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## “Out of Romania!”

*Reasons and Methods as Reflected in State Security  
Documents 1987–1989*

Could we identify with the refugee situation within the history of Romanian-Hungarian relations in 1987–89? We know that the answer is no, yet appearances persist even today. The wave of refugees arriving from Romania seemed to shield other dimensions of conflict in the relationship of the two countries, by the fact that the citizens of other countries increasingly targeted Hungary as a destination country. Furthermore, the migrating masses coming to Hungary gave an advantage to the Hungarian political elite in that they represented the positive alternative of a “reforming socialist” country in the West. This work of research seeks to examine factors that motivated, and, in turn, influenced, the mass migration of Romanian citizens in the mid-1980’s. The situation is unmistakable: “In the past few years, mainly due to the discriminating measures against citizens of Hungarian nationality, the lower living standards, the number of legal and illegal migrants, the majority of whom are ethnic Hungarians arriving in Hungary is increasing, and they have no intention to return to the Socialist Republic of Romania.”<sup>1</sup> Up to the mid-1980, Hungary gave refugees to the world;

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<sup>1</sup> The Inter-ministerial State Committee dealing with the affairs of foreign citizens residing in Hungary informs the county and town committee secretaries about their tasks connected to the solution of the situation of foreign, mainly Romanian citizens of Hungarian nationality residing in Hungary and not intending to return

but from 1987 onward, the country has taken refugees. Between 1988 and 1995, more than 130,000 refugees were registered in the country. The number of those who arrived in Hungary receiving support from private persons, that is, without registering with the authorities, may be substantially more. Chief among the reasons for this exodus were certain features of the Romanian-Hungarian relationship such as the so-called regional and settlement reorganization – in Romanian official language – systematization, in colloquial Hungarian “village destruction” that began in Romania in 1987. Furthermore, the practice of Ceaușescu’s dictatorship violating human rights also played a significant role, coupled with the discrimination against Hungarian, German and Jewish minorities. An increasing number of social and economic problems were also important migration factors. The immigration of Romanian citizens demanded measures of border control, administrative control, state security and public safety from the part of the Hungarian law enforcement, while the negotiations between the “fraternal socialist parties” was also needed as much as diplomatic and international political solutions. In the examination of the complex problem of migration, our research intends to focus on three characteristic processes, based on the contemporary documents: the instruments of the Romanian policy, including use of state secret services in the national settlement reorganization, the “incidents” along the Hungarian-Romanian border, and the differences in handling refugees.

### *1. Political and Security Background*

Large migrations are first and foremost examined by national security researchers as a challenge to security, one of the factors that may endanger public safety.<sup>2</sup> The free movement of people between countries has been a natural phenomenon since the fall of the “iron curtain”, and migration

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home. 14<sup>th</sup> April 1988. HSWP KB KAO NAH M-KS 288. f. 31/21. ó. (MSZMP = Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt, HSWP = Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party; HSWP CC = Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party; NAH = Magyar Országos Levéltár, NAH = National Archives of Hungary.)

<sup>2</sup> Deák, Péter: Conceptual and content wise approaches and new interpretations of security. In: Deák, Péter (editor): *Handbook of Security Policy*. Osiris, Budapest, 2007. 17 p. .

affects security. Mass migration may also burden the social and economic capacity and infrastructure of a given country. In addition, it may foster the underground economy, money laundering and organised crime, or it may open channels to radicalism, extremism and political violence. However, beyond these security considerations, it is also worth examining the political and economic dimensions of migration.

In Hungary, just as in the Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe, after 1947–48 the issue of legal and illegal migration was fundamentally considered a state security concern. In an era attentive to class struggle, the ideological argument was quite simple: those inclined to leave the people's democracy could be only (political) criminals, but most people arriving were considered likely spies.<sup>3</sup> It was also characteristic that the Hungarian Bureau of Immigrant and Emigrants Protection<sup>4</sup> created in 1921 was also dealing with the affairs of immigrants after 1945, ceased operations on June 15 1948,<sup>5</sup> although formally minor issues were dealt with by the World Association of Hungarians.<sup>6</sup> It is not accident that based on the resolution number 4353/1949/268./M.T. of the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Hungary; the Border Police were transferred from the Ministry of Defence to the jurisdiction of the State Security Agency (ÁVH).<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the Head Command of the Border Guards constituted organisationally one single department together with the Interior Security Police.<sup>8</sup> In this period, a system of total border control was organised along the southern and western border areas.<sup>9</sup> It reference to the restrictions to travel abroad, no data was found on

<sup>3</sup> Our democratic police is five years old. *Magyar Rendőr* (Hungarian Policeman). 15th January 1950. 4 p.

<sup>4</sup> 44.700/1921. Decree of the Ministry of the Interior.

<sup>5</sup> 463.231/1948. Decree of the Ministry of the Interior.

<sup>6</sup> Margit Jenes: The Bureau Defending Hungarian Emigrants and Remigrants 1945–1948. NAH XIX-B-7.

<sup>7</sup> 255.100/Eln. ÁVH leading order of 30th December 1949. Central Archives of the Ministry of the Interior (furthermore: BM KI). Collection of Directives (furthermore Pgy) 1949. box 12 (furthermore d).

<sup>8</sup> Beatrix Boreczky: The organisation of the ÁVH, 1950–1953. Saft. 1. Historical Office, Bp., 1999. 99 p.

<sup>9</sup> In 1950, then in 1952, along the western borderlines a 15 km-long borderline area, and within it, 500 and 50 m-wide borderlines were established where one could enter only with the permission of the police or the border guard service. Only border guards could enter 50-m borderlines. Along the western borderlines, a square system of barbed wire was established. In the South and in

any permits issued to emigrate from Hungary until 1953.<sup>10</sup> According to official political doctrine in a people’s democracy there are no reasons for emigration;<sup>11</sup> therefore, migration is not a concern. As for certain foreign individuals coming to Hungary, state security had to be particularly vigilant of those few “war-mongering, counter-revolutionary plotting imperialists”. Those who tried to cross the border illegally, “defying the scrutiny of border security”,<sup>12</sup> were in serious danger. Following the patterns, nearly to the letter, of the Soviet penal code, other Eastern-European countries also regulated border related transgressions.<sup>13</sup>

Keeping with the demands of in-depth prevention, the operational field of the border guard service was a 15-km-wide swat from the border. Within that area, the border guards were supposed to be always in service to detect illegal border crossings, with instructions to arrest illegal border crossers and hand them over to the police.<sup>14</sup> The operational tasks were performed by reconnaissance units. Their assignment was to detect individuals that may endanger border security. This was to be done by covert and open means such as social interaction and cooperation with the civilian population. Usually, border control regulations were carried out without taking into account the particular political character of the neighbouring countries. The border control network, however, distinguished between the “Western relationship” and the “Southern and fraternal border relationship”. In the latter case, the border guard agency dealt mainly with illegal border crossers coming in

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the West, a 318 km-long minefield was built. The minefield was removed along the southern borderlines in 1956, but it was resettled in the West in 1957. The minefields were ceased in 1965 in the southern, and in 1969 in the western borderline area. The removal of the minefields was finished in 1971. See also: Csapodi, Tamás: Mines in Hungary, *Fundamentum*, 2002. 2. And: Okváth, Imre: The period of “war preparations” 1948–53. In: Okváth, Imre: *A bastion on the front of peace. Hungarian army and military policy, 1945–1956*. Aquila, Budapest, 1988.

<sup>10</sup> In 1953, 153 persons were permitted to emigrate. Tóth, Péter Pál: Migration in Hungary in the 19 and 20th centuries. In: *Migration and the European Union*. SZCSM, Budapest, 2001. 35 p.

<sup>11</sup> See Szántó, Miklós: *Hungarians in the world*. Kossuth, Budapest, 1984.

<sup>12</sup> Kádár, Miklós (editor): *Penal Code (special part)*. ELTE ÁJTK, Budapest., 1953. 87 p.

<sup>13</sup> See Penal Code: Official Text. Edited by the Panel of the Ministry of Justice and Public Prosecutor’s Office of the Socialistic Republic of Romania. Scholarly Publishing House, Bucharest, 1956. section 320–322.

