the minutes of the MNSZ of Șimleu Silvaniei on November 14, 1946, we know that the local Hungarians in Vârșolț intended to vote for Maniu. See: *Jegyzőkönyv* [A minutes] November 14, 1946, published by Orbán János, in: *Szilágység*, October 7, 1994, p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> For example: *Feloszlatták a Maniu-féle Nemzeti Parasztpártot* [Maniu's National Peasant Party was dissolved], in: *Falvak Népe*, August 10, 1947, p. 1.; *Megkezdődött a főtárgyalás Maniu Gyula és társai bűnperében* [The main hearing in the criminal

Romania, reported that Maniu planned and organised these guards, and that the massacres were carried out on his orders and with his knowledge. Both Hungarian and Romanian historians agree that Maniu had little to do with the anti-Hungarian massacres. However, Maniu was wrong not to publicly distance himself from the activities of these guards, as far as we know. When he did, it was too late, because he was in the dock. He testified there that these guards had taken his name, but had not been formed with his knowledge and will; he had only heard of the massacres of the Maniu Guards by hearsay and did not approve of them.<sup>45</sup> If we are able to see through Maniu's entire career and personality, we can say that Maniu was telling the truth in the dock. He would never have agreed with the massacres that took place.

A very radical statement was published in the *Romániai Magyar Szó* daily in the days immediately before the verdict: „The Hungarians in Romania are also eagerly anticipating the verdict of the Maniu trial, because they know very well this time that the Hungarian killers are the intellectual authors of the massacres of the Maniu guardsmen. The people who are responsible for inciting the two interdependent nations against each other, who in the past, in a close community of interests with the Hungarian reaction, prevented the friendly meeting of the Romanian and Hungarian nations, so that they could more easily siphon off the working masses. In the name of the Hungarian people of the country, we ask for the most severe sentences for all the accused.”<sup>46</sup>

From the Hungarian side, the main accusation against Maniu was the Maniu Guards, but in addition to that, both the Hungarian press in Transylvania and in Hungary listed all the accusations against Maniu that were also brought forward by Romanian politics. He was branded as a traitor, a reactionary, anti-grass roots, fascist and war criminal.<sup>47</sup>

### HUNGARIAN PAPER ABOUT MANIU'S PRO-GERMAN AND ANTI-HUNGARIAN POLICIES

But it was not only the press that was anti-Maniu, diplomatic documents also paint this picture. In the envoy reports, we read that the historical parties, branded as reactionaries, were made the scapegoats and blamed for all anti-Hungarian atrocities.<sup>48</sup> The Peace Preparation Department of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry commissioned a study on Iuliu Maniu's pro-German and anti-Hungarian policies.<sup>49</sup> The study was written by Gyallay-Pap Domokos,<sup>50</sup> the desk officer at the Hungarian Mission in Bucharest. The study begins by stating that Maniu is still considered by the Western public to be one of the purest and

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trial of Gyula Maniu and others has started], in: *Magyar Szó*, October 31, 1947, p. 2.; *A Nemzeti Parasztpárt volt vezetőinek bűnperre. Képek a Maniu-per főtárgyalásáról* [The criminal trial of the former leaders of the National Peasant Party. Pictures from the main hearing of the Maniu trial], in: *Romániai Magyar Szó*, November 1, 1947, pp. 2–3.

<sup>45</sup> *Maniu nyílt vallomást tett a demokratikus rendszerünk ellen* [Maniu made an open confession against our democratic system], in: *Erdély*, November 5, 1947, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> *Az ország magyarsága a vádlottak legsúlyosabb megbüntetését kéri* [The Hungarian community of the country demands the most severe punishment for the accused], in: *Romániai Magyar Szó*, November 12, 1947, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> See the articles cited in the previous footnotes and: *A néptörvényszék előtt tett tanúvallomásaiban Maniu kijelentette, hogy Antonescu és társai „Nem bűnösebbek, mint mások”* [In his testimony before the People's Tribunal, Maniu stated that Antonescu and his associates were „no more guilty than others“] in: *Népi Egység*, Mai 14, 1946, p. 3.; *Maniuék igazi arca* [The real face of Maniu's], in: *Erdély*, July 18, 1946, p. 1.; *Maniu közvetlenül irányította a demokratikus rend elleni összeesküvést és az angolszászoknak végzett kémkedést* [Maniu directly directed the conspiracy against the democratic order and espionage for the Anglo-Saxons], in: *Romániai Magyar Szó*, November 3, 1947, pp. 1–3.

