

**STATE AND MINORITY IN TRANSYLVANIA,
1918–1989**
**Studies on the History of
the Hungarian Community**

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Zoltán Csaba Novák

THE YEAR OF THE "LIBERALIZATION." THE IMPACT OF 1968 ON THE HUNGARIAN POLICY OF THE ROMANIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

The Administrative Reform of 1968

The year 1968 was an important milestone in the nationality policy, and specifically the Hungarian policy, determined by Nicolae Ceaușescu. In 1968 events of great significance took place in foreign and domestic policy, activating the nationality policy of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP). The country's administrative reorganization and active role in foreign policy could be conceived only with a stable and "pacified" hinterland. In this process, settling relations with the nationalities was also allotted an important role. During this brief period three events that were important from the Transylvanian Hungarians' viewpoint (but for other national minorities as well) took place: the administrative reform, a meeting with Hungarian intellectuals and the establishment of the Council of Workers of Hungarian Nationality (*Magyar Nemzetiségű Dolgozók Tanácsa* or MNĐT).

In 1967 Nicolae Ceaușescu, in order to consolidate his power position and put the Party leadership's conception of socioeconomic transformation into practice, resolved to take a further step: the organization of the administrative reform realigning the country's territory. The reform played an important role in the Party's economic and social policy from several viewpoints. The counties, smaller than the regions, more transparent and more easily organizable, were intended from an economic point of view to serve the more efficient, decentralized industrial development. At the same time, the realignments occurring during the reform resulted in a large-scale movement of cadres as well, during which the Party leadership put in place elite groups on whose loyalty it

could rely in the long term as well. At the same time, the reform acquired an important role from the point of view of propaganda and mass mobility as well, since by mobilizing local elites and the population, and partially considering and accepting their opinion in making decisions of a local nature, the Party elevated its popularity index to a great degree. The preparation and implementation of the 1968 administrative reform played an important role in the Party's nationality policy as well. From the point of view of nationality policy, the planning for the establishment of the counties continued to follow the principle in operation since the 1950s, according to which the nationality question in Romania had been solved, and thus the particularities of minority existence did not have to be represented as a separate interest. Across the country, during the first phase in the preparations for the establishment of the counties the nationality question cropped up only to the extent that the future decentralized county institutions would ensure the appropriate press and school network for the nationalities living there.¹ Despite all these things the so-called nationality question nevertheless determined the preparations, mainly in relation to the Székelyföld or Szekler Land (in Romanian Ținutul Secuiesc). The question of the Székelyföld appeared both as an administrative question and as an economic one. The essence of the administrative question was whether the administrative modifications would make it possible in the future for the larger part of the Székelyföld, inhabited overwhelmingly by Hungarians, to form a single administrative unit. Moreover, during the debates the region's appalling economic situation came to the forefront, as did the lack of investments and industrial developments, which had led to the economic isolation of the region.² The first draft would have divided the Székelyföld between the "large Székely county," named Odorhei-Ciuc County, and Mureș County in such a way that the most of the region would have ended up in the former county, 7,459 square kilometers in area. The planned county border in the north began with the Gyergyói Basin, and ended in the south with Kézdivásárhely and Sepsiszentgyörgy Districts. In this draft, Csíkszereda (Miercurea Ciuc), centrally situated but smaller

than Székelyudvarhely (Odorheiu Secuiesc) and Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfântu Gheorghe), was designated as the county seat. The large Székely county would have counted 364,196 inhabitants, with a Hungarian majority of nearly 95 percent (342,044 persons).³

Examining the minutes of the preliminary debates, three lines of argument unfolded: the restoration in the region of the former, pre-1950 counties, the establishment of a large Székely county, and arguments in favor of the small Székely county, by joining the districts of Sepsiszentgyörgy and Kézdivásárhely (Târgu Secuiesc) to Brassó (Braşov). The representatives of these three opinions represented ideological cleavages within the Party that were at times well differentiated from one another. Among these the most important was the dispute between Ceauşescu and Drăghici, which revolved around the evolution of the post-Dej power structure. After 1965 Ceauşescu expended significant energies on weakening, and even removing from their positions, his possible political opponents tied to the Dej era. In this struggle it was the former minister of the interior and one of the potential heirs apparent to the post of first secretary after Dej's death, Alexandru Drăghici, who represented the greatest danger to Ceauşescu. The dispute and difference in opinion between Drăghici and Ceauşescu determined the preparations surrounding the administrative reform as well.⁴ During the debates a third, less pronounced, national line also emerged with regard to the nationality question (represented by Iosif Banc, Militaru Aldea and Virgil Ioanovici), which resolutely rejected the idea of taking nationality minority special interests into account and the pact policy *vis-à-vis* the nationalities. They resolutely opposed the establishment of the large Székely county. Several important members of the Party leadership (Gheorghe Apostol, Leonte Răutu, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Chivu Stoica and János Fazekas) unequivocally supported the compromising line advocated by Ceauşescu.

As already mentioned, the first draft featured the "large Székely county." Supporters of the plan raised the ethnic principle, the common interests of the region's Hungarian population, as the most important argument. At one of the preliminary sessions, Gheorghe

Apostol articulated this position thus: "Examining it from the angle of the nationality question, we will proceed properly by establishing Odorhei-Ciuc County. It must be appreciated that we have found a solution that satisfies the demands of the Hungarian population. Minor modifications naturally will still take place."⁵ Opponents of the large Székely county took up a stance in favor of annexing Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfântu Gheorghe) and Kézdivásárhely (Târgu Secuiesc) Districts to Brassó (Braşov) County. They based their arguments primarily on economic criteria and interests, according to which the two districts were tied economically to the city of Brassó. At the sessions Ceauşescu himself took up a stance in favor of the large Székely county, acknowledging also that economic interests spoke against this plan: "It really would be natural for Sepsiszentgyörgy and Kézdivásárhely to belong to Brassó County, but the proposals were premised on the point of view of nationality, namely, that we create an opportunity for the Székely population to remain in a single county."⁶ Until the final decision was taken, the prospect of listening to the opinion of the population was also held out.

Lending an interesting dash of color to the preliminary debates were the arguments raised by Alexandru Drăghici, who proposed that the administrative system from before 1950 should be revisited and the economically viable counties of that period retained. Drăghici found the plan for Odorhei-Ciuc County to be contrived, because by putting it into effect, in his view, an artificially established ghetto would evolve in the region. In his remarks Drăghici opposed every kind of territorial annexation that he judged to be artificial: "In my opinion it was groundless for us to annex the three Romanian-majority communes of Bodzaforuló (Întorsura Buzăului) to the Kézdivásárhely District just to make improvements to the ethnic composition of the district. I am of the opinion that we should not establish artificial structures. If we really want to eliminate that ghetto [the Székelyföld – Z. N.], we must industrialize it."⁷

The plan for the administrative reform was revealed to the public on January 14, 1968. The region's Hungarian population reacted to the news preceding the creation of the counties and to the plan with

an excitement that could be experienced on the national level. In working out the essential points of the reform, the Party had acted through its customary centralized system; however, in various details of a local nature it asked the opinion of the population. Whereas during the 1950 and 1952 administrative reforms the population followed or acknowledged the happenings for the most part passively, this time an opportunity arose at forums controlled by the Party (popular rallies, deliberations and the press) to express the various opinions. This partial form of liberalization inspired large-scale activity among the populace. Between January 14 and February 9, 1968, the Party's central organs registered 10,606 joint or individual proposals.⁸ In the major settlements of those regions (Râmnicu Sărat, Valea Dâmboviței, Clisura Dunării, Dumbrăveni, Sepsiszentgyörgy and Szilágyság) where the greatest number of questions arose, the Party leadership organized popular assemblies to clarify these.⁹