<sup>14</sup> Border Control Regulations. Ministry of the Interior. Order number 7. 20th February 1958. BM KI Pgy. 1958.

and related to tourism, and those who wanted to leave the country illegally. The agency also performed cross-border assignments and exploratory missions – mainly in the western areas. For more effective cooperation the border guard units and the regional state security operatives prepared an annual joint plan of action.<sup>15</sup>

The establishment of the system of total border control (and the penal regulations for it) certainly did not completely prevent, but it hindered those who wanted to cross the borders illegally. For political reasons, after 1949 many Greek, and after 1973, many Chilean citizens escaped to Hungary, but apart from this, Hungary was a country that gave refugees to the world for more than fifty years. As for legal and illegal migration, there are no exact data after 1945.<sup>16</sup> Based on different documents, we can assume that approximately 100,000 people migrated from Hungary in the period between 1945 and 1956, but the number of people legally migrating did not reach 15,000. After the wave of migration of 170,000 people in 1956–57, the number of legal emigrants was about 1500–2400, while the number of illegal migrants oscillated between 300 and 500.<sup>17</sup> From the 1960's to the 80's more people left the country than those who migrated to Hungary, 1000 to 2000 people immigrated.<sup>18</sup> Illegal migration was very low until the 1980's. Between 1960 and 1987, the number of illegal border crossings did not reach 500

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<sup>15</sup> The assignments of the exploratory bodies of the Border Guards of the Ministry of the Interior. Order number 014. BM KI Pgy. 1969. 10–21/14/69. sz.

<sup>16</sup> It is only a partial explanation that the documents of the ÁVH from between 1951–1953 do not reach two metres documents in the Historical Archives of the State Security Agency. See: Baráth, Magdolna: Handling and eliminating documents. In: *The Report of the Professional Commission 2007–2008*. s. I. a. .131. p.

<sup>17</sup> People who committed the crime of „escaping abroad” were not accused of a crime against the state, but for a political crime, based on the Penal Code passed in 1961. These people did not commit crimes included in chapter 9 of the Penal Code, but committed a crime against the public order and safety included in chapter 12. See: The number of crimes committed the state and of political nature, the reasons for the crimes based on the experienced of the past 14 years. Ministry of the Interior Department III/1. 3rd March 1974. 16 p. in BM KI Pgy. 1974. 34–67/74. sz.

<sup>18</sup> Harcsa, István: Migration: In: Kollega Tarsoly István (editor): *Hungary in the 20th century II*. Babits Kiadó, Szekszárd, 1997. 221 p.

persons in any year,<sup>19</sup> but the number of illegal border crossers coming from Romania did not reach 10,000 persons in any year until 1987.<sup>20</sup>

From the middle of the 1980s, the situation changed. While the number of emigrants quickly decreased, the number of foreign citizens migrating to Hungary legally or illegally (primarily from Romania, but not exclusively ethnic Hungarians) and intending to settle down was increasing quickly. The years of 1987–88 were a reversal of the migration patterns since the end of World War II. In 1987, comparing to the number of immigrants, the numbers of legal (1,476) and illegal (4,923) emigrants showing a population decrease of 4,000. In 1988, however the population shows a net increase of 8000 people (12,788 immigrants vs. 4864 emigrants). From this period, the difference of migration did not show negative ratios in any period.<sup>21</sup> It is a noteworthy circumstance that the number of illegal border crossings taking place in the “eastern border” already approached 7,000 (6,854), and, except one, all the border violators were detained.<sup>22</sup>

The special attention gained by the migration phenomenon popularly known as “Romanian refugees” could be explained by the complexity of the issue. The controversy between two countries sharing a (communist) alliance became increasingly tense and gained permanence when the discrepancies of political leadership went beyond considerations of ideology, inter-party and international relations. The press, history and the evolving democratization taking place in Hungary became actors in the, at times, fierce disputes of the opposing sides, who also sought to elicit international support for their cause. In this situation, a variety of data, motives and interpretations of their decisions, were published in relation to the groups of people migrating from

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<sup>19</sup> Report about the results of border control. The Proposal of the Minister of the Interior to the Political Committee of the HSWP about the long-run assignments of border control. 3rd February 1989. Supplement number 3. MOL M-KS 288. f. 5/1054. ő. e.

<sup>20</sup> The number of Romanians migrating to Hungary in a yearly compilation. Horváth, István: The migration of the Hungarian minority in Romania to Hungary. *Korunk*. February 2002. Chart number 8.

<sup>21</sup> See the date: Tóth, Péter Pál: *Is there only one home? Refugees, immigrants, new citizens in Hungary. (1988–1994)*. Püski, Budapest, 1997. 65 p.

<sup>22</sup> Report about the results of border control. The Proposal of the Minister of the Interior to the Political Committee of the HSWP about the long-run assignments of border control. 3rd February 1989. Supplement number 3.

Romania to Hungary. The fundamental equation is, at first sight, simple: “people always tend to escape from tyranny to freedom”. The common thread of the reason for migration is coercion or pressure to leave: “as for coercions or pressures, we can think of political persecution, ethnic or racial discrimination, disasters, wars and military conflicts, and finally unemployment or social and economic problems.”<sup>23</sup> As for Romania, in the period discussed, it is evident that it would be a simplification to treat the political motives as exclusive. It is true that refugees escaping from Romania mainly complained at “the lack of democracy, the terror, the ever present spy network, and ethnic discrimination (violent urbanisation)”,<sup>24</sup> but despite the official propaganda it was well-known that in Romania, the majority of the population – not only compared to the European average, but also to the Hungarian standards of living – lived in poor and ever worsening condition.<sup>25</sup> Below, our research will primarily focus on the political motives of the refugees, since these not only did played a defining role in motivating the migration of Romanian citizens, but also in the measures taken by Hungary, and her domestic agencies as well as in the receptivity of the refugees by the Hungarian public opinion.

Besides the questions related to the legitimacy of the Kadar regime the nationality question, that is, the issue of the ethnic Hungarians across Hungary’s borders was a forbidden topic. The issue was made taboo by the web of commitments to the internationalist and “fraternal” Socialist (communist) party. It also meant that the interpretation of the problems presented by the presence of the Hungarian minority was a monopoly of the regime. Therefore, an open discussion of these issues was relegated to the politically illegal opposition. It also gave a voice and an agenda to the Hungarian émigrés of the West as well as to the Hungarian-language media functioning abroad.

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<sup>23</sup> Tóth, Judit: From political migration to migration policy. *Mozgó Világ*, 1991. 11. 112 p.

<sup>24</sup> Kende, Péter: Romanian refugees in Hungary. *Külpolitika*, 1989. 2. 95–96 p.

<sup>25</sup> We may as well call the case of a twenty-year-old couple tragic-comical. They left their six-months-old baby in Romania and justified their escape with the fact that “there is video in Hungary”. Tamás Forró and Henrik Havas’s interview with captain Margit Péntzes, the acting director of the Division of Administration of Hajdú-Bihar county police department. *After Arad – who knows where?*, Háttér, Budapest., 1988. 78 p.

The meetings of the Editors-in-Chief of the Agitation and Propaganda Division of the Hungarian Socialist Party were also a control mechanism of the Party over the press.<sup>26</sup> The monthly meetings sought to identify expected events suitable for publication as well an analysis of the work performed. It was no accident that the party leadership suspended in 1978 all “problematic writings” related to Transylvania as well as the “effectively functioning” “ex-post censorship”. It “provisionally” mandated that writings dealing with Hungarians abroad could only be published after consulting with the Agitation and Propaganda Division). However, more important than these measures were the interpretation of the set of principles for the press to follow:<sup>27</sup>

- Regardless of location in the world, only socialism can solve the problem of nationalities; there is no other recipe.
- The fundamental precondition to resolve the nationality question is that there should be good relations between peoples and countries (tensions between Hungarians and Romanians only harms the situation of the Hungarians living in Romania);
- We must treat the issue in a way that we should not be detrimental to ourselves (the danger of isolation) and should not harm Hungarians living outside the borders;
- The ethnic issue is not a territorial issue for us;
- The hostile, fascist émigré groups now especially agitating for the sake of the Hungarians in Romania are our enemy, as they are enemies of our the Socialist Republic of Romania and the Hungarians living in Romania;
- In summary: we care about the fate of Hungarians abroad on the principle of internationalism.

In the same year, the same issue came up, with a similar level of secrecy, but with a radically different interpretation. In those times, the Department of Intelligence (III/I-1.) of the Ministry of the Interior dealt with intelligence against the United States and international organizations. Evidence of the success in obtaining information needed

<sup>26</sup> Hegedűs, István: Sajtó és irányítás a Kádár-korszak végén (Press and control in the end of the Kádár-era). *Médiakutató*, 2001. 1.; Pór Edit: A Kádár-rendszer sajtópolitikája, 1963–1979 (The press policy of the Kádár Regime). In: *Zárt, bizalmas, számozott II. Irodalom-, sajtó- és tájékoztatáspolitiká 1962–1979* (Closed, discrete, numbered II. Literary, press and publication policy 1962–79). Osiris, Budapest, 2004.