<sup>48</sup> *Az erdélyi magyarság politikai helyzete 1946. május havában* [The political situation of Transylvanian Hungarians in May 1946], MNL OL XIX-J-33-a Papers of the Hungarian Legation from Bucharest, Box 43, 1946–1948 Külpolitikai, belpolitikai tájékoztatók [Foreign policy, domestic policy briefings] f. 426–433.

<sup>49</sup> *Szemponatok Maniu Gyula németbarát és nemzetiségellenes politikájának áttekintéséhez* [Aspects for reviewing Iuliu Maniu's pro-German and anti-nationalist policy] MNL OL XIX-J-1-a Papers of the Peace Preparation Department Box 60, item IV-131, f. 137–154.

<sup>50</sup> Domokos Gyallay-Pap wrote several papers which were used by the Peace Preparatory Department. One of his memoirs is published by Géczi 2021.

most respected representatives of democracy in Romania in the Western sense. This was a completely true statement, although the trial accused Maniu of collaborating with “imperialists” and spying for the Anglo-Saxons. The most experienced historian expert on the subject is Dennis Deletant, who succinctly and concisely formulated the relationship between Maniu and the English: “Iuliu Maniu was an agent of the British. But he was a patriotic agent for Romania”.<sup>51</sup> We also know that Maniu received money from the British for network construction, but we also know from SOE’s<sup>52</sup> 1945 statement that Maniu accounted for the money he used (he bought radios from it), and returned what was left.<sup>53</sup> So Maniu was indeed involved in espionage, but he sought to democratize the country. At the same time, a report from the Hungarian Mission in Bucharest in June 1946 said that for the Anglo-Saxons, Maniu’s personality is no longer very significant, because he is an old man and his innermost colleagues are also weak, therefore “Anglo-Saxon politics [...] does not expose itself too much in his interest”, but rather Mihai’s person is important to them.<sup>54</sup> I think that the diplomat did not correctly assess Maniu’s importance in the eyes of the Anglo-Saxons, and that by diminishing his role it was easier to create him as an enemy.

Much closer to reality was the political summary of the close relationship between Maniu and the Anglo-Saxons: „The coalition government of Groza seems difficult to maintain and extend, and Maniu’s authority is enormous and growing, becoming as powerful as it was five years ago. [...] Maniu is also undeniably looked up to by the British, having built up a strong enough authority over the past decades. Maniu has his connections with the English, but there are also other powerful players in Romania with Anglo-Saxon connections, and all of these are preparing the way for new situations. [...]”<sup>55</sup>

However, in the mentioned study, Gyallay-Pap tried to prove that Maniu is against the democratic state system. The study starts at a very distant point, because it begins with Maniu’s contacts in Vienna before 1914, and accuses him of having been in a relationship of trust with the mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger, and the Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand, who was considered anti-Hungarian. Yes, this is also true. Iuliu Maniu, together with Alexandru Vaida-Voevod and Aurel Popovici and several representatives of other nationalities, belonged to the so-called Belvedere circle of trust of Franz Ferdinand. It was expected that Franz Ferdinand would succeed to the throne after the death of Franz Joseph, and in this case they planned to reform the Monarchy, to reform it federally. The Romanian national minority representatives tried to put pressure on the Hungarian government through Vienna to claim their nationality rights. However, their hopes were dashed by the assassination of Franz Ferdinand on 28 June 1914.<sup>56</sup>

Then, by some astonishing logical deduction, Gyallay-Pap concludes that Maniu was to blame for the suppression of the 1918/19 socialist revolution in Hungary,<sup>57</sup> that is, he supported and served the „reactionary” counter-revolutionary regime that was being set up.<sup>58</sup> Then his government took anti-nationalist measures, he infiltrated the industrial workers, allied himself with the Iron Guard, supported Antonescu, and so on and so forth.