The presentation of the plan to set up the county system and the opportunities stemming from the Party leadership's liberalization to a large extent mobilized the local political elite and intellectuals of the Székelyföld and the population of the settlements directly affected. The memory of the Hungarian Autonomous Region (HAR) abolished in 1960 was still very much alive in local society, and the possibility of organizing the Székelyföld into one administrative unit actively engaged public opinion. Having at least as much weight – sometimes even overriding the previous factor – was the striving of the region's local elite groups to retain or obtain the most advantageous positions possible during the reform. The internal struggle occurred among three major elite groups: that of Csíkszereda, designated as the county seat in the case of the creation of the large Székely county, and those of Székelyudvarhely and Sepsiszentgyörgy, both possessing important historical traditions.¹⁰ The various local lobby groups swung into motion already during the organizational preparations. The solution was expected from the cadres of Hungarian origin positioned on the upper echelons on the Party hierarchy and the connections of leading intellectuals

working within the regime's orbit. The bulk of the requests of this nature came in to the most influential Hungarian Party leader of the time, János Fazekas, who himself originated from the Székelyföld.¹¹ What the fate of the Sepsiszentgyörgy and Kézdivásárhely Districts detached from the HAR in 1960 would be, and how the future large Székely county and Brassó County would divide up the settlements of the two districts, figured as prominent problems. As was already mentioned, this question had arisen already during the preliminary debates at the central level, too. The Brassó Party leadership, obtaining the support of a part of the local Party leadership in Sepsiszentgyörgy, deployed every possible means for the sake of retaining the two districts: they lobbied at the meetings of the Party's central organizing committees, obtained the support of some of the Hungarian cadres in Sepsiszentgyörgy who feared for their positions, and by means of promises, threats and manipulated popular rallies they tried to convince the Party leadership to decide in their favor. The debate divided the local Party leadership of the two districts involved (Sepsiszentgyörgy and Kézdivásárhely) as well, since those of Kézdivásárhely took a position in favor of belonging to the large Székely county.¹² By sending a profusion of reports to the central organs, the Party leadership in Brassó attempted to create the appearance that the population of the region was unequivocally in favor of annexation to Brassó. From other sources (reminiscences, or the personal papers of János Fazekas), on the other hand, it turns out that the bulk of the population and the intelligentsia did not unequivocally share the local Party leadership's opinion. Local intellectuals and the cadres opposing the Brassó center attempted to signal to the higher forums the abuses that meant that participants and speakers at the popular rallies were influenced by promises and threats in an effort to get them to vote in favor of Brassó, and speakers who thought differently were in many cases silenced.¹³ The two most prominent leading intellectuals of the era also called János Fazekas's attention to similar abuses. After the meeting with the intellectuals of Sepsiszentgyörgy, András Süttő and Győző Hajdu drafted a letter to Fazekas, passing on the

locals' requests. The letter reveals that the assistant manager of the theater in Sepsiszentgyörgy, Balázs Báakai, had been summoned to the building of the Party's local council, where Éva Sándor asked Báakai to set it down in writing that he requested the attachment of Sepsiszentgyörgy to Brassó County. After Báakai refused, she asked him to recruit actor Gyula Fekete and director András Völgyesi for this purpose. Báakai refused to do any of this.¹⁴ In this same letter they also recount how the local Party organs did not hold any of those meetings about which it could be guessed from the outset that they would decide against Brassó.¹⁵ Another local intellectual group sent a message to János Fazekas personally, asking him to intercede with Ceaușescu so that the districts of Sepsiszentgyörgy and Kézdivásárhely would not end up in Brassó County. "Those who agitate in favor of Brassó think that the administrative changes will negatively affect their positions and their jobs. Some believe that the new county leadership will no longer guarantee jobs for them; they pin all their hopes on their former connections in Brassó, ignoring the interests of the community," reads the letter.¹⁶ The leaders of villages to be attached to Brassó County (Tamásfalva, Gidófalva and so on) also reacted to the plan in a similar fashion.

In the case of Kovászna County, in addition to economic factors, the ethnic factor was also allotted a role. The memory of the abolition of the HAR in 1960, along with the administrative disunion of the Hungarian ethnic bloc, was still alive. The plans and debates on setting up the counties only intensified suspicions and tensions between Hungarians and Romanians. Those arguing in favor of the unitary Székely county were accused by local Romanians and pro-Brassó supporters of separatism, as the Romanian-speaking population of the region would rather have chosen Brassó County. In contrast, for the majority of Hungarians the plan of annexation to Brassó signified nothing other than a new attempt to divide the Székely and to allow the region's "exploitation" by Brassó to proceed.¹⁷

News of the events in Háromszék soon reached the highest levels of the Party leadership. On their instructions a number of central

delegates who also knew the terrain well (Sándor Koppándi, Károly Király, János Fazekas and Vasile Patilineț) tried to ease tensions. For the Party leadership it became increasingly more obvious that most of the region's population and the local intellectuals clearly did not desire annexation to Brassó. Following the request and the "pressure" of the public, as well as the intercession of higher-ranking Party activists (such as Fazekas and Király), a compromise solution began to take shape: a plan for a new county to be established out of the two disputed districts. As I mentioned, at a national level a similar situation evolved in three other cases concerning Szilágy, Mehedinți and Galați. In the case of Galați, there likewise existed an ancient rivalry with the town of Brăila. On February 10, a Central Committee report officially acknowledged that Kovászna County would be established out of Sepsiszentgyörgy and Kézdivásárhely Districts and a few settlements of Csík District.¹⁸ The final adoption of the new plan (the establishment of Szilágy and Mehedinți Counties, and the separation of Brăila and Galați) took place at the RCP plenary session on February 14, 1968.¹⁹

The complication surrounding the establishment of Kovászna County was not a unique phenomenon in the debates around the establishment of the counties in the Székelyföld. One of the agenda points of the plenary session concluding the process of establishing the counties, held on February 14, 1968, discussed an extraordinary case: in Csíkszereda on the previous day demonstrations had taken place in the interests of this town's providing a home for the seat of Harghita County. The antecedents to the events included the fact that three towns had applied to obtain the status of county seat for the large Székely county planned in the initial phase: Sepsiszentgyörgy, Székelyudvarhely and Csíkszereda. News of the preparations for the administrative reform threw the competitors into a fever. Already during the preliminary debates, the representatives of Székelyudvarhely, also trusting in the support of János Fazekas, who hailed from the area, addressed a letter to the Party leadership in which they sketched the advantages of Udvarhely.²⁰ "We think about which town would best meet these complex demands on the

territory of the Székely county. We believe we betray neither local patriotism nor bias of any other nature when we consider the town of Székelyudvarhely to be the most suitable county seat,"²¹ wrote the people of Udvarhely to János Fazekas in January 1968. The pressure by Székelyudvarhely can be traced in the official reports arriving from the Maros Hungarian Autonomous Region. "During the public debates numerous citizens from the localities of Harghita County also declared their request that the town of Székelyudvarhely, and not Csíkszereda, be named the seat of Harghita County. They argued that Székelyudvarhely was a more developed town and that it could oversee the duties of the county seat much better," we can read in the official reports of the local Party organs.²² With the secession of Sepsiszentgyörgy and the areas to be attached to Kovászna County (approved in the meantime), the Party leadership duly changed its ideas concerning the county seat without consulting with the locals. On February 11 a new official version this time designated Udvarhely as the county seat. With the delegates of the neighboring settlements, the constituent session of the new county was duly organized in Székelyudvarhely a day later. The official documents reported a positive atmosphere, yet it was a matter of common knowledge that the people of Csíkszereda were not at all pleased by the new situation, but rather considered it to be expressly humiliating. "We did not want to go. Nevertheless, they rounded up enough people for four buses and a couple of small cars from the enterprises, but they were rounded up almost by lasso, because we didn't really want to go," recalls Imre Pataki.²³ The regional Party organs quickly perceived that despite the "obligatory consent" of those from Csíkszereda the situation was very complicated. The Party Committee in Marosvásárhely Region immediately signaled to Bucharest that "in Csík District the mood is tense. In various enterprises, like the clothing factory, the timber plant, the motor depot and the mining works in Balánbánya (Bălan), the workers gave voice to their dissatisfaction."²⁴ The dissatisfaction did not cease in the following days either. On February 13 people arriving from the town's economic units and the villages of the vicinity, for the most

part in an organized manner, but at times spontaneously, surrounded the building of the Party Committee.²⁵ The demonstration continued overnight and the next day as well. From Bucharest a delegation formed by Mihály Gere and Vasile Patilineț negotiated with the demonstrators.²⁶ In the heated atmosphere, after long negotiations, the sides finally reached an agreement that Nicolae Ceaușescu would receive a delegation of the demonstrators.