<sup>27</sup> NAH M–KS 288. f. 22178/25. ó. e.

for domestic consumption in Hungary was the quick repatriation of a NATO internal document. On 18<sup>th</sup> April 1978, the British delegation prepared a memorandum about the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania for the session of the Political Committee of the NATO.<sup>28</sup> Slightly two months later, the Minister of the Interior sent the translation of the memorandum to János Kádár and to the five members of the Hungarian Political Committee.

1. The Hungarian ethnic minority – that lives mainly in Transylvania – is one of the largest ethnic minorities in Europe. According to the results of the census in Romania, there are 1.7 million Hungarians of the total 21.5 million population. According to Hungarian émigré sources, the number of Hungarians living in Romania is estimated to 2.5 or even 3 million.
2. Transylvania has a historical importance for both Romanian and Hungary. For the Romanians, it means the homeland of their ancestors who lived since antiquity. The Hungarians had ruled Erdély directly or indirectly since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. From 1867 to the First World War, the Romanians suffered much from Hungarian nationalism and forcible attempts to assimilate. The Romanians – considering the invasion of northern Transylvania by Hungarians in the Second World War /Decision of Vienna, August 1940/ - are probably afraid that the Hungarians once again will demand Transylvania back.
3. At the end of the 1950's, the old Hungarian university in Cluj Napoca was integrated into the Romanian university as part of the coercion against the Hungarian ethnic minority, and this coercion has been practiced partly or totally ever since. Probably encouraged by other movements – opposing the regime – of Eastern Europe, some members of the Hungarian minority have started an open protest in recent years. The first manifestation of this protest – to which the West paid attention – was the so-called “Lazarus Document” allegedly written by a Hungarian person living in Transyl-

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<sup>28</sup> A magyar kisebbség helyzete Romániában: újabb megpróbáltatások. (The situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania: further vicissitudes.) Report of András Benkei about the NATO-report, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1978. BM KI miniszteri iratok 1978/96. 1-a-776.

vania under a pseudonym.<sup>29</sup> This document contains a report about the past of the Hungarians in Transylvania, about their participation in the fight for Romanian socialism between the two world wars and describes their present situation. Although it is very probable that the document was written before 1976, it was published in the West only in March 1977. An intellectual group consisting of mainly Transylvanian Hungarians somehow managed to obtain this document; therefore, it also became known in Hungary before the meeting of Kádár and Ceaușescu in June 1977 near the Romanian-Hungarian border.[...] <sup>30</sup>

6. The Hungarians are critical to the “Romanization” policies in education, because they are afraid that this phenomenon will not only decrease the number of educated Hungarian in positions requiring a high level of academic preparation to a minimal number, but it also endangers the characteristic Hungarian culture in Transylvania. The ethnic policy of President Ceaușescu is the product of Romanian nationalism that is the gist of both his external policy and internal policy aiming to create a strong nation state. Ceaușescu, in his speech addressed to the

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<sup>29</sup> In the March-April issue of the Paris Literary Journal the study entitled *Jelentés Erdélyről* (Report about Transylvania) is published, written by Sándor Tóth, professor of Philosophy in Cluj Napoca and Budapest philosopher Zádor Tordai, under the pseudonym György Lázár. The Western media turns attention to the report. For example, the issue of the *Le Monde* published on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1978 explains it, and then the report of György Schöpflin is written based on this report, published by Minority Rights Group. The Witnesses to Cultural Genocide was published in 1979 in the volume entitled Romania’s Minority Policies Today that was published in New York in the edition of the American Transylvanian Federation Inc. and the Committee for Human Rights in Rumania, with the foreword of György Schöpflin. See also: Tóth, Sándor: *Jelentés Erdélyből* (Report from Transylvania). II. Párizsi Magyar Füzetek 13. 1989. Introduction. 5–16 p.

<sup>30</sup> The document was later forwarded – with current information – to Károly Király, the former member of the CC of RCP and the Romanian Parliament. It deals with the letters of the Vice President of The Committee of Romanian Workers of Hungarian Nationality written to leading Romanian personalities, in which Károly Király expresses his deep anxiety about the violent assimilation attempts of the Romanian Government against Hungarians. Király was obliged to move from Tirgu Mures, a town populated by Hungarian majority to Caransebeș where he was assigned to be the director of a furniture factory. See the whole text: Révész, Béla: NATO dokumentum a romániai magyar kisebbség helyzetéről (A NATO-document about the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania). *ArchívNet* 2005. 1. <http://www.archivnet.hu>

Commission of Hungarian-speaking Workers on 15<sup>th</sup> March said that ethnic problems must be examined based on class aspects, and “if discriminations occurred in Romania, then they did not occur based on national, but on class interests”.

7. Kádár also spoke about the solution of ethnic problems with socialist solutions. In an interview published in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* the previous year Kádár declared: “In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, an ethnic problem cannot be solved by 19<sup>th</sup> century standards. The fate of the minority cannot be separated from the fate of the majority. The ethnic issue is one of the issues that will gain their final solution in socialism, based on the fact that socialism provides free development for the whole society, including the minorities within. In today’s Europe, the fate of nations and ethnic minorities cannot be solved by recalling past glories, only by the correct application of the lessons of history.” This last sentence can be interpreted as a warning to Hungarians living in Hungary, or as criticism to the Romanians, or both. Kádár, while he is probably anxious about the fate of the Hungarians in Transylvania, has to operate carefully, if he does not want to see the revival of nationalism and irredentism in Hungary.
8. Kádár – according to the declaration – during his meeting with Ceaușescu last year agreed that for both countries the right solution of minority issues lies in building socialism; at the same time, he admitted that the solution of the problem are an internal affair of each country. During the meeting an agreement was reached on opening the border for local traffic and about the establishment of a Consulate in Cluj Napoca a long time wish of local Hungarians and about the establishment of a Romanian Consulate in the Hungarian city of Debrecen. Despite this, concerns in Hungary about the fate of Hungarians living in Transylvania did not subside. Gyula Illyés, the well-known Hungarian writer published articles in the December and January issues of the Hungarian daily *Magyar Nemzet* expressing concern for the increasing oppression of the Hungarian minority in Romania. When Ștefan Andrei, secretary of foreign affairs of the Party visited Hungary, the issue was obviously discussed, but judging from the brief statements issued and published on the press of both countries, no visible progress was made on the matter.

9. While it is not probable that Kádár would encourage the re-emergence of Hungarian territorial demands for Transylvania, the Romanian failure to improve their treatment of the Hungarian minority will most likely not satisfy Budapest’s expectations, leading to continued or even increased tensions between the two countries. The assumption is that it is not in the interest of the Soviet Union for the situation to worsen but it may be tempted to apply some degree of pressure on Romania in response to the Hungarian minority concerns.

The NATO report reflects the British Intelligence’s precise summary of the background of the historic ethnic conflict between Hungary and Romania, focusing on the current problems, that is, those of the 1970’s forwarding the information to the NATO Council, one of the most significant deliberative bodies of the organization. A very important approach of the report is that it made a connection between the increasing protests on behalf of the Hungarian minority and the opposition movements in Eastern Europe. Using material from legal and illegal sources of intelligence, the report was able to document the tensions between the two countries, it also offered dubious solutions to end the controversy, using official documents and unofficial or informal hearsay material. A common feature of the above mentioned documents is the article written by noted Hungarian writer Gyula Illyes published in the Christmas 1977 issue of *Magyar Nemzet*. In fact, while the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party calls it a “problematic writing”, the NATO report makes reference to the “very strong article” by the “highly respected Hungarian writer”. There are no data about the fate of the NATO report. János Kádár read the document without commenting on it. In the next decade, its most significant findings became increasingly valid.

## 2. *Urbanization, Village destruction: motives, opportunity, pretext*

After the publication of the three-volume *History of Transylvania*<sup>31</sup> in 1986, the already tense Hungarian-Romanian relationship was further burdened by ideological conflicts. The Romanian Government did their best to make people and the international public opinion believe that the history book contained “fascist, chauvinistic and racist statements” and “forgeries of history that harm the memory of the victims of the Horthyist terror”.<sup>32</sup> In their campaign, “the nationwide plenary sessions of the Committee of Hungarian-speaking Workers” was also enrolled in the effort. On 27<sup>th</sup> February 1987, a new session Commission of Ethnic Affairs was organised and even non-experts criticized the *History of Transylvania* without reading it and made their statements on prepared texts. Ceaușescu argued for the theory of Daco-Romanian continuity, spoke about the Hungarian-Romanian cooperation against the Turks and declared that the ethnic issues had already been solved in Romania. He commented on the book that “it was a forgery of history” that was thwarting cooperation between two socialist countries.<sup>33</sup>

But the anger fuelled by the Romanian political leadership was only an element of increasingly vocal national homogenisation efforts. At the 10<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, the Secretary Gen-

<sup>31</sup> *Erdély története I-III* (*History of Transylvania I-III*). [edited by Béla Köpeczi]. Akadémiai, Budapest, 1986.