The question arises, why did the Hungarian Foreign Ministry need this material? The answer to this is found in a report written by Gyallay-Pap to the Foreign Minister János Gyöngyösi, and it reads, “This should be used especially towards London and Washington to discredit Iuliu Maniu, so dear to the

<sup>51</sup> Deletant 2019a About the clandestine activities of the Britains see Deletant 2019.

<sup>52</sup> Special Operation Executive (SOE) was a British organisation formed in 1940 to conduct espionage, sabotage and reconnaissance in German-occupied Europe and to aid local resistance movements during World War II.

<sup>53</sup> Deletant 2019a

<sup>54</sup> Román összefoglaló [Romanian summary] MNL OL J-33-a Box no. 43, f. 487–492.

<sup>55</sup> *A román belpolitikai helyzet jellegzetességei* [Characteristics of the Romanian domestic political situation] MNL OL XIX-J-1-a Box no. 60, IV-131 item, f. 89.

<sup>56</sup> See: Hitchins 1999, Maior 2006, Marchut 2024b

<sup>57</sup> Two episodes of Hungarian history are usually classified here: the Aster Revolution of October 1918 and the period of the Bolshevik-type Soviet Republic between March and August 1919.

<sup>58</sup> This was the Horthy-regime between 1919 and 1944.

British and Americans and so recognised as a democrat.”<sup>59</sup> The report concludes that “Maniu’s person and spirit are the most significant obstacle to reconciliation in the Danube Valley in international, social and national political terms.”<sup>60</sup> The trial and arrest of Maniu was obviously not influenced by a Hungarian foreign ministry document, but it is interesting to note that the post–1940 part of the study actually contains the accusations on which the trial was based.

### MANIU’S ARREST, HIS YEARS IN THE PRISON AND HIS DEATH

And then let’s see what was the Hungarian reaction to the arrest? The MNSZ passed a resolution stating that “Maniu’s Hungarian accomplices, the worshippers of the American golden calf, the despicable seekers of a new bloodshed, the assassins lurking in our ranks, can expect no mercy from us.” (Resolution of the Congress of the MNSZ, Timisoara, November 23, 1947)<sup>61</sup> The aforementioned prime minister, Ferenc Nagy went on holiday with his family to Switzerland after Petru Groza’s visit to Hungary in May 1947. There, Mátyás Rákosi, then general secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party, kidnapped Ferenc Nagy’s five-year-old son and blackmailed him into resigning. Ferenc Nagy immediately resigned on May 31, and could never return to Hungary. In Hungary, he was also labeled as a traitor to the country and a traitor to the nation, and was even accused of trying to create an international agrarian front with Maniu and several other regional politicians to serve the interests of the imperialists.<sup>62</sup> This is how Nagy saw Maniu’s arrest from his Swiss emigration: “The gray leader, Iuliu Maniu, was imprisoned in Romania together with his comrades-in-arms. The lightweight Petru Groza swims merrily in the sea of sufferings of the Romanian people, and the patriotic people go to the dance of Moscow at the behest of Ana Pauker and Emil Bodnăraș.”<sup>63</sup> The future Hungarian dictator, Mátyás Rákosi, said: “the Romanian government has the right and duty to protect the nation’s independence and democratic order against reactionary politicians by all means.”<sup>64</sup>

Ferenc Nagy was replaced by Lajos Dinnyés as prime minister on May 31, 1947. During his prime ministership, the so-called “blue-ballot” elections<sup>65</sup> took place on August 31, which now also meant the communist takeover in Hungary. After that, Lajos Dinnyés was asked to be prime minister, but this was already one of Moscow’s puppet governments. Immediately after Maniu’s conviction, he traveled to Bucharest with Foreign Minister Erik Molnár to conclude the Hungarian-Romanian cultural agreement with the Romanian government.<sup>66</sup> At that time, Erik Molnár declared in his speech that “the ruling classes in the past had an interest in inciting inequality and hatred between the two peoples. The regimes of Horthy and Maniu pitted each other against each other and the suppression of national minorities was the cornerstone of their politics. This policy brought the two countries to the side of German fascism, but this era of its history is over.”<sup>67</sup> In this speech, the historian Erik Molnár, by the way, was a

<sup>59</sup> *Javaslat a Románia és Magyarország közötti viszony rendezésére. Szempontok Maniu németbarát politikájához* [Proposal for settling the relationship between Romania and Hungary. Aspects of Maniu’s pro-German policy], October 3, 1945, MNL OL XIX-J-1-a Box no. 60, IV-133 item, f. 17.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem* f. 8.