The meeting between the number one leader of the Party and the country with the delegation from Csíkszereda took place on February 14 in Bucharest. It should be noted that it was in this time period that the Party plenary session was underway and Ceaușescu interrupted this to negotiate with the delegates. The delegation from Csíkszereda consisted of well-known, distinguished locals, such as István Orbán, the secretary of the executive committee of the popular council for Csík District, Ovidiu Muntean, manager of the Woodworking Plant in Csíkszereda, economist Imre Pataki, and school principal Pál János. In addition to Ceaușescu, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, János Fazekas and Vasile Patilineț received them on behalf of the Party leadership. The meeting, providing an opportunity for dialogue as well, was opened by Ceaușescu, who briefly outlined to the delegation the reasons for the planned modifications. He justified the change in the county seat by citing the detachment of Sepsiszentgyörgy and Kézdivásárhely, as well as Székelyudvarhely's economic, demographic and infrastructural features. He promised economic investments to the town of Csíkszereda and also promised that a number of the future county's institutions would be moved to the town. The delegation received a map to examine, while Ceaușescu returned to the plenary session for a while.²⁷ After a brief pause the dialogue continued. This time the delegation from Csíkszereda also stated its opinion. István Orbán diplomatically although bravely argued in favor of Csíkszereda, reminding the Party's leaders that the town had been originally designated as the county seat and that nothing at all justified changing this.²⁸ The manager of the timber enterprise, Ovidiu Muntean, attempted to convince the Party leadership with economic arguments and by

sketching Csíkszereda's infrastructural features.²⁹ The economist Imre Pataki also took umbrage at the fact that to his knowledge in Brassó the workers had been obliged to vote in favor of belonging to Brassó. To the counterargument that Csíkszereda would have been centrally situated only in the case of the creation of the large Székely county, Pataki proposed that the towns of Sepsiszentgyörgy and Kézdivásárhely be joined to Brassó and the surrounding areas to Hargita County.³⁰ The school principal Pál János argued the town's historical and cultural heritage and traditions.³¹ The representatives of the Central Committee listened to the extremely convincing and dedicated arguments, and Ceaușescu departed with the promise, providing hope to the delegates from Csíkszereda, that the Executive Committee would reconsider the request of the delegation. The Party leadership in the meantime consulted with the principal figures of the towns involved in the matter of the future county (Balánbánya, Gyergyószentmiklós, Udvarhely and Székelykeresztúr). The close proximity and economic links of the former two towns to Csíkszereda carried great weight. The decision in favor of Csíkszereda must have been reached during the plenary session that same day, since it was now this stance that the Grand National Assembly, meeting on February 15–16, sanctioned.³²

In the dispute, which primarily bore the hallmarks of a regional one, it is an important factor in terms of nationality policy that a compromise was also reached on an issue affecting some of the Hungarian population. Although the large Székely county could not be formed, Kézdivásárhely and Sepsiszentgyörgy and their environs were not attached to Brassó, but instead concentrated in a smaller county, albeit one with a Hungarian majority. The fact that the two aforementioned Székely districts did not end up in Brassó, even though both the Party leadership and the Brassó regional and Sepsiszentgyörgy district leadership considered this to be economically justified, in any event could be counted as a significant success. In this case, even if only to a moderate degree, nationality criteria had taken precedence over economic ones. For its part, the mass protest of the people of Csíkszereda for a long time counted

as a unique act even on a national level. We have no knowledge of street demonstrations of this magnitude from this period, or for that matter going back some years either. In the course of the events in Csíkszereda and the assessment of it by the Party leadership, it is an important factor that behind the events were some of the local Party elite and the intellectuals. The majority of the population was also dissatisfied with the resultant situation, but it was the local elite that pulled the strings behind the events. The demonstrations and the Csíkszereda delegation's visit to Bucharest brought about the decision desired by the town. Csíkszereda became the seat of Hargita County. In February 1968 Csíkszereda was a freshly established county seat where the local elite, with the backing of local society, had had a great say in bargaining with the regime.³³ Influenced by the street demonstrations and not least the delegation's diplomatic but very resolute requests and arguments, Ceaușescu and the Party leadership made changes to their original plans.

A Further Step: the Meeting of Nicolae Ceaușescu and the Party Leadership with Representatives of the Hungarian Intellectuals of Romania on June 28, 1968

The development of the international political situation (e.g., the events in Czechoslovakia) in 1968 further generated the internal political processes that had commenced starting in the mid-1960s.³⁴ In the summer of 1968 the Romanian Party leadership needed more than ever before the support of all of Romanian society. Meetings and discussion between the Party leadership and various intellectual groups, as well as visits to the more important counties in the country, multiplied spectacularly.³⁵ This series of tactical gestures by the Party leadership did not bypass the Hungarians of Romania either. Through an "agreement" with society the Party consciously prepared to make advances towards the Hungarian community of Romania as well. In the matter of bringing the nationality question before the highest Party forums, too, movement away from the

impease of the early 1960s occurred. János Fazekas, charged with mediating with the Hungarian intellectuals of Romania, and the committee responsible for minority affairs continuously delivered information to the Party leadership on issues preoccupying Hungarian intellectuals. Statistics were prepared on the state of nationality education, the number of nationality students, and their opportunities for further study. By the summer of 1968 the Party leadership was prepared for a meeting with the Hungarian intellectuals as well. After the summarizing of demands, complaints and requests and the outlining of a potential catalogue of problems, the list of names of the representative Romanian Hungarian intellectuals was also prepared.³⁶ János Fazekas's letter to Ion Gheorghe Maurer in the summer of 1968 already anticipated the problems preoccupying the Transylvanian Hungarian intellectuals. Among other things, Fazekas mentioned the Hungarians' underrepresentation in the various state, Party and cultural institutions, the reconsideration of the constitutional and legal status of the Hungarian population, the need for new radio and television programs, the development of Hungarian-language education and the demand for the creation of a new organization safeguarding minority interests.³⁷

The steps taken to regain the confidence of the Hungarians of Romania include also the meeting that took place between the top Party leadership and the Hungarian intellectuals of Romania on June 28, 1968. On the initiative of the Party's highest leadership, the preeminent opinion shapers of the Romanian Hungarian intellectuals were invited to Bucharest on the model of previously organized meetings with intellectuals. More than 50 Romanian Hungarian intellectuals (writers, poets, editors, artists and educators) received an invitation. Although the expected happenings of the era theoretically included this same possibility, the invitation nevertheless caught the intellectuals summoned by surprise, since they were informed only a few days before the meeting.³⁸ Under such circumstances there was hardly an opportunity for advance coordination or tactics (possibly a brief conversation among a few people could have taken place), even

though, as became clear from what was said at the discussions, everyone was aware of the most urgent problems of the Hungarians of Romania.³⁹ At the talks, held in the headquarters of the RCP Central Committee, a few key figures of the Party leadership (Nicolae Ceaușescu, Paul Niculescu Mizil, Leonte Răutu, Mihály Gere and János Fazekas) and the representative intellectual elite of the Hungarians of Romania took part – from Bucharest (Géza Domokos, János Szász and Pál Bodor) and from the major Transylvanian cultural centers: Kolozsvár (Ernő Gáll, János Demeter, Lajos Jordáky, Lajos Kántor, István Nagy, Gyula Csehi, Sándor Fodor, Sándor Kányádi and Elemér Jancsó); Marosvásárhely (Győző Hajdu, Zsolt Gálfalvi and András Sütő); Temesvár (Ernő Sisak) and so on. Twenty-six people spoke during the talks.⁴⁰ In theory anyone who had received an invitation could speak up, and the duration of the speeches was not strictly fixed either, only in that "as the time passed they were told to be as brief as possible."⁴¹ As was mentioned, no preliminary coordination took place, but from the speeches given those problem areas that according to Hungarian intellectuals awaited an urgent solution were clearly outlined. The first and one of the most pronounced questions concerned the settlement of the legal status of the Hungarians of Romania and their representation in state and Party organs. Several speakers (such as Ernő Gáll and János Demeter) emphasized the point that there was a need for a minority statute that would regulate the particular, collective rights of the Hungarians.⁴² Those commenting on this subject furthermore also asked that a state agency that would coordinate the cultural life of the Hungarian minority be established. Among the legal issues raised was the rehabilitation of Hungarian intellectuals convicted in the 1950s on the false charge of treason against the homeland and the nation.⁴³ Moreover, the bilingual signs removed in the 1960s and the changed street names were also brought up, as was the use of the minority languages in the state administration.