<sup>32</sup> On 7<sup>th</sup> April 1987, the *Times* published an advertisement that with the publication of the book, “under the aegis of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, history has been forged”. Under the same title, another text were published in English written by academic St. Pascu, M. Musat and Fl. Constantinu (A Conscientious Forgery of History of Transylvania under the Aegis of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences *Romanian News Agency*.), enumerating the opinions of Romanian historians about the Dacian-Romanian Continuity, the independent Province of Transylvanian, the national effort of duke Michael, the rightfulness of the Romanian revolution in 1848–49, the Hungarian oppression in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, citing Marx, Lenin, Tolstoi and Björnson. The Trianon Treaty of Peace was evaluated as the resolution of the Romanian population of Transylvania, in North Transylvania, the oppression of the Hungarians between 1940 and 1944 and the deportation of Jews were emphasised, and finally it was declared that ethnic issues were already solved in Romania. The edition was considered “revisionist, chauvinistic, reminiscent of the Hungarian history writings of the Horthy-era”. See: Köpeczi, Béla: *Erdély története harminc év távlatából* (*The History of Transylvania from a 30-year view*). *Kisebbségkutatás* 2006. 1.

<sup>33</sup> See: at the same place.

eral highlighted the changing role of the state: “No doubt that after the elimination of the exploiting classes, in harmony the developing homogenization of the socialist society, the role of the state and the instruments it employs also changes.”<sup>34</sup> When making reference to the nationalities of Romania and until the mid-eighties, Ceaușescu made specific references to “all of the workers – Romanians, Hungarians, Germans and other nationalities”, but this expression was replaced by “all of the workers without any differences, our whole people”, “all citizens of our homeland” and “nationalities living together” at the session of the Committees of Hungarian and German Workers at the end of 1984.<sup>35</sup>

However, the process of cultural homogenisation was begun much sooner.<sup>36</sup> In the first quarter of 1985, the ethnic and district stations of the Romanian Radio were discontinued in Cluj Napoca, Targu Mures and Timișoara, the editorial staff and its nearly 600 employees were dismissed. The Hungarian TV channels had a similar fate. From 1986, the material of the museums in Transylvania was transferred to Bucharest,<sup>37</sup> and Hungarian books became unavailable for the readers

<sup>34</sup> N. Ceaușescu: The Report of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party about the activities of RCP from the period between Congress 9 and 10 about the future tasks of the Party. 6<sup>th</sup> August 1969. In: *Romania on the way of building a many-sided developed socialistic society*. Politics, Bucharest, 1970. 297 p.

<sup>35</sup> See: A Magyar Nemzetiségű Dolgozók Tanácsának feladatairól a XIII. pártkongresszusi határozatok fényében (In the light of the Resolutions of the Party Congress 13 about the tasks of the Committee of Romanian Workers of Hungarian Nationality). *Előre*, 29<sup>th</sup> December 1984.

<sup>36</sup> Süle, Andrea R. : Románia politikatörténete 1944–1990 (Political History of Romania 1944–1990). In: *Románia 1944–1990. Gazdaság- és politikatörténet* (Economic and political history). Atlantisz – Medvetánc, Bp., 1990. 265–269 p.; Lipcsey, Ildikó: A román nemzetiségi politika négy évtizede (Four decades of Romanian ethnic policy.) *Külpolitika*, 1989. 2. 64–66 p.; A stratégiai áttörés terve (The plan of strategic breakthrough). In: Tóth, Sándor: *Jelentés Erdélyből* (Report from Transylvania). II. Párizsi Magyar Füzetek 13. 1989. 124–133 p.

<sup>37</sup> “Connected to the preparation of the party meeting, the first room of the Museum of Local History in Cernat where the most ancient monuments of local history were exhibited was evacuated and was filled with the material presenting the periods of the Dacians to present day and the Ceausescu-era, based on the guidelines of the County Museum. However, on the county level it was considered so important that the Secretary of Propaganda Affairs ordered the leader of the Securitate to check it in person on Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> November.” Report of the Hungarian Embassy, Bucharest, 10 November 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. d.

in the libraries.<sup>38</sup> Bilingual inscriptions and street names disappeared in Transylvania, and the majority of streets of Hungarian towns were renamed in Romanian. The number of books published in Hungarian decreased to 50 % in 10 years; in 1972 265 books were published in Hungarian, but only 225 in 1980, in 1987 much less than 200. Only 2 million books of the 50 million copies published in 1981 were Hungarian, but based on the ratios, this number should have been around 4 million. After the Second World War, there were six independent Hungarian theatres in Romania – much more in 1956, since 4 companies operated only in Cluj Napoca – up to the 1980's, only two theatres remained: one in Cluj and one in Timișoara. The two large theatres of Transylvania were integrated into Romanian theatre companies: in Târgu Mures and Sfântu Gheorghe. From the end of the 1970s, the number of Hungarian primary and secondary schools decreased to 25 %. Based on the earlier Act of Education, 15 students were enough to create an ethnic class, but until the beginning of the 1980s the students could learn in Hungarian primary school in case of 25 students and in secondary school in case of

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<sup>38</sup> “The distribution of all Hungarian press products was suspended throughout Romania for 1990. The chances of press subscriptions were very narrow even this year, but until 1989 it was allowed to subscribe for Hungarian press products not containing political and cultural references. The customs procedure well-known as for Hungarian press products makes it impossible that even a letter written in Hungarian should be allowed in Romania.” Report of the Hungarian Embassy, Bucharest, 7th December 1988. In the recent weeks, Chlef Bogdán, teacher of Romanian and French language was nominated as the director of the “closed library” of Sfântu Gheorghe, 54 years old (his wife is Hungarian) who is renowned for his hatred for Hungarians. The town propaganda secretary is Chlef’s best friend. The new library director was assigned to annihilate everything in the library and in the Székely Museum that is Hungarian as soon as possible. The ambition of the director leaves no doubt about that he will accomplish his mission as soon as he can. The “cleaning” will begin in a few weeks. Report of the Hungarian Embassy, Bucharest, 7th February 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. d. “Our cultural reporter has made an in interview with A. Pezderka who takes over the library in Romania. Pezderka told: The Romanian party does not intend to give back the books of 500,000 ROL value, as defined in the earlier agreement. Strictly for our own information, he handed us a list composed by him about our orders. From the list it turns out that only a small quantity of the books ordered by them has been transported up to now, one part of them is still being printed, another was not even sent to the printery. According to Pezderka, the Romanian intention is clear: since he cannot satisfy our demands, based on the principle of reciprocity, he will decrease his orders from Hungary.” Report of the Hungarian Embassy, Bucharest, 1st December 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 77. d.

36 students. While in the school year 1977–78 the number of Hungarian primary school students was 7–8 %, in 1986–87 this ratio was only 5 %. The practice introduced in 1956 according to which one could take an entrance exam also in Hungarian at any university of the country and in case of students a Hungarian group could be established was ceased. In the Department of Hungarian Studies of Babeş-Bolyai University 32 instructors taught in the school year 1964–65, but only 14 in 1988. In the school year 1986–87 7 students got a degree of Hungarian Studies, but since it was the state who gave jobs to graduating teachers, engineers and doctors, less and less of them got a job in the areas of Transylvania populated by Hungarian majority. In 1985, 5 of the 22 final-year students got a job in Transylvania, and since 1987, it was the norm that Hungarians having a baccalaureate or a degree were employed in nearly exclusively Romanian-speaking areas.<sup>39</sup>

The situation worsened with news gradually coming out of Romania at the beginning of 1988 about the urbanization project of gigantic proportions, later called “village destruction” scheme. Romania declared in March that the majority of the population of villages will be relocated to so-called agricultural centres of urban character within the framework of the urbanization project. According to his own admission, President Nicolae Ceauşescu was preparing for the project for more than 20 years.<sup>40</sup> The details of the President and Secretary General of the Party were made known to the world of his speech delivered on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1988. The number of villages (then about 14,000) were to be decreased nearly half – declared Ceauşescu at the session of the Political Executive Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. The central committee quickly accepted his declaration at its next session, and in May the forty county party committees also announced support for the project. In place of the about 7,000 villages to be eliminated, they wanted to create 350,000 hectares of field and nearly 500 large industrial and agro-biological complexes.