<sup>61</sup> Nagy, Olti 2009, p. 472.

<sup>62</sup> *Az elhangzott vádbeszéd kétségtelenné tette Maniu bűnösségét* [The indictment made Maniu’s guilt beyond doubt], in: Erdély, November 9, 1947, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Nagy 1990, p. 168.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>65</sup> „Blue-ballot” elections: Hungarian parliamentary election. The ballot paper was a blue form and the Communist Party forged it in every district. See: Szerencsés 1992; Borhi 2004, p. 127.

<sup>66</sup> The Hungarian-Romanian Cultural Convention was followed in January 1948 by the conclusion of the Hungarian-Romanian Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance.

<sup>67</sup> *Hétfőn megkezdődtek a hivatalos tárgyalások Bukarestben* [Official negotiations began in Bucharest on Monday], *Kossuth Népe*, November 25, p. 3.

historian, and he was a high falsifier of history. He called the Romanian domestic policy between the two world wars the Maniu system, which was completely divorced from reality, even though Maniu was prime minister for only a very short time (three times between 1928 and 1933), and neither Horthy Miklós<sup>68</sup> nor Maniu had the oppression of national minorities as a pillar of their policy. At that time, Erik Molnár was a communist politician serving the interests of Soviet power in Bucharest, whose interest was to scourge Iuliu Maniu, who had been sentenced a few days before. Erik Molnár not only compared Maniu to Horthy, but also sought a contemporary parallel. He claimed that the dissolution of the Maniu party in Romania and the Pfeiffer party in Hungary was a decisive blow to “foreign imperialism and the agents of fascism.”<sup>69</sup> This parallel was more a cover for reality. Zoltán Pfeiffer,<sup>70</sup> a former smallholder politician, left the Independent Smallholders’ Party at the end of March 1947 and in August founded the Hungarian Independence Party, which stood for the maintenance of democracy and strongly opposed the Communist advance. For both Maniu and Pfeiffer, November 1947 was a turning point. While the former was arrested, the latter was stripped of his immunity and emigrated to the United States with his family on 4 November. While Maniu died in a prison cell, Pfeiffer died in forced emigration.

In 1948, Áron Márton, Bishop of Gyulafehérvár, on the occasion of the traditional Roman Catholic feast of Csíksomlyó, visited the prefect of Miercurea Ciuc, Márton Keckó, who stated to the authorities that during the Maniu trial, the Ministry of Culture had issued warnings to several priests for not explaining the significance of the trial to their parishioners from the pulpit. The bishop stated that he “considered it incompatible to discuss the Maniu trial in the Hungarian Roman Catholic churches, because the trial had a political character and was not related to the Hungarian nationality, but to the Romanian people”. “If the Hungarian people did not resist the murders ordered by Maniu, why should they do so now?”<sup>71</sup> Márton Áron, with his great sense of reality, knew that it was unfortunate to talk about the Maniu trial in sermons, but he also attributed the massacres committed by the Maniu Guards to Maniu.

Iuliu Maniu already spent his days in the prison in Galați,<sup>72</sup> when from 1949 the trials of Iuliu Maniu, Cardinal József Mindszenty<sup>73</sup> and the Bulgarian smallholder politician Nikola Petkov<sup>74</sup> were mentioned together. The juxtaposition of these trials was made possible because the United Nation (UN) raised its voice against all three countries, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, due to gross violations of human rights. However, these countries evaluated all of this as the UN wanting to interfere in their internal affairs and cannot do so.<sup>75</sup> On October 13, 1948, Romanian Foreign Minister Ana Pauker sent

<sup>68</sup> Governor of Hungary, 1919–1944.

<sup>69</sup> *Megkezdődtek a román-magyar tanácskozások* [The Romanian – Hungarian consultations have begun], *Makói Népujság*, November 25, 1947, p. 1.