Belonging to the second category was the discussion of problems in the area of education. Here the most pronounced question was the situation of education in the mother tongue. The majority of

speakers remarked upon the almost complete elimination of technical school instruction in the Hungarian language, as well as the obstacles to studying at school and university in the mother tongue: the prevention of classes with Hungarian as the medium of instruction from starting; the discriminatory measures against Hungarian students during university admission examinations; the textbooks written for the minority students; the teaching of Romania's geography and history in the minorities' mother tongue; the complications surrounding the placement of university graduates.⁴⁴ The scope of the so-called cultural requests and grievances was similar. An array of issues was mentioned, ranging from support for minority tradition-preserving and amateur groups all the way to the deficiencies in theater life. The relationship between the minorities and the Romanian media received relatively extensive space. The intellectuals who rose to speak, sensing the possibilities, requested new periodicals, Hungarian- and German-language television and radio programs, and the quantitative and qualitative improvement of the existing newspapers. In addition, the question of book publishing in the minorities' language was also mentioned, where they urged increasing the number of publications and requested a separate publishing house for the minorities. Appearing as one of the prominent segments of cultural life was the role and position of the minorities in Romanian scholarly life, which according to the majority of speakers reflected neither the proportion of the nationalities nor the quantity and quality of the activity performed by the latter in scholarship and cultural life. The repercussions of the events in Hungary in 1956 in many respects had broken the assessment of the real or imagined integration of the Hungarians of Romania on the part of the Romanian state. The issue of the Hungarian community in Romania became a question of state security, similar to the state of affairs in 1944–1945. A positive change in Romanian society's image of the Hungarians may have been hoped for by those speakers who deplored the lack of information about the Hungarians and about the nationalities in general in the Romanian media and mass communication.

The meeting and the talks that took place between the Party leadership and the Romanian Hungarian intellectuals did not count as a unique phenomenon in 1968, and yet it was an extremely important moment in the Hungarian policy of the RCP. After 1948 the Party had practically declared that the minority question had been solved, the minorities' situation did not signify a unique problem, and the freedoms provided by the socialist constitution made the request for collective rights unwarranted. Until 1968 the Party, discounting the 1956 episode, in practice did not consult in such depth on an issue concerning any minority (or other, religious or social, and so on) group.⁴⁵ Not even at the time that the HAR was established in 1952, which enjoyed great popularity among the Hungarians of Transylvania, and particularly the Székelyföld, was the affected community or even the competent elite group consulted (and not at the time of the latter's partial abolition in 1960 either). The meeting and talks were undoubtedly the result of the Ceaușescu-style partial liberalization and initiative. The recollections and remarks reveal that a significant majority of the speakers at this time saw that the time had come to finally make the Party leadership aware of all those phenomena and events that the Hungarians of Romania in their opinion could record as grievances. An interesting characteristic of the speeches made during the talks was the diplomacy with which the speakers presented some issues. For Ceaușescu and the Party leadership – putting the blame on the "sabotages" of the activists working in the second line of the Party and the failures committed in the Dej era – it became possible to place minority policy and the related questions of its legitimacy on new foundations. Another characteristic of the talks and the questions raised was the fact that economic arguments and problems were not mentioned. In January of that same year, in connection with the administrative reform within the internal Party debates, however, the economic backwardness of the mostly Hungarian-inhabited Székelyföld appeared as an acknowledged fact. It is also a fact that Hungarian intellectuals working in the area of cultural life could not have possessed, beyond their personal experiences,

accurate economic data, balance sheets or statistics to which they could have referred.

On the basis of the requests presented during the hours-long discussion, the Party leadership prepared a problem catalogue, in which it summarized the requests, observations and answers to be given to them. An examination of the problem catalogue reveals those questions to which the Party immediately reacted, the most delicate points for the Party leadership, those areas where some sort of compromise could be expected, and those requests that the Party leadership rejected out of hand. The immediate rejection of any request referring to the legal status of the nationalities is striking. The Hungarian intellectuals, availing themselves of the opportunity, tried to break out of the situation canonized since 1948, by requesting a new legal status for the nationalities living in the country. They requested a statute and based on this a well-defined and circumscribed, effective representation at the institutional level. The Party leadership, on the other hand, immediately rejected every kind of request that would have resulted in the recognition of collective rights. In contrast, promises were made regarding administrative changes and putting a few persons of Hungarian background into positions at the various state agencies, which was often confined to the so-called advisory (consultative) role.⁴⁶ We must examine the success or failure of the talks in the given historical-political context. Among the demands and requests voiced very few were actually realized and a few were only partially so. Again the Party leadership did not recognize the collective rights of the national minorities (or those of other communities either), and for this reason it considered the drafting of a statute to be unwarranted. Aside from the launching of a few classes with Hungarian as the language of instruction, technical school training did not change. The changes proposed with regard to language use, street names and bilingual signs generally became lost in the maze of the rural Party and state bureaucracy. The history and geography of Romania were still not taught in the minorities' mother tongue, and nor were special Romanian language and literature textbooks prepared for

ethnic minority students. Beginning in the second half of the 1970s the partial achievements, too, gradually disappeared. At the same time we may also state that despite all these things this meeting also yielded numerous positive results there and then: the Party leadership once more confronted the most urgent, mainly cultural, problems of the Hungarians of Romania. As for the Hungarian elite of Romania, they were presented with an opportunity to state and outline all this before an official forum as well. It was in the period after the talks that the *Kriterion Könyvkiadó* and the cultural weekly *A Hét* were established, and it was also now that the Hungarian- and German-language programs of Romanian television began. In the two counties established in 1968 (but in others as well), the opportunity arose in the late 1960s and early 1970s to cultivate local Hungarian culture, and erect Hungarian statues, monuments and local museums.

The press recounted the meeting with the Hungarian intellectuals laconically and observing the strict rules of Party propaganda. There is no mention whatsoever of the requests, recommendations and debates voiced during the meeting. The communiqué reports merely that "at the meeting those participating in the conference declared their satisfaction with and complete adherence to the Marxist-Leninist nationality policy of our Party and our state, and to the consistent striving of the RCP to enhance socialist democracy and ensure the actual realization of legal equality for all workers, without regard to nationality, for the ceaseless flowering of the common socialist homeland. On this occasion numerous valuable recommendations were made on improving work in various areas of domestic scholarly and cultural activity."⁴⁷ Lajos Takács also describes the "ambiguous" atmosphere of the meeting to the employees of the Hungarian embassy in Bucharest.⁴⁸

The Birth of the Council of Workers of Hungarian Nationality

Between 1965 and 1968 Ceaușescu succeeded in winning the trust of a significant part of the Transylvanian Hungarian elite of the time. Through the "flexibility" displayed during the process of organizing the counties, the dialogue with Hungarian intellectuals and not least his (intentionally exaggerated) interest displayed during the meetings and visits, he achieved a not insignificant measure of sympathy for himself. The Hungarian cadres coopted onto the Central Committee or other state or Party institutions, the Party activists of Hungarian descent who remained in or gained positions during the administrative reform, and the intellectuals given the floor and listened to during the negotiations were in many respects indebted to the Party leadership. And for the more skeptical there remained the hope and optimism that the changes would not just be for show but would also contain substance. Romanian foreign policy displayed towards the 1968 events in Czechoslovakia showed an enormous need for the creation of domestic balance and unity and a pacified hinterland. The Party leadership organized a veritable countrywide tour. The most important members of the RCP leadership, headed by Nicolae Ceaușescu, paid visits to several counties during August and September. The Transylvanian counties, located close to the western border and containing minority populations as well, were the first. Counties that were considered to be more important from the viewpoint of propaganda and internal peace were visited by Ceaușescu personally, while important Party leaders paid visits elsewhere.⁴⁹ From the viewpoint of the Party's Hungarian policy, the Székelyföld and the traditional center of Transylvanian Hungarian culture, Kolozsvár (Cluj), enjoyed a privileged status. The Romanian Party leadership, despite the fact that it really did not agree with the Dubčėkian liberalization and had not applied it in its own country, and did not take part in the Warsaw Pact's intervention in Czechoslovakia. On August 21, 1968, at the zenith of his power and popularity, Ceaușescu condemned the military intervention in Czechoslovakia during an enormous popular rally. A few days after the rally in Bucharest condemning