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<sup>39</sup> See: Cabinet Decree 54/1975 about the position of graduates in the industrial production.

<sup>40</sup> The CC of RCP passed the principles of the improvement of the administrative-territorial reorganisation of the country and of the urbanisation of villages in October 1967. But exactly what it means was conceptualised by Ceauşescu in his comment held at the Congress of People’s Committee Presidents in 1976: “As for the urbanisation of villages we do our best to decrease the number of such settlements (...) and establish strong centres, the most important social and economic activities are focused on mainly in developable communities and villages.” 1989. 2. 78 p.

This project affected 2,000 largely Hungarian settlements, mainly in counties Harghita, Alba, Bihar, Cluj, Satu Mare and Covasna.<sup>41</sup>

The initial shock was followed by sharp Hungarian, and then, international protests. Government agencies and non-governmental organizations spoke up against the project. At the end of February the United States declared that they will deny Romania most favored nation status because of her human rights record. The most favored nation status trade privilege was given to Romania for her early independent foreign policy within the Soviet bloc. The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany learned about the village destruction plan with “the greatest anxiety”, since it would affect the German minority living in Romania. At the Vienna follow-up meeting dealing with the Helsinki Final Agreement it was repeated in several speeches: the provision of ethnic rights is an organic part of normal interstate relationships, and the meeting in Vienna cannot ignore the event connected to it.

The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs called in the ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Romania in the beginning of April and explained: the Hungarian Government was informed with deep anxiety about the fact that in Romania the names of settlements had been used only in Romanian from 3<sup>rd</sup> April. Furthermore, they told him that the elimination of smaller settlements would modify the ethnic composition of the country and this measure would discriminate the ethnic minorities. The forcible eviction of residents would violate the most basic human rights; with the elimination of thousands of the villages inhabited by ethnic minorities their sense of community and preservation of heritage would be weakened.<sup>42</sup> In this situation, Károly Grósz made an unexpected announcement in the middle of July at the national meeting of Worker Guard commanders, when he declared that he would soon start official negotiations in the Socialist Republic of Romania.<sup>43</sup> His proposal was accepted by the session of the Hungarian Socialist Worker’s Party Secretary on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1988, and the official invi-

<sup>41</sup> See: Vincze, Gábor: *A romániai magyar kisebbség történeti kronológiája 1944–1989* (Chronology of the Hungarian minority in Romania). László Teleki Foundation, Budapest, 1994.

<sup>42</sup> The events were published only three months later. The spokesman of Foreign Affairs István Komoróczy about the Romanian measures. *Népszabadság*, 7 June 1988.

<sup>43</sup> Munkásőr-parancsnokok országos találkozója (Nationwide Congress of Worker Guard Commanders). *Népszabadság*, 13 June 1988.

tation transmitted by Bucharest with the proviso that “the date of the visit should be diplomatically agreed”.<sup>44</sup> According to the decision of the Political Committee made at the session on 14<sup>th</sup> June, the Secretaries of Foreign Affairs of the two parties should have a preparatory initial meeting where they would discuss the elements of the Hungarian-Romanian relationship. If these initial negotiations were successful, there would be a basis for the later negotiations with the Heads of the Governments and later a meeting of at Secretary General level.<sup>45</sup>

The demonstration held at the Heroes’s Square in Budapest on 27<sup>th</sup> June rewrote the planned scenario for both Budapest and Bucharest. At the mass demonstration organised for the first time since 1956 about 40 to 50 thousand people (according to the police 20 to 30 thousand, and according to the participants more than 150 thousand) demonstrated against the plan of village destruction program.<sup>46</sup> Next day the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs called in the Hungarian ambassador in Bucharest and informed him that the Romanian Government decided to close immediately the Hungarian Consulate in Cluj Napoca and demanded that the staff of the Consulate should leave Romania within 48 hours. The decision was justified by the Hungarian demonstrations against the Romanian resettlement plan.<sup>47</sup>

On the same day, the Council of Romanian Workers of Hungarian Nationality held session. The approved statement hailed as the greatest achievement of the Ceaușescu-era that is “securing consistently the total equality of all compatriots and the unity of the workers.” They resented and declared unacceptable the chauvinistic, irredentist, and revanchist manifestations of the People’s Republic of Hungary that “purposefully distort reality and treat with hostility the great achievements of the Romanian people through the new socialist social system that not only falsify the present, but also the historical past.” Next day the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party took up the question

<sup>44</sup> NAH M-KS 288. f. 7/802. ó. e.

<sup>45</sup> NAH M-KS 288. f. 5/1028. ő. e.

<sup>46</sup> *Hősök tere. June 88 27.* editor.: Csaba Varga. Eötvös, Budapest., 1998.; Attila Arakóvács: *Délibáb az utcasarkon* (Mirage on the street corner). *Beszélő*, 1999. 9.

<sup>47</sup> On 28th June the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania called in Pál Szűcs, Hungarian ambassador in Bucharest and informed him about the Romanian party and state leadership according to which the operation of the Consulate in Cluj Napoca is considered to be ceased, and the crew of the Consulate should leave Romania within 48 hours. *Népszabadság*, 29<sup>th</sup> July 1989.

of the Romanian- Hungarian relations in a similar vein.<sup>48</sup> Ceaușescu declared that “certain chauvinist and nationalistic circles, in order to distract attention from problems wanting for solutions, employ methods that even Horthy would not have allowed”.<sup>49</sup>

The tense situation and its background were summarised by a comprehensive report prepared in Bucharest that was forwarded to the Minister of Foreign Affairs by the Ambassador.<sup>50</sup>

Based on Nicolae Ceaușescu’s own conception, in the autumn of 1986 we obtained the first information about a comprehensive plan of resettlement according to which a demarcation of area where settlements can be built will be outlined, and the real estate and settlements outside that demarcation will be eliminated. According to the plans of that period, the affected real estate will be nationalized. The former owners will be compensated at 20% of the value of their property. These owners would be housed in rental units in the village center or elsewhere in the new settlement, generally with smaller plots of land (250 square meters). Vice Prime Minister Ion Dinca explained at the meeting with Comrade Vánca<sup>51</sup> that with this new method, for example, with the elimination of superfluous roads they would gain back 500,000 hectares of land for agriculture. Another objective was to eliminate the differences between villages and towns.

From these conceptions evolved the program of village destruction and the bulldozer policy. The execution of the program would be just one component and symbol of the historically grandiose Ceaușescu-era. In our view, the redrawing of the ethnic and geographical map of the country, is not directly linked to the broad range settlement program worked out in the 1970’s in Romania. At that time there were no plans to eliminate half of the

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<sup>48</sup> The letter of the CC to the HSWP. *Népszabadság*, 30 June 1988.

<sup>49</sup> See: *Történeti kényszerpályák – kisebbségi realpolitikák* (Forced orientations – minority policies). op. cit.

<sup>50</sup> A falurombolási terv jelenlegi állása (The present situation of the village destruction project). Pál Szűcs ambassador’s proposal forwarded to Minister of Foreign Affairs Péter Várkonyi. Embassy of the People’s Republic of Hungary, Bucharest, 12 December 1988. 198/Szt/1988. HSWP Department of Social Policy NAH M-KS 288. f. 22/1989. 22. ő. e.

<sup>51</sup> Jenő Vánca was the Minister of Agricultural Affairs between 1980 and 89, himself born in Brasov (Brassó), Transylvania.

settlements. Thais why it is untenable Ceaușescu's claim that the project undertaken is a 20 year plan.

It is true that earlier resettlement plans were frequently discarded. The modification and destruction carried out in Bucharest were often done by on-site decision made by Ceaușescu himself (not only due the building program of the new government quarter) and as part of the creation of several town centres in the country. In underdeveloped regions, for example in Moldova, the new centres meant a positive change, a kind of improvement, but in other cases, for example, in Transylvania, they contributed to the uprooting of historic and ethnic characteristics. The Secretary General of the Romanian Communist Party admitted that "settlements in Transylvania are more compact".