<sup>70</sup> Szerencsés, Földesi 2003.

<sup>71</sup> Vajnovszki 1995

<sup>72</sup> Iuliu Maniu was first imprisoned in Malmaison prison in Bucharest (the same prison where Petru Groza was imprisoned in 1944), then in Galați and was transferred to Sighetu Marmatei on 14 August 1951. See: Borz 2023, pp. 165–166.

<sup>73</sup> Mindszenty József (Csehimindszent, 1892 – Vienna, 1975) Archbishop of Esztergom, the last Prince-Primate of Hungary. On December 26, 1948, he was arrested and detained by the police on suspicion of disloyalty, espionage, crimes against the Republic and currency manipulation. On February 8, 1949, Mindszenty was sentenced to life imprisonment. He was under house arrest from July 1955 due to his illness and the enormous Western foreign policy pressure. He was released from house arrest during the 1956 revolution and war of independence. On November 4, when the revolution fell, he applied for asylum at the American embassy and was granted it. He stayed at the embassy for 15 years and the Hungarian government and VI. According to Pope Pál’s agreement, he left Hungary on September 28, 1971. He died in 1975 in Pazmanium, Vienna. About his life see: Balogh 2015.

<sup>74</sup> Nikola Petkov (Sofia, 1893 – Sofia, 1947) was a Bulgarian politician, one of the leaders of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union. He was found guilty of espionage and sentenced to death on August 16, 1947.

<sup>75</sup> *Az Egyesült Államok és Anglia az ENSZ-et eszközül használják fel más országok belügyeibe való beavatkozásra* [The United States and England use the UN as a tool to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries], in: *Délmagyarország*, October 14, 1949, p. 1.

a note to the UN General Assembly and Secretary-General Trig Veyle protesting against the UN's decision to brand Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary for their alleged crimes against respect for human rights. They believed that the UN represented imperialist interests, so countries should be protected from it.<sup>76</sup> Andrei Visinsky, the Soviet Foreign Commissar and then Foreign Minister, defended the countries concerned at the UN.<sup>77</sup> "It was on the basis of this doctrine that the Soviet Union took us [Visinsky – M.R.], the Romanian People's Republic, as well as Hungary and Bulgaria into its defence when the Western imperialists repeatedly tried to interfere in our internal affairs, when they came to the defence of Maniu or Mindszenty and other traitors."<sup>78</sup> The kind of crackdown that began in Romania and Bulgaria in 1945, began in Hungary in 1947 and was completed in 1948, the Soviet-style exercise of power worked in the same way in all three countries.

We know very little about Maniu's years in prison.<sup>79</sup> We know from the available Hungarian sources that Bishop Áron Márton said that even in the prison cell, Maniu was proud of the fact that he was always a good Romanian, but he was never a "Hungarian-eater".<sup>80</sup> After the regime change in 1989, the Hungarian Catholic weekly *Új Ember* published an article in which we learn that Greek Catholic Archbishop Alexandru Todea had confessed Iuliu Maniu in the prison cell a few days before his death. We also read that after Bishop Martin Aaron learned in a nearby cell that Maniu had died, he paid his respects to the deceased.<sup>81</sup>

The false news of his death was already published on July 27, 1951 by *Californiai Magyarság*, the newspaper of the American Hungarians. According to their information, Maniu died that week.<sup>82</sup> This false news probably originated from the fact that Maniu and his companions were transferred from the prison in Galați to Sighetu Marmației, and the news that Maniu was no longer there could have leaked out of the prison in Galați, leading to the conclusion of his death. According to the recollections of the former prison commander, they were brought in a small car, blindfolded. He complained many times that he was suffering from colds, diabetes and prostatitis.<sup>83</sup>

However, the news of his real death appeared in the Hungarian press earlier than in the Romanian one. We know, that Maniu's sister Cornelia (Sister Cecilia) did not even know that her brother had died in 1955.<sup>84</sup> On December 1, 1955, the Jewish daily *Új Kelet*, published in Cluj, wrote that the news of