the intervention of the Warsaw Pact's troops, we now find Ceaușescu in the Székelyföld.⁵⁰ On August 26, at the height of his popularity, he arrived in Brassó, only to visit later on from there the two newly formed "Székely counties" of Kovászna and Hargita.⁵¹ This was his second visit to the Székelyföld since his ascension to power (1965). While his predecessor, Dej, had made working visits relatively rarely, Ceaușescu – with outstanding political instinct – recognized the importance of frequent and ostentatious visits. At the same time, it must also be emphasized that the Party leadership in 1968 also feared a Soviet (and Hungarian) intervention similar to the one in Czechoslovakia. The frequent visits to the Székelyföld, embracing every larger settlement, carried an important political message for the local populace. The leadership of the two counties was indebted to the Party leadership, but the bulk of the population, too, evaluated the happenings of the recent period positively and with hope. In his remarks Ceaușescu acknowledged the economic backwardness of the Székelyföld and promised large-scale investments.⁵² He also complemented the ostentatious promises with symbolic gestures of outstanding importance in minority existence. During the visit it was possible to address comments in Hungarian as well, and at the end of his speeches Ceaușescu saluted the Party and the two counties in Hungarian as well: "Long live Hargita, long live the Romanian Communist Party!" (*Éljen Hargita, éljen a Román Kommunista Párt!*), he said, for example, in Csíkszereda.⁵³ The elite and population of the two counties assured the Party leadership of their trust and support. In their speeches the speakers (Károly Király, Anna Dukász, Árpád Tankó, László Bránis, Lajos Szávuly and others) met the expectations of the Party: they emphasized their loyalty, condemned the intervention by the troops of the Warsaw Pact and stressed the importance of "common patriotism," considered to be one of the basic tenets of the socialist nation's doctrine. By mentioning fraternity and the common fate and mentality, the Party leadership in essence made the local Hungarian elite profess "Romanianness," belonging to the Romanian socialist nation, which implicitly assumed even fewer bonds with the mother nation.

A few days after the visit to the Székelyföld—following a crowded work schedule in Bucharest—on August 30 the Party leadership visited Kolozs County. In his speeches delivered at the popular rallies in Torda (Turda) and Kolozsvár, Ceaușescu emphasized the importance of unity around the Party, and—exploiting the favorable atmosphere—he found time to promote the major political acts of recent years (partial liberalization, maverick foreign policy, and economic decentralization). During his brief presentation of the Party's nationality policy he referred to speeches made during his visit to Harghita and Kovászna Counties, without detailing the message of the Party leadership delivered there.⁵⁴ During Ceaușescu's visits to Kolozsvár and Nagyszeben (Sibiu), as well as the Central Committee secretary Paul Niculescu Mizil's visits to Temesvár (Timișoara), Arad and Nagyvárad (Oradea), it turned out that the Party leadership considered it to be important primarily in the counties of the Székelyföld to communicate and separately emphasize the most important aspects of the Party's Hungarian policy. During the other visits these questions were only alluded to, inserted into the general mobilization policy of the Party.⁵⁵

In late 1968 a new phase in the political and social transformation initiated by Ceaușescu took place. In the heightened foreign-policy and domestic-policy climate, the RCP leadership, for the purposes of reviving the Party's diminished capacity to mobilize the masses, established a new organization, the "Front of Socialist Unity" (*Frontul Unității Socialiste*, henceforth FUS). The organization's set-up, basic operating principles and goals were debated at the plenary session of the RCP Central Committee on October 24–25, 1968. In his lead address Ceaușescu proposed the name FUS and articulated the purposes for establishing the organization:

In the period between the parliamentary elections there did not exist any permanent body that would have ensured on a national level the regular cooperation of the local organizations under the Party's leadership. This could have occasioned a multilateral exchange of views amongst the representatives of these organizations, and it would have facilitated wide-scale inclusion of the masses in the debating

of the country's developmental questions. Precisely for this reason, in harmony with the demands for improving social relations and the participation of members of society in economic, political and state life, as well as the directives of the Ninth Congress and the National Conference, the EC [executive committee] recommends the creation of a permanent political organ.⁵⁶

The FUS was built on the model of mass organizations frequently employed in dictatorships, and it embraced Romanian society of the era on every level and in every area.⁵⁷ In the organization's structure the Central Council represented the highest level, followed thereafter by the county, municipal, town and communal councils.⁵⁸ It was at this same plenary session that the Party leadership decided to establish under socialist mobilization similar organizations for the nationalities living in the country as well, which would function on the model of the FUS and be integrated into it. The name "Council of Workers of Hungarian (or German or Serbian) Nationality" was adopted. Lajos Takács's proposal, that the new organs be called simply German or Hungarian Nationality Councils, the Party leadership rejected. The latter name must have appeared too "national" to the Party leadership, and did not sufficiently emphasize the fact that these organizations had been established for "nationality workers" and were not to operate as separate, national, interest-advocacy agencies. In his closing speech Ceaușescu patiently addressed Takács's proposal, but hinted that the latter should withdraw it. Maurer, on the other hand, closed the issue all the more decisively.⁵⁹ The establishment of the nationalities' councils and their subsequent operation fitted perfectly into the Party's nationality policy. For the sake of keeping balance in domestic policy, the Party had created a new means of mobilization, and in this it had devoted particular attention to the minorities, first and foremost the minority elites, the leading intellectuals. For the two larger nationality groups remaining after the mass emigration of the Jews (Hungarians and Germans) from the late 1950s onwards the opportunities narrowed significantly. Although the general level of exclusion experienced

by the Germans in the late 1940s and early 1950s abated somewhat starting in the second half of the 1950s, still this community had to confront numerous unsolved problems (education, culture in the mother tongue, proportional representation in politics and public life, maintaining contacts with relatives living in West Germany, and so on), just like the Hungarians of Romania after 1956. In obtaining the support of the minority elites and for the purposes of becoming familiar with the major issues affecting them, the Party leadership considered it to be important to establish a forum for them as well. At the meetings with the leading intellectuals of both nationalities, the demand for the establishment of interest-advocacy organizations was raised. The creation of nationality councils within the FUS involved important tactical, propagandistic and not least practical advantages for the Party leadership in several regards. With this decision the Party signaled to the public (and to the outside world) that it was engaged in finding an actual solution to the nationality question. Ever since the abolition of the MNSZ and the other minority organizations (1953), there had not existed separate interest-advocacy organizations and forums for the nationalities. The appearance and potential opportunity of the changes happening in this area filled the minority elites with optimism, guaranteeing the latter's loyalty towards the Party. The Party leadership partially fulfilled the request frequently asserted by the national minority intellectuals; at the same time, the councils, not having an independent legal status or decision-making jurisdiction, remained fully under the Party's control. By creating them the Party successfully channeled, and at the same time controlled, the activity of the nationalities.

The MNDT was established not for the purpose of enforcing the collective rights of the Hungarians of Romania, but rather to transmit the Party's policy.