The plan of village destruction involving many settlements, real estate and masses of people – was unique in the world – and had from the very beginning a negative bent in terms of ethnic policy, since the settlement program was used to strengthen the Romanian character of ethnic areas and weaken the centuries-old compactness of Hungarian ethnic groups. The redrawing of the map of Romania by Ceaușescu would have immeasurably negative consequences for the Hungarian ethnic minority, their values and for the preservation of the universal Hungarian and European history and culture. Since the ethnic characteristics of towns were changed in the past 70 years in favour of the Romanians, the existence of the Hungarian ethnicity remained more or less untouched in villages. The disruption of this network of villages is the greatest danger. For example, the fate of churches and cemeteries is unclear; the majority of the properties are church property. We could assume that there may remain some historic buildings or monuments and others may be transferred by the church. However, since the church does not have the necessary financial means; many monuments could be lost, as it happened in Bucharest. The ethnic character of Transylvania would decrease with the redrawing of the map, since many villages would be eliminated, replaced by uniform new settlements and towns, becoming characterless, as it happened in the case of numerous towns in Transylvania.

Between 1986 and 1988, many villages were destroyed around Bucharest and modest small settlements were built where the whole population were forced to move in, while the existing villages were eliminated. Around Snagov, in the autumn of this year some villages were already destroyed.

The former owners had to dismantle their own houses, or else they had to pay for the contractors to do it. In the housing blocks they are not owners but renters. This is not only a violation of human rights, but also illustrates the forced character of the whole project.

It is noteworthy that the Romanian party leaders did not support the village destruction project until the beginning of this year. The project was mentioned only in a few speeches given by Ceaușescu. The situation was the same in the time of People's Councils, where Ceaușescu argued for speeding up the resettlement plan. He declared that the number of 13,000 villages must be radically decreased to 5 to 6,000. After the execution of the plan at most 2,000 villages should remain, and in accordance with the number of agricultural committees 558 agricultural centres must be established. Until 1990, 2–3 model agricultural centres must be established, and until 1995 the building of agricultural towns should be ended, and until 2000 the whole project must be executed in its main lines.

After the congress, the resettlement of villages received a greater emphasis in the propaganda effort. The media got weekly instructions to promote the execution of the plan. The Party's Central Committee and representatives of the National Council of People's Committees set up a Committee in charge of carrying out the project, and the Prime Minister shortly thereafter became its leader.

A decision, which was not made public, was made about the fact that county plans would be worked out and finalised in a few months. Although there were doubts about the feasibility of the program (at issue were financial resources and the capacity of the building industry), but the dismantling phase was fast approaching. There was information from the ethnic areas of the county of Covasna, where the whole plan cycle would be completed by 1992.

In fact, based on the speeches given by Nicolae Ceaușescu all preparations were made for the village destruction program.<sup>52</sup> The area around Bucharest was a showcase of the consequences of the program.

<sup>52</sup> See also: Hunya, Gábor: *Falurendezési terv a határozatok, nyilatkozatok és sajtóközlemények tükrében* (Urbanisation plans in the mirror of resolutions, declarations and press publications). *Tér és Társadalom*, 1989. 2.

When the report was made, “the top secret, highly confidential document made exclusively for the highest state and party leadership” could no be known for the Hungarian Embassy, but the document was in possession of the Hungarian intelligence “from an operational venue”, and it also reached the narrow leadership of the Hungarian Socialist Worker’s Party via the Department III/I.<sup>53</sup> The Department III/I. operating within the framework of foreign intelligence officially could not execute missions against “fraternal socialist countries” including Romania, but really the operational fields marked with X were in the area of fraternal. It was also an open secret that many agents of the Department of Foreign Intelligence of the Securitate, the Departamentul de Informații Externe (DIE) arrived in Hungary from Romania.<sup>54</sup> The documents evaluating the meeting of the Secretaries General Chief of the two parties on 28<sup>th</sup> August in Arad, made for the session of the Political Committee by the Foreign Department of the Central Committee and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also turned the attention to this issue: “Violating the agreements concerned, Romania is doing wide-range intelligence activities in Hungary. To neutralise these activities, the competent authorities of the Ministry of the Interior should make an evaluation report about these activities against our state security, including the circles connected with embassy staff and the activities of Romanian intelligence present in Hungary.”<sup>55</sup>

The document of the Hungarian intelligence sent to Budapest, cited below was not on the agenda of the Political Committee, but all of the

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<sup>53</sup> Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történelmi Levéltára (Historical Archives of State Security Agency) (ABTL) Állambiztonsági Miniszterhelyettesi Titkárság iratai 1.11.1. 27. doboz, 45–13/13/a/1988. Budapest, July 1988. 174–183 p.

<sup>54</sup> Dr. István Horváth (former Minister of the Interior): There was some cooperation between the organisations regulated by bilateral agreements. The Hungarians had such agreements with the German Democratic Republic, Yugoslavia and Austria, and we were preparing to sign such an agreement with the Federal Republic of Germany. So there were certain agreements of cooperation between certain countries. There was cooperation and (...) there was also competition. And there was a manifestation, I must say, that we did not like, let us say that it is not important to write about in the daily press, but the Yugoslavian intelligence was operating in Hungary, in the same way as the Romanian intelligence. Memorandum about the session of the Committee Examining the Intelligence Activities of the Prime Minister, 6th July 2002, Delegation Hall of the Parliament. NBB-5/2002–2006.

<sup>55</sup> NAH M-KS 288. f. 5/1035. ő. e.

members of the Committee and from among the Secretaries of the Central Committees, including György Fejti received the material.<sup>56</sup> The introduction of the report contains the summary of the Ministry of the Interior about the evolution of tensions up until 1988 and their reasons:

The competent authorities of the Ministry of the Interior – based on a high-level political decision – are continually informed about developments in the Romanian situation, the Romanian moves and their outcome. According to this:

The Romanian authorities increased in July the discriminative actions against Hungarian representations and their employees in Romania. The selective control at airports was extended to our staff and experts in long-term missions and their family members, and also to their relatives visiting them.

In a departure from earlier practice, an incident took place involving a Hungarian holding of diplomatic passport which was confiscated and a shipment consigned and sealed by the Ministry of Foreign Trade, was opened and returned to him 8 hours later. There is suspicion that our diplomatic pouches are monitored electronically.

In parallel with the discriminative measures against Hungarian citizens assigning official missions in Romania, the Romanians are trying to make the impression as if the Hungarians were not able to or did not want to provide the appropriate circumstances for the unhindered operation of the Romanian Embassy in Budapest. The advisor assigned to be in contact with Romanian diplomats accredited in Budapest told the diplomats of other countries that an expert of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs visited to Budapest at the beginning of this month and his assignment was to make a plan about the evacuation of the staff and families.

The successor of the Romanian ambassador in Budapest allegedly will not be career diplomat, but a well-known historian or academic. It is also

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<sup>56</sup> Sent to: Comrades Károly Grósz, Dr. János Berecz, Judit Csehák, Csaba Hámori, Pál Iványi, János Lukács, Miklós Németh, Rezső Nyers, Imre Pozsgai, István Szabó, Dr. Ilona Tatai, György Fejti, Péter Varga III/III. 12., Irattár (Archives).

rumoured that the instead of an ambassador a provisional caretaker official will be appointed.

The are signs that there is resistance against the resettlement plan and that the leaders of Covasna and Harghita counties are trying to hinder the execution of the programs, since they did not prepare in a timely manner the proposals for elimination of villages and are also trying to bargain with the central organizations.

There are people who think that given the dissatisfaction in some villages populated by both Hungarians and Romanians with the resettlement program, the emphasis of Ceaușescu's speeches has shifted. In one of his speeches he said that the measures do not have to be executed so urgently, and in another there was a variation in the number of settlements to be destroyed.

There are prominent personalities and their family members among the Romanian citizens migrating to Hungary from Romania and not intending to return home (for example, the children of high-ranking officers of the Securitate, the daughter of the former Minister of the Interior, an ex-body guard of the President-Secretary General).

On the Romanian side of the border everything is done to prevent the migration of people. A Securitate brigade of 2,800 was sent near the Romanian-Hungarian border. Their main task is to prevent the illegal emigration of Romanian citizens to Hungary and to strengthen border control. To reinforce border guards, newly recruited Worker Guards are also deployed. On 15<sup>th</sup> July, shots were fired at a railway car behind the international express train to Biharkeresztes, and there are also unconfirmed reports of the presence of Securitate officers, with the mission to create among refugees in Hungary.

We obtained the rough Hungarian translation of a top secret document issued by the Romanian Communist Party for high-level political leaders. The material – assuming that was not disinformation – gives us an insight to the thinking of the highest Romanian leadership about the relationship of the two countries and about likely “solutions”.

(...)

Our agencies are still paying monitoring events and adopting measures consistent with their sphere of authority.