<sup>76</sup> MNL OL XIX-J-33-a Papers of the Hungarian Legation from Bucharest, Box 43, 1946–1948 Külpolitikai, belpolitikai tájékoztatók [Foreign policy, domestic policy briefings]

<sup>77</sup> *Visinszkij elvtárs erélyesen megvédte az ENSZ-ben a Bolgár, Magyar és Román Népköztársaság ügyét* [Comrade Vyshinsky vigorously defended the cause of the Bulgarian, Hungarian and Romanian People's Republics at the UN], in: *Fáklya*, October 15, 1949, p. 2.; *Visinszkij leplezte az imperialisták Magyarországot, Románia és Bulgária ellen indított hazugsághadjáratának célját. Vita az ENSZ-ben a népi demokráciák elleni angol-amerikai koholmányokról* [Vyshinsky exposed the purpose of the imperialists' campaign of lies against Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. UN debate on Anglo-American fabrications against the people's democracies], in: *Magyar Nemzet*, October 14, 1949, p. 1.

<sup>78</sup> „Valamennyi nemzet, kicsiny és nagy egyformán egyenlő...” [„All nations, great and small, are equal...“], in: *Falvak Népe*, October 28, 1951, p. 1.

<sup>79</sup> About the years in Sighet see: Dobeş 2024.

<sup>80</sup> *Maniu szépséges magyar szerelme? Vagy ágyasa?* [Maniu's beautiful Hungarian lover? Or his concubine?] in: *Romániai Magyar Szó*, January 14, 1998, p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> Fodor Sándor, *Tiszta, keresztény hang a román televízióban* [A clear, Christian voice on Romanian television], in: *Új Ember*, January 12, 1992, p. 5.

<sup>82</sup> *Nevezetes halottak* [Famous dead], in: *Californiai Magyarság*, July 27, 1951, p. 3.

<sup>83</sup> Klacsmányi Sándor, *Máramarosszigeti Gulág* [Gulag in Sighetu Marmației], in: *Erdélyi Napló*, July 1, 1993, p. 11.

<sup>84</sup> Cornelia Maniu (Sora Cecilia) wrote these messages to the Roman Catholic priest from Șimleu Silvaniei: „I am asking you to say a mass in honor of this saint on Tuesday, the 26th of this month, the feast of St. Demeter, for the health and safe release of my dear good brother. To be mentioned: Iulio-Demetrio. With a thousand thanks and gratitude, S. M. C. [Sora Maniu Cecilia – M. R.] October 24, 1954.” „I am asking you very much to please me this Friday, the 25th of this month, the feast of Our Lady of Fruitbearing, the anniversary of my holy vow, to worship the holy family, out of gratitude for the graces and consolations I have received, and another request for the health and liberation of my dear brother and the two of us, for my part I still have my spiritual life for its perfection. To be mentioned: Iulio-Demetrio, Sora Maria

the death of Iuliu Maniu, who had already died two years before, was confirmed.<sup>85</sup> Roumaine Libre, the official newspaper of the Romanian government-in-exile published in Paris, brought the news in mourning along with the news of the death of Constantin Dinu Brătianu. The news became public when New York Times correspondent Jack Raymond visited Bucharest in November 1955 and requested a meeting with former Prime Minister George Tătărescu. Tătărescu received the American correspondent in the company of one of the editors of one of the Romanian communist papers, Scântea, a stenographer and an interpreter, and then he told that Dinu Brătianu and Iuliu Maniu had already died two years ago. Subsequently, the former Romanian King Mihai addressed a proclamation to the Romanian people in the Roumaine Libre and mourned the two statesmen. The US State Department also issued an official statement expressing its condolences. Paul Raymond and former French Prime Minister George Bidault warmly praised Iuliu Maniu.<sup>86</sup> It should be added that, although an editor of Scântea was present at the meeting, there was no news of Maniu's death in the newspaper.