It will be one of the main tasks of the councils to contribute to the activity of political education, which the Party and the community organizations have carried out for fostering socialist patriotism and socialist internationalism, for commitment to our new system, for the common homeland,

for the development of superior Communist ethics, against all types of retrograde, nationalist thinking and manifestations, for the continuous elevation of the socialist consciousness of the masses.⁶⁰

At the same time, besides its integrative role, the MNDT, under the rubric of linguistic separation also accepted in the definition of the socialist nation, *in principle* could contribute "to stimulating scholarly, artistic and literary creation in the mother tongues of the co-inhabiting nationalities, in close union with the creative works of the Romanian people, and with the socialist intellectual progress of the entire country."⁶¹ One stipulation gave cause for hope of a partial remedy to the particular minority concerns. According to this, the MNDT would receive a role "in examining the particular problems of the population of the given communities in order to find the best solutions, in harmony with the general interests of socialist society and the ethnic minority citizens."⁶²

As we mentioned, the MNDT was organized as part of the Front of Socialist Unity and based on its organizational structure. Bucharest was named the council's headquarters, and its members were nominated by the county councils of the Hungarian workers.⁶³ Both the German and the Hungarian councils had an elected bureau, the main task of which was to organize the daily activities. In those counties where a sizeable Hungarian, German or other ethnic minority population lived, county-level councils were established. Their members were nominated by the representatives of the workers of the nationality concerned. This meant in practical terms that the persons in question were nominated "on the recommendation of" and with the consent of the representatives of the local Party organs. The county councils of the co-inhabiting nationalities were headed by a chairman and two vice-chairmen. The councils in addition had one secretary each. The relative insignificance of the new organization is conveyed, however, by the fact that their employees "worked based on the principle of public work, and on a communal basis, [and] they [i.e., the councils] could not have paid employees."⁶⁴ The formation of the MNDT's national organization took place on November 15, 1968, in Bucharest. Academician

István Péterfi became chairman of the organization's Central Bureau. Lajos Takács, Károly Király, József Méliusz and Tibor Maros assumed the posts of vice-chairmen. In addition elected as members of the bureau were László Bányai, János Demeter, Anna Dukász, Zoltán Kovács, Sándor Egrý, Magdolna Fábán, Mihály B. Kovács, Julianna Márton, Sándor Nagy, András Sütő, József Valter and Dezső Szilágyi.⁶⁵ The council's central organ was expanded by a further 24 members in 1971. The organization of the MNDT's county councils took place likewise in November. On Friday, November 8, constituent sessions were held in Bihar, Beszterce, Kovászna, Hargita, Hunyad, Máramaros, Maros, Szatmár, Szilágy, Szeben and Temes Counties. The formation of the county organizations happened in the presence of Hungarian delegates who arrived from the settlements of the county in question. The constituent sessions were held in every case in the presence of the Party's local leadership. Alongside the local intellectuals, teachers and writers, members in economic posts (from plants and factories) were also coopted onto the county councils and, naturally, the worker members could not be lacking either.⁶⁶

Conclusions

In 1968 three events that to a large extent determined the Party's Hungarian policy took place. In the first half of the year the territorial-administrative reform was completed, during which the nationality question also surfaced, mainly with regard to the territorial division of the Székelyföld. The establishment in the Székelyföld of a unitary administrative unit based on collective rights, the successor to the HAR, was articulated only on the theoretical level; in practical life the political will for it was lacking. At the same time, the Party elite and intelligentsia of the Székelyföld did not emerge from the reform as the clear losers, since two new counties with Hungarian majorities were formed, Hargita and Kovászna Counties, the latter coming about as the result of a lengthy and difficult lobbying campaign. The method of

handling the conflict in the Székelyföld between Csíkszereda and Székelyudvarhely that erupted during the formation of the counties also acquired symbolic significance. Why might Ceaușescu have yielded to "pressure" of this kind? The political aim of the new territorial, administrative and regional network development plans was to establish a loyal elite serving the changed central regime, while its economic goal was the creation of local conditions for decentralized, forced-pace industrialization. Despite the fact that the minority question was regarded as solved, the Party leadership also had to contend with the fact that in the case of the compact bloc of Hungarians in the Székelyföld a very unfavorable decision would do no good at all in terms of achieving future economic and political goals, and nor would it place the country's international assessment in too good a light either.⁶⁷ In the new political and economic constellation, Ceaușescu in the Székelyföld, too, needed a new loyal political elite, one that could gain positions in the new counties. At the same time, the division of the Székelyföld over several counties, the establishment of multiple political and economic centers, as Dennis Deletant also puts it, "left Hungarian speakers in a majority in more counties than previously, in the old regions, but without the possibility of creating a single, clearly delineated, monolithic bloc of Hungarians, which could have presented a more convincing claim for autonomy."⁶⁸ A related phenomenon that gained further strength at the level of nationality policy was the situation whereby the "Transylvanian Hungarians" became increasingly marginalized as both an expression and a question of nationality policy in political jargon. With the establishment of the HAR, the Transylvanian Hungarian question in essence became concentrated on the Székelyföld, and this outlook became increasingly entrenched during the preparations for setting up the county system as well. The Party leadership of the time believed that the nationality question no longer existed as a political priority. And with the much-heralded linguistic and cultural concessions and the settlement of the administrative and economic issues of the Székelyföld, the demands of the Transylvanian Hungarians could

finally be satisfied. The creation of counties in the Székelyföld also points to another phenomenon frequently determining the region's history. Local antagonisms rooted in the historical past, and various economic and political interests, often preempted so-called common, or even national, interests. The debates between Sepsiszentgyörgy and Kézdivásárhely and Csíkszereda and Székelyudvarhely squandered the minimal political strength of the Székelyföld. Only in the preliminary phase did minimal lobbying for the "large Székely county" occur on the part of Fazekas; later on the local disputes always overrode this question. The battle for the county seat of the "small" Harghita County was no longer a nationality but a regional struggle, the attempt of the local elite to retain their former positions or obtain more important new ones beckoning with greater social prestige and existential opportunities. Giving the populace a voice under controlled confines during the process of creating the counties happened to be strongest in the Székelyföld, perhaps even on a national level. The population of the affected settlements and the local elite took their full share in the local debates and conflicts of interests. The counties came into being, and the subsequent brief period was exceedingly important in the life of the region. In tandem with industrialization, the modernization of the region gathered new momentum: the creation of jobs; providing public utilities; construction projects; the change in the living environment; the expansion of the school network; the stream of professionally trained teachers to the village; the bringing of gas and electricity to the village. New cultural and artistic institutions were formed, in the county seats dozens of intellectuals were hired, and with the support of the local Party elite the nurturing of culture in the mother tongue received new opportunities. The symbolic expanse of Hungarian culture and traditions after 1945 was manifest to a degree hitherto not witnessed, mainly in Kovászna County.

With the intensifying of the foreign policy situation the Party leadership took new steps and made new gestures towards Romanian society and the nationalities. The working visits in the counties and the consultations with the various intellectual groups

multiplied. The counties inhabited also by the minorities formed one of the "favorite" destinations of the visits. In the tense foreign policy situation, the Party leadership could not allow the image of the country, judged positively in the West as well, to be tainted in any respect. Between 1966 and 1971 Ceaușescu and the members of the Party leadership often made appearances in Marosvásárhely, Csíkszereda, Nagyvárad, Szatmárnémeti, Kolozsvár, Sepsiszentgyörgy, Szében, Temesvár or Székelyudvarhely. The talks conducted with the intelligentsia of the two nationalities were also an ostentatious gesture to the Hungarian and German minorities. By planning talks on issues affecting the nationalities as well, the Party leadership implicitly acknowledged the existence of problem areas that were not adequately solved. The request for legal status based on collective rights, which appeared ideal from the viewpoint of the minority situation, on the other hand, was resolutely rejected. The Ceaușescu regime, building on neo-Stalinist dogmas, did not recognize separate rights in the case of any social, confessional or nationality group. The same was valid in 1968 for the MNDD established within the framework of the Front of Socialist Unity as well. The MNDD, by uniting the political elite of Hungarian descent and the leading Hungarian intellectuals, initially assumed a multifunctional role in relations among the Transylvanian Hungarians, the Hungarian elite and the Party leadership: mediating, as well as legitimizing. These roles were multidirectional. The council transmitted in the mother tongue the Party's official policy to the Hungarian community, at the same time transmitting in the opposite direction, initially, the community's fundamental problems to the Party leadership. Besides the official Party and cultural policy and propaganda in the mother tongue, an opportunity also arose to cultivate segments of Hungarian culture. The legitimizing role had a similar duality. The Party, through the activity of the council, legitimized its nationality policy; at the same time the raising of minority grievances in the council's meetings and reports could occur through an official forum. Such dual activity by the council practically institutionalized the ambivalent, dual discourse characteristic of the minority elites in

the initial period. The weak points of the council stemming from its consultative character (the recommendations, even if they were listened to, frequently went off track and off target in the labyrinths of bureaucracy) were apparent already at the start of its operation, but its role beginning in the mid-1970s changed to such a degree as to be reduced from the 1980s onwards to a mere ideological mouthpiece and means of propaganda. The concessions made in the area of cultural life, new institutional opportunities, the movement observable in the area of economic investments, the ostentatious promises and gestures raised the hope in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the Romanian Hungarian elite that there was a chance, a possibility of retaining, and possibly expanding, the successes achieved.