The Bucharest-originating document provided no further information about purpose and character of the material itself or the circumstances surrounding its distribution, and there was not comment on part of Hungarian intelligence either. But the observation that the document “may have been sent to us as a provocation” suggest suspicion on part of Department III/I. In addition, the translation of the text was not done by the Hungarian state security agencies either, but “a rough and extracted translation” was obtained by intelligence. And this fact rightfully raises the question whether or not it was possible that a document drafted in Romanian “for the highest political leadership” could be translated into Hungarian at once in the Ceaușescu-era, or it is only a bogus disinformation document made for the Hungarians.

However, the style and content of the document suggested that the document may be genuine and intended for the Party’s bureaucracy mid-level leadership. From the documents of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, it was known that proposals were complete only when the issuers of the concerned departments were identified. In the document obtained, the issuers are the Secretary, the Central Committee and the Secretariat of the Romanian Communist Party. Therefore, it can be assumed that document was confidential and prepared by the Department of Agitation of Propaganda of the Central Committee made with the active contribution of the DIE (Romania’s security agency) that intended to provide guidelines for the party apparatus (and perhaps leading press representatives) on how to handle the tense situation leading up to the summer of 1988. The stylistic feature of the document that it contains many *epitheton ornanses* like “our beloved Homeland, dear Romania”, “the great leader of the Romanian Nation, of our Homeland, Comrade Ceaușescu” may also support this assumption, since these elements were widely used in mass propaganda but rarely appeared in documents made for the highest political leadership. The document was not published later either;<sup>57</sup> therefore, supposedly it was used as an internal party document.

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<sup>57</sup> Andrea Varga’s kind information.

The document, apart from the usual ideological arguments and pompous, meaningless rhetoric and some revolting statements, contains some really remarkable information.

- The intelligence material otherwise prone to the irrational, nevertheless identified the Hungarian national debt figures closer to reality than, in an attempt to calm public opinion, disclosed by the Hungarian government. It is well-known that Prime Minister Miklós Németh admitted only in the end of 1989 that the earlier statistical data on the Hungarian national debt was false.
- All the conditions necessary to go forward with the resettlement project summarised in nine points were ready for the elimination of more than 7,000 villages. These conditions included the project timeline, the financial and technical requirements, including the involvement of Romanian National Army. However, in the light of subsequent events, the effect of vehement domestic and international protests could not have been an exaggeration, even though we do not have more precise information on this.
- The Romanian government imposed 15 conditions to continue the Romanian-Hungarian talks with the probable aim that upon the likely refusal of those conditions the Hungarian side could be portrayed as uncompromising in resuming dialogue. Otherwise, the Romanian side would not have demanded next to the high minded respect for Romanian national sovereignty, the absurd demand that the Hungarian Government should take the commitment to “end illiteracy”.
- During 1987, according to Romanian data, altogether 1,262 citizens migrated to Hungary, while according to the Hungarian statistics, 10,445 people migrated to Hungary. This difference is explained by the arrival illegal migrants and those who arrived in Hungary with a valid passport but refuse to return to Romania. The Ministry of the Interior declared on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1988 that from the beginning of the year 4,977 Romanian citizens had declared that they did not want to return home, and until the end of the year, 12,273 people were granted temporary residency from the Hungarian authorities.

Recently, the humiliation of our beloved Homeland, our dear Romania and the international discredit of the whole Romanian Nation and the smears

against our great leader of our Homeland Comrade Ceaușescu and the whole Romanian leadership has continued.

Certain countries interfere in the internal affairs of Romania and endanger the revolutionary socialist achievements and endanger our socialist state. Our beloved Romania has always strived that who live in Romanian should have the same rights and obligations. It must be accepted that people living in Romania are Romanian citizens regardless to their nationality.

The party and state leadership of the People's Republic in Hungary is pursuing a nationalistic policy, the political leaders want to create a distraction from the serious economic and social problems of the country. They do their best to discredit socialism building Romania before the international public opinion with falsehoods. The Hungarian leadership also misinform the Hungarian people about the real conditions in Romania, on the rights and the life ethnic minorities of our country and they portray a false account of our resettlement program.

Suffice to say that the Hungarian People's Republic economy is burdened with high debt, amounting to 19 billion dollars that at the moment is unable to repay. The country sustains itself by borrowing. The economic development of Hungary is far behind Romania's achievements.

Hungarian goods cannot be sold abroad, the Hungarian technology, chemical industry and other branches industries are completely outdated. The exchange of goods has been the characteristic of the Romanian-Hungarian commerce for a long time. It is only due to the understanding of Romania and the patience of Comrade Ceaușescu that Romania is willing to buy low-quality products from Hungary.

Henceforth the economic relationships will have to be revised. Romania cannot endlessly sacrifice its economy to help a country that permanently violates the rules of cooperation, a country that is encouraging Romanian citizens to leave their homeland, encouraging the Romanian workers to act against our beloved Homeland and discrediting Romanian socialist achievements abroad.

The chauvinist leaders of Hungary, instead of solving their own social problems, interfere in the affairs of neighbouring fraternal socialist country, under the leadership of the great builder of socialism, son of our beloved homeland and the people, Comrade Ceaușescu. The Hungarian leadership also denigrate the Romanian nation.

The Hungarian Government calls the criminals escaping from the rightful fury and punishment of the Romanian people refugees. At the same time, the Hungarian Government keeps it secret that thousands of Hungarians citizens search for asylum abroad and request political asylum in other countries, without intention to return to Hungary.

Certainly, we cannot and do not want to solve the internal social crisis of the People's Republic of Hungary, but we expect the Hungarian Government to solve these issues within their own country, and should not be engaged in the Romanian nation's revolutionary building of socialism. That is why we, at international forums, such as in Vienna, we declare that all states should solve their own problems, and states should be banned from interfering in the internal affairs of other states.

Hungary makes territorial demands on our beloved Homeland coupled with concern about the situation of our Romanian workers of Hungarian nationality. The chauvinist leaders of Hungary also keep it secret that there are ancient Romanian territories and what is more, also in the territory of Hungary, Romanian towns and townspeople.

If someone could have territorial demands, then it would be our dear Homeland, Romania; but we do not speak about these rightful demands for the sake of friendship and the peace of neighbouring peoples. But we are always ready to defend our socialist achievements against aggressors, with arms if we must. We are not afraid of threats, particularly not in the use of military force. The Hungarian attempts to conquer territory are condemned to failure. It does not only derive from the qualities of the Romanian National Army, but also from the high-level preparedness, commitment and patriotism.

We have the appropriate information about the fact that based on their equipment, the Hungarian Army can be called modern, but in its thinking it, morally is still at the level of Horthy's army, and as for its human

material, it is far behind our National Army. The Hungarian military leadership is bland, alcoholism has reached critical levels.

The only military force that can be called modern is the Hungarian Air Force, although the airplanes are getting older, and there is no money to replace them. At the same time, the homeland air force of our beloved Homeland Romania has the equipment to defend our national air space.

The Romanian National Army will undertake enormous tasks in the forthcoming resettlement program. On the one hand, in conformity with regional development regulations, our units will participate in the creation newly designed functional districts; on the other hand, they will participate in the planned transfer of residents, assisting to convert the newly freed areas for agriculture.

The resettlement program begun on 1st June must be accelerated in every area. All assistance and support must be provided to the individuals and organizations that were appointed by the central administration to carry out the required tasks. The Presidential Decree clearly determines the tasks.

Within the territory of the country, the following tasks are to be done apart from the already mentioned:

1. Early registration of the population (composition of families, age, occupation, nationality, qualification, social status, etc.)
2. Estimating the required labor force, occupational distribution and evaluation of requirements.
3. Definition of the new functional districts. Estimating the requirements of skilled labor, with special attention to industrial capacity.
4. To achieve the goals of the project, residents need a structured reorientation. In this task local People's Council and the emerging new People's Councils and divisions of Party organizations will have a special role. The police will be in charge of public order.
5. The new building area must be secured and the dismantled area must have protective measures to avoid encroachment during the building phase.
6. Each citizen has to be given a job somewhere in the country. With this step we want to guarantee each Romanian citizen the right to work. If the citizen does not want to take the assigned position, this does not exempt

the citizen of the obligation to move to the designated residence. Refusal to move or placing stumbling block against moving endangers the great socialist transformation of our country, and requires appropriate measures on part of the authorities wish to accept the position granted to him or her, he or she is not exempted from the obligation to move to the previously marked region and dwelling place. Denying moving endangers the socialistic reformation of our Homeland; therefore, the authorities are obliged to make the appropriate measures against it.