### MANIU'S CORPSE

To this day, no one has found his body.<sup>87</sup> In 1965, an article was published in the already mentioned Jewish daily newspaper Új Kelet that Maniu was buried next to the chief rabbi in the Jewish cemetery in Sighetu Marmației. The journalist Dezső Schön heard the story in Vienna and when he visited Sighetul, he did not dare to tell anyone. The person from Vienna told the story like this: one night a car stopped in front of the Jewish cemetery guard's house and asked for the keys. They warned him not to tell anyone about this, otherwise he would end up in the salt mines for the rest of his life. They got the key and dug a grave next to Chief Rabbi Teitelbaum and put a body in it, which was the body of Maniu. They carefully smoothed the surface so that no one could notice anything and even laid turf bricks on it.<sup>88</sup>

This is one of the stories. The other is a story in a 1993 issue of the Erdélyi Napló, which published an interview with former prison commander Vasile Ciolpan. The interview went as follows:

– His death is much talked about by former prisoners.

– They don't tell the truth. We put him in a wooden box and, as night fell, we secretly took him to the hospital cemetery and buried him. There was a walnut tree nearby, and I noted his grave in relation to it. We found him later, when they came down from Bucharest to carry him out. It was hard to find, there is a cattle station there. Lucky we had the walnut tree.

– Who dug the graves?

– Common law convicts. They were told that one of their deceased comrades needed it.

– And why did they use the hospital's cemetery?

– That's what our superiors asked. To deceive people. Let them think that someone really died in the hospital and has no relatives.<sup>89</sup>

For me, this second story really confirms the first one, and they come from two completely different sources and are even distant in time, almost 30 years apart between the two articles. In my opinion, we can be certain that the body was removed from its original location and this was done secretly. It is not certain, but I think it is conceivable that he was actually buried next to the rabbi in the Jewish

Cecilia Cornelia and Nellike, March 22, 1955; Documents of Casa Memorială "Iuliu Maniu" Bădăcin. I am indebted to P. Cristian Borz, who made these documents available to me.

<sup>85</sup> *Megerősítették Maniu Gyula halálhírét* [The news of Gyula Maniu's death has been confirmed], in: *Új Kelet*, December 1, 1955, p. 4.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>87</sup> Borz 2023, pp. 169–180.

<sup>88</sup> Schön Dezső, *Ahol a miniszterelnököt a csodarabbi mellé temetik* [Where the prime minister is buried next to the miracle rabbi], in: *Új Kelet*, October 15, 1965, p. 4.

<sup>89</sup> Klacsmányi 1993

cemetery, since a Jewish cemetery is the safest place from this point of view, because it can only be disturbed by committing religious blasphemy, so you could be sure that no one would take it from there.

## CONCLUSION

After the Second World War, the role of ethnicity became secondary behind ideological orientation, the constructivist identity approach pushed the primordialist identity element into the background. In the name of internationalism, the communist ideology tried to marginalize the role of the ethnic conflicts and the only measure was the degree of loyalty to the system and the state party. In the emerging new system, Iuliu Maniu and his fellow believers and fighters were considered reactionaries. Maniu's loyalty to principle, his doctrinal adherence to democratic values, and his Greek-Catholic religiosity were not compatible with the communist state power, so the construction of the enemy's image of him began in 1945. A part of the Hungarians in Romania tried to integrate into this new political situation through the MNSZ, but those who remained outside were considered as reactionary in the eyes of the state party as in the eyes of the MNSZ. We can describe this with the theoretical framework in such a way that the alignment with the constructivist identity element did not take place in the whole community. However, this would have been expected from the state. Thus, even those Hungarians who did not embrace the communist line, or perhaps even protested against it, or joined forces with the "Manuists" who were labelled reactionaries, became enemies. With strong propaganda, the communist government created an image of the enemy from Maniu and the Hungarian "reactionaries", and the same image of the enemy was adopted and created by the left-wing Hungarian leadership. The atrocities committed by the Maniu Guards against Hungarians came in handy for both the MNSZ and the PCR. The contemporary and subsequent public discourse influenced the historical consciousness of the wider society to such an extent that a quay in Budapest was named after Petru Groza in 1958, which bore his name until 1997, and Maniu is still referred to today, if anyone is familiar with the name, the Maniu Guards come to mind. In the Hungarian public opinion, Maniu and Groza have not yet been reconsidered, in this area communism still lives on... As historians, we have a great responsibility to correct this distorted historical consciousness, even if we know that our voice is almost imperceptible in the wider society...

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