Notes

- 1 For more detail, see Zoltán Csaba Novák, "A megyésítés előkészítése és a nemzetiségi kérdés Romániában 1967–1968" [The Preparation for Establishing the County System and the Nationality Question in Romania 1967–1968], in Nándor Bárdi and Attila Simon, eds., *Integrációs stratégiák a magyar kisebbségek történetében* [Integration Strategies in the History of the Hungarian Minorities] (Somorja, 2006), pp. 455–421.
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 As we can learn from one of his later speeches, it was János Fazekas who proposed the creation of the large Székely county at the National Party Conference. Putting the proposals into a concrete plan was made possible by Ceaușescu's approval; ANIC, fond CC PCR Cănelarie, dos. 191/1967. f. 20.
- 4 The final showdown with Drăghici took place shortly after the administrative reform. The plenary session of the RCP, at which the rehabilitation of the previously convicted Party activists was debated, took place between April 22 and 25, 1968. It was at this session, based on the charge of political abuses committed during the Dej era, that Alexandru Drăghici, too, was stripped of all of his Party and state functions.
- 5 Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (Central National Historical Archives, henceforth ANIC), CC PCR Cănelarie, dos. 189/1967. f. 10.

- 6 *Ibid.*, dos. 190/1967. f. 6.
- 7 *Ibid.*, f. 5.
- 8 ANIC, fond CC PCR Secția Organizatorică, dos. 1968/4. ff. 8–111.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 In 1966 Csíksereda had 8,459 inhabitants, Sepsiszentgyörgy 20,768, Székelyudvarhely 15,901, Kézdivásárhely 8,872 and Gyergyószentmiklós 13,204.
- 11 Beginning from the mid-1960s János Fazekas's political career was once more proceeding upwards: he was a Central Committee member and also held the post of vice-president of the Council of Ministers. In his personal papers there can be found several dozen requests and letters in which intellectuals, cadres and lobby groups in the Székelyföld asked him to intercede on their behalf.
- 12 The conflicts between the leaders of the two districts are also confirmed by Károly Király in his recollections. The Party Committee for Kézdi District, Domokos Szász, József Stemmer, József Németh, Gyula Bede, Lajos Szylvester, Ernő Fábán and Géza Benedek, were proponents of the large Székely county. In contrast, the Party Committee for Sepsiszentgyörgy District, led by the first secretary, Károly Sántha, took a position in favor of belonging to Brassó. See Károly Király, *Nyílt kártyákkal. Önéletrész és naplójegyzetek* [With Cards on the Table. Autobiography and Diary Notes] (Budapest, 1995), p. 22. János Fazekas himself confirms this conflict in an interview. See István Sarány and Katalin Szabó, *Megyevesinálók* [County-Makers] (Csíkszereda, 2001), pp. 19–20.
- 13 "Interjú Czíkó Árpáddal, Szylvester Lajossal és Fábán Ernővel" [Interview with Árpád Czíkó, Lajos Szylvester and Ernő Fábán], in András B. Kovács, *Szélszabadt Székelyföld* [The Székelyföld Carved Up] (Marosvásárhely, 2006).
- 14 Letter of András Sütő and Győző Hajdu to János Fazekas. PTSzL, fund 917. pack 8. dossier 3. ff. 1–3.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Ibid.*, pack 10. dossier 3, ff. 1–5. The letter was signed by, among others, the writer Dániel Veress, the teacher Zoltán Berde, the poet Ernő Valkó, and teachers Ibolya Birtalan and Enikő Cz.
- 17 PTSzL, fund 917, pack 10, dossier 5, f. 1.
- 18 According to Fazekas's recollections, it was he who had proposed the name Kovászna: see Sarány and Szabó, *Megyevesinálók*, p. 20. We could find no written source for this, although it is a fact that he

proposed the name Hargita. At the time that the new counties were established, in certain cases the Party permitted the use of the old names, while in other cases they were named after some settlement or symbolic terrain formation.

- 19 ANIC, fond. CC PCR Cărmăzari, dos. 21/1968, f. 7.
- 20 On December 12, 1967, a group of intellectuals from Székelyudvarhely wrote a letter to János Fazekas in which they tried, using historical, geographical and economic arguments, to prove the importance of the town of Udvarhely. PTSzL, fund 917, pack 10, dossier 3, f. 24.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 Report of the MHAR regional Party organization to the CC. ANIC, fond CC al PCR Secția Organizatorică, dos. 4/1968, f. 135.
- 23 Sarány and Szabó, *Megyei hírlapok*, p. 27.
- 24 ANIC, fond CC al PCR Secția Organizatorică, dos. 4/1968, f. 144.
- 25 József Gagyí, "Az új elit a Székelyföldön. Hargita megyei változások 1968 után" [The New Elite in the Székelyföld. Changes in Hargita County after 1968], *Társadalmi Szemle* 4 (1997): 61.
- 26 ANIC, fond CC PCR Cărmăzari, dos. 21/1968, f. 7. In the late 1960s, Gere was responsible for the CC Propaganda Department and later held the post of vice-president of the State Council. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, CC member Patilineț was minister of construction and later mining and crude oil as well.
- 27 Meeting of the Party leadership with the delegates of the town of Csíkszereda, 1968; *ibid.*, dos. 220/1968, ff. 2–4. For more on the memorandum of the meeting, see Zoltán Csaba Novák and Ágoston Olti, "Udvarhely vagy Csíkszereda? Harc a megyeszékhelyért (Egy csíkszeredai küldöttség Nicolae Ceaușescu-nál 1968-ban)" [Udvarhely or Csíkszereda? Battle for the County Seat (A Delegation from Csíkszereda Visiting Nicolae Ceaușescu in 1968)], *Székelyföld* 7 (2008): 85–111.
- 28 *Ibid.*, ff. 4–6.
- 29 *Ibid.*, ff. 6–9.
- 30 *Ibid.*, f. 10.
- 31 *Ibid.*, ff. 12–13.
- 32 *Vöröcs Zászló*, February 16–17, 1968.
- 33 Although disturbances similar in size to the demonstration in Csíkszereda did not take place, it is important to state that local elites achieved successes in other regions as well. Such were, for example, the separation of the regions of Brăila and Galați into two counties,

as well as the establishment of Mehedinți and Sălaj Counties, which had not figured in the preliminary plans.

- 34 Relations between the member states of the Warsaw Pact and Romania had soured so much by 1968 that, for example, the Romanian side was not even invited to the talks held in Dresden on March 23.
- 35 For more detail on the phenomenon, see Alina Pavelescu and Laura Dumitrescu, eds., *PCR și intelectualii în primii ani ai regimului Ceaușescu (1965–1972)* [The RCP and the Intellectuals in the First Years of the Ceaușescu Regime (1965–1972)] (Bucharest, 2007).
- 36 ANIC, fond CC PCR Secția de Propagandă și Agitație, 18/1968, 98–102 ff. The list of Hungarian intellectuals in Romania considered to be important by the Party contained 121 names in total from Marosvásárhely, Kolozsvár, Bucharest, Szatmárnémeti, Nagyvárad, Csíkszereda, Brassó, Arad, Nagybánya and Sepsiszentgyörgy.
- 37 Informatory letter of János Fazekas to Ion Gheorghe Maurer, 1968. PTSzL, Fund 917, pack 7.
- 38 Andreescu, Varga and Nastasă, *Minorități etnocolturale*, p. 912.
- 39 In his recollections Géza Domokos relates how on the eve of the meeting he visited Pál Bodor and there together with Gyula Szabó wrote the texts of the remarks: Éva Bányai, *Sikertörténetek kudarcokkal* [Success Stories with Failures] (Kolozsvár, 2006), p. 140.
- 40 Memorandum on the meeting between the Party leadership and the intellectuals of Hungarian nationality. June 28, 1968; ANIC, fond. CC PCR Secția Organizatorică, dos. 47/1968, ff. 1–53.
- 41 Interview with Zsolt Gálfalvi (interview in the author's possession).
- 42 The question of a statute stabilizing the legal position of the Hungarians in Romania had appeared already between the two world wars, but also in the period concluding the Second World War. Facing the peace negotiations, on February 6, 1945, Romania proclaimed the so-called Nationality Statute, which declared the equality before the law of all citizens without regard to race, language or nationality, and guaranteed collective rights in the area of language use to the Transylvanian Hungarians. The class-oriented political system created by the RCP, which came to power in 1947, no longer recognized the collective rights of the nationalities.
- 43 The majority of those convicted at that time were released from prison in 1963 and 1964. However, the central and local Party organs placed erected obstacles to their returning to their former positions

or perhaps obtaining new jobs. The Hungarian intellectuals asked the Party leadership for a remedy to this.

- 44 Following the local interpretation of the events of 1956, the issue of so-called Hungarian separatism was raised once again, more forcefully. On the pretext of "preventing the separation from the majority nation" of Hungarian students, university graduates, doctors and experts, Hungarian university graduates began to be posted in Romanian-majority areas located far from their native land.

- 45 In the autumn of 1956 the CC secretary, Miron Constantinescu, traveled to Kolozsvár, where on September 29 and 30 he met with the representative Hungarian intellectuals of Kolozsvár. For more details, see Levente Benkő, *Az őszinteség két napja. 1956. szeptember 29–30. [The Two Days of Sincerity. September 29–30, 1956]* (Kolozsvár, 2007). A similar discussion had occurred in October 1956 in Marosvásárhely between the Hungarian intellectuals of the HAR and the local Party leadership; for more details, see *Az 1956-os forradalom és a romániai magyarság*, pp. 143–159. It is characteristic of both meetings that they were prompted by the ramifications of the 1956 Hungarian events in Transylvania. First and foremost the repercussions of de-Stalinization and the reforms in Hungary were evaluated, while at the same time a few questions generally affecting the Transylvanian Hungarians were also debated. At the same time it is to be noted that neither of the meetings attained the complexity of the 1968 meeting.

- 46 Zoltán Csaba Novák, "A nyitás éve", 1968. A romániai magyar értelmiségiek találkozója Nicolae Ceaușescuval" [The "Year of Liberalization", 1968. The Meeting of the Hungarian Intellectuals of Romania with Nicolae Ceaușescu], *Múltunk* 2 (2008): 229–266.

- 47 *Vörös Zászló*, No. 152, 1968; *Scântea*, No. 7747, 1968.

- 48 Gábor Vincze, *Történeti kényserpályák-kisebbségi realpolitikák II. Dokumentumok a romániai magyar kisebbség történetének tanulmányozásához 1944–1989* [Historical Fixed Courses – Minority Realpolitik II. Documents for the Study of the History of the Hungarian Minority in Romania, 1944–1989] (Csíkszereda, 2003), pp. 295–299.

- 49 On August 28–29, 1968, the wave of visits culminated on a national level. Gheorghe Apostol visited Brăila, Vrancea and Galați Counties, and Alexandru Bărlădeanu visited Neamț and Bákó Counties. In this same time period Emil Bodnăraș visited Vaslui and Iași Counties,

while Chivu Stoica visited Dolj and Mehedinți Counties. *Scântea*, No. 7809, 1968.

- 50 This step by the Party leadership, which in any case bore the marks of neo-Stalinism, is interpreted in the specialist literature as the political proceeds of the Romanian maverick policy; for more details, see Rătegan, 1968. *Din primăvară până în toamnă*, pp. 54–185.

- 51 Already during the preparations for establishing the county system, Ceaușescu had promised the visits to those concerned, for example the members of the delegation from Csíkszereda negotiating in Bucharest in February 1968. The fact that the Party leadership traveled not just to the two county seats, but also paid a visit to the loser in the battle to become the seat of Harghita County, Székelyudvarhely, was an outstanding symbolic gesture. The latter town was accorded in advance the fervently desired municipal rank as well.

- 52 *Scântea*, No. 7807, 1968; ANIC, fond CC PCR Cănelarie, dos. 136/1968, f. 39.

- 53 *Ibid.*

- 54 *Scântea*, No. 7811, 1968.

- 55 *Scântea*, No. 7812–7813, 1968.

- 56 Stenographic minutes of the RCP CC plenary session, 1968; ANIC, fond CC PCR Cănelarie, dos. 178/1968, ff. 47–56.

- 57 In the years of the royal dictatorship the "Front of National Rebirth" (*Frontul Renașterii Naționale*) had functioned.

- 58 Like the Patriotic People's Front established by the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party in Hungary, it was a social-mass organization of a coordinating nature. It did not, however, have its own paper. With the harshening of the dictatorship it gradually lost the minimal advisory, opinion-shaping role that it had possessed at the moment of its inception.

- 59 Ceaușescu: "A few objections were voiced regarding the name of the nationality councils, namely, that we should call them simply German or Hungarian nationality councils. We think that it is better to stick to the originally proposed expression, the council of workers of Hungarian and German nationality, and we will ask Comrade Takács – I believe he proposed it: perhaps he will abandon it."

Lajos Takács: "I proposed only that we think about this."

- I. Gh. Maurer: "Think about it? We abandon it." ANIC, fond CC PCR Cănelarie, dos. 178/1968, f. 135.

- 60 Az RKP KB plenáris ülésének gyorsírástó jegyzőkönyve 1968. ANIC, fond CC PCR Cancellarie, dos. 178/1968, ff. 147–156.
- 61 *Ibid.*
- 62 *Ibid.*
- 63 The Hungarian and the German workers' councils were directed both at the central and local levels by the competent Party organs, which expressly determined the identity of persons nominated and elected onto the respective councils.
- 64 *Vörös Zászló*, No. 255, 1968.
- 65 *Vörös Zászló*, No. 273, 1968.
- 66 *Vörös Zászló*, No. 26, 1968. The MNDT council for Maros County was composed as follows: chairman Professor Tibor Maros; board members Géza Fodor on behalf of the county popular council, theater-manager Zsolt Gálfalvi, railway worker Márton Szöllösi, and secretary and activist György Parajdi. A further 42 members belonged to the council's governing board. At the same time the Maros County organization sent 18 members to the MNDT national council.
- 67 This latter argument was raised a number of times during the preliminary debates.
- 68 Deletant, *România sub regimul comunist*, p. 129.

BIOGRAPHIES OF KEY PERSONALITIES

Anghelescu, Constantin (1870–1948)

Romanian politician, doctor and university professor. From January 1914 onwards he was a member of the government on a number of occasions. From December 30, 1933, until January 4, 1934, he was chairman of the Council of Ministers.

Baász, Imre (1941–1991)

Transylvanian artist. He won the Graphic Salon Second Prize for his diploma work (the illustrations to the *Kalevala* prepared for the Kriterion Publishing House). He later worked as a set designer for the Hungarian Theater in Kolozsvár and as an instructor at the Institute of Fine Arts in Bucharest.

Bálan, Ștefan (1913–1991)

Romanian engineer and politician. Between 1956 and 1957 he was deputy minister of education, and then between 1963 and 1969 minister of education. In 1963 and again between 1984 and 1991 he was head of the Technical Division of the Romanian Academy. Between 1979 and 1989 he was an alternate member of the Central Committee.

Balogh, Edgár (1906–1996)

Hungarian publicist and political writer. He was a contributor to several journals, and also filled important political and public roles, and was one of the leaders of the Czechoslovak *Sarló* [Sickle] Movement. Between 1944 and 1948 he was vice-chairman of the MNSZ. Starting in 1948 he was an instructor at, and in 1949 rector of, Bolyai University. In 1950, together with a number of leaders of the MNSZ, he was sentenced in a show trial. He was freed from prison in 1955. Between 1957 and 1971 he was deputy editor-in-chief of *Korunk*. From 1959 onwards he taught at the university in Kolozsvár, and was editor-in-chief of the *Romániai Magyar Irodalmi Lexikon* [Romanian Hungarian Literary Lexicon].