7. Each citizen must be granted the chance to voluntarily undertake to move and accept a position, for a certain period of time, in the resettlement areas.

8. Proper provision must be made citizens moving, including food supply and other social services (health care, school, kindergarten, etc.).

9. Moving requests for multiple families is only possible within the framework of voluntary moving. In case of non-voluntary moving, we must insist on strictly adhering to the requirements of the economy and the regional experts. The proximity of relatives is not reason enough to ignore the strict principles of moving to the designated residence.

As for ownership matters, our guiding principle is that all land within the territory of our beloved Homeland Romania are state property; therefore, they are exclusively managed by the state.

As for the ownership and breeding of animals, a separate amendment of the decree will be drafted, considering the resettlement project and the formation economic areas. The areas have to strive to become self-supporting.

We have an enormous set of tasks before us – the creation of nearly 500 industrial agro-biological complexes – but this is endangered by the neighbouring People's Republic of Hungary by attempting to thwart the development our socialist society.

The chauvinistic Hungarian Government does not consider the reality of socialism, the fact that our dear Homeland Romania lead by its great and faithful son Comrade Ceaușescu is working on the realisation of a developed society. Nothing proves the anti-socialist nature of the chauvinistic Hungarian Government more than the fact that the heroic son of our Nation Comrade Ceaușescu, on occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday was

awarded, on behalf of the Soviet party and state leaders, with the Order of Lenin. If the accusations about our beloved Homeland and its great leader Comrade Ceaușescu disseminated by the chauvinistic Hungarian political leaders were true, then he would not have been awarded with this order for building socialism. The award itself is the best example that the Romanian Government represents the socialist advancement, while the Hungarian leadership denies its greatness.

This is why the dialogue between the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party and the Central Committee of Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party will take place only if in the future the Hungarian leadership:

1. Desists in a policy of humiliation the Romanian Nation and its leaders.
2. Desists in the shameful forgeries of history
3. Ceases the interference in Romanian national internal affairs
4. Commits to stop disinformation about Romania in the Hungarian press and literature, banning all writings and articles humiliating Romania
5. Accepting the fact that that Romania has jurisdiction over any Romanian citizens, regardless of nationality
6. Repatriates Romanian citizens illegally migrating to Hungary without preconditions
7. Repatriates Romanian citizens who travelled to Hungary with official travel documents, and after the expiration of such documents did not return to Romania
8. Strictly abides by the Treaty of Friendship and other important international conventions related to Romania
9. Withdraws declarations that are against general principles of peace and international relations
10. Initiates legal proceedings against those that express hostility against Romania and the development of socialism by the Romanian people.
11. Makes a commitment to strictly abide human rights and enforces them. Guarantees housing and jobs to all residents of Hungary until de Millennium.
12. Solves the issue of alcoholism and drugs, and ends illiteracy
13. Commits not to violate Romanian territorial sovereignty
14. Commits to best practices in economic relationships and takes notice that Romania cannot henceforth support the troubled Hungarian economy.

15. Desists interfering in the affairs workers of Hungarian nationality living in the territory of Romania, and takes note of the protest of the Committee of Ethnic Workers.

The nationality has been solved in the socialist Romania, since laws guarantee rights and the ethnic minorities can have their own journals, schools, cultural institutions and book publishing houses.

Under the leadership of Comrade Ceaușescu, the heroic son of our beloved Romania, exemplary cooperation developed with the workers of German nationality in Romania Those who wanted to leave our beloved Homeland Romania could leave it on condition that the German State taking them will permanently contribute to their livelihood and that the state receiving emigrants pays to our homeland the social cost of services such health care and education.

We do not exclude similar mutually agreed upon solution for a determined number of Romanian workers of Hungarian nationality. Certainly, Hungary should defray with convertible currency the social expenses of each emigrant. The People's Republic of Hungary would provide proper jobs and housing for the immigrants. The Romanian contracting party should have access to the emigrants to ensure their welfare. Only under these conditions would the Highest Council consider taking away their Romanian citizenship.

The Romanian people have manifested great patience towards the Hungarian people under the direction the prominent personality of our Comrade Ceaușescu. We hope that the Hungarian leadership will finally recognise their mistaken policy and will cooperate with our people in the interest of social and economic progress and independent socialist development.

Both party and state leaders are responsible for their people, for history, and for humanity. Based on this, we cannot renounce from furthering our economic and social development and we cannot allow ourselves to leave the path of building socialism, the modification of our economic and regional landscape to allow the elevation of our people. This is why we have redouble our efforts to carry out as soon as possible the resettlement and economic plan. To achieve this we have to mobilize our people, our

party so that we can stand up as one man for the sake of the flourishing of our beloved Homeland the Socialistic Romania.

Secretary General of the RCP  
Central Committee of the RCP  
Secretariat of the RCP

Classification Clause:

The material is top secret, made exclusively for the highest state and party leadership with a determined serial number, in a number of copies indicated below; therefore secrecy guidelines must be followed in handling this material.

Since the documents were undated, we only can have only assumptions about it. On the one hand, the supplement refers to the fact that “the resettlement should be accelerated from the 1<sup>st</sup> of July”; Then, by indicating the day, the report itself also refers to a date in July. However, it is precisely known that the report was on the agenda of the Assembly of the Vice Minister of National Security of the Ministry of the Interior on 20<sup>th</sup> September, 1988. After discussing the report, Szilveszter Harangozó, the head of the Department summed up the discussions. As for the political situation, he established that the opinion of the Communist Parties is not completely the same about ethnic issues, and the socialist camp is not completely unified in evaluating these political topics. “The interest of our policy – he added – is to prove the anticipated negative consequences of the policy of the Romanian Party, but at the same time, it must do its best to build legal contacts for cooperation and to develop in the direction of mutual understanding. At the moment, the manifold possibilities of strengthening contacts and the examination of communication methods are the most important factors. In this case, it is natural that national security agencies become more active, but despite this situation, we must react to the events in a moderate and sober manner. Therefore, we should be informed about different political events, not only considering the state security aspect. We can help the political leadership if we exploit our multiple opportunities of information and explore the realities based on facts, providing a clear picture

for the decision-making”.<sup>58</sup> After the digressing on the security agencies, it is worth continuing the exploration of the embassy report mentioned above that summed up the history of the village destructions in 1988 until the end of the year<sup>59</sup>:

By the summer, by the time when the conditions were ready to begin the resettlement program international protests also grew. The Romanian Government was forced to consider this fact, even if they have not given up their plans. The protests had its results, even if ending the program was not a realistic expectation. The Romanian Government changed their tactics in several steps. At least they attempted to make the project more acceptable, but later – mainly concerning the use of bulldozers – they extended the deadline for the initiation of the program.

In July and August, they tried to make the “resettlement project” more acceptable in two directions. On the one hand, with the control of propaganda, they tried to influence the public opinion in a positive direction. The county authorities attempted to gain the support of the population with differentiated policies and tried to silence the protestors. The press justified the historical necessity of the program, as a historically justified natural process. Although the acceleration of the process seriously burdened the state, but, so to say, it serves the interests of the population. At the same time, the use of the word “destruction” was prohibited; only “modernisation” and “development” could be mentioned. Later, from September, among the arguments cited was that they intended to stabilise the village population in place, providing appropriate educational, cultural and health services for them. Towards diplomatic corps they emphasised that the process is voluntary, constitutionality sanctioned, and that buildings can be dismantled only with the permission of the citizens, and the whole exercise serves a humane process. In county Harghita, the first copies of applications in which a Székely villager requests the dismantling of

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<sup>58</sup> Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára (ABTL) (Historical Archives of State Security Agency) Állambiztonsági Miniszterhelyettesi Titkárság iratai 1.11.1. 27. doboz, 45–13/13/a/1988. Budapest, July 1988, 174–183 p.

<sup>59</sup> A falurombolási terv jelenlegi állása. Szűcs Pál nagykövet felterjesztése Várkonyi Péter külügyminiszternek. (The present situation of village destruction plans.) Proposal of Ambassador Pál Szűcs forwarded to Péter Várkonyi, Minister of Foreign Affairs. Embassy of the People’s Republic of Hungary, Bucharest, 12th December 1988.

his house to be replaced by new modern town-like dwelling in the settlement. This process was boycotted in Cehetel, Simonești, Tipari, Timiș and Bodovice. Another method was applied in Bodos, a small settlement in county Covasna: the local People's Committee "asked for" the elimination the settlemant in the name of the local population, saying that the village had no prospects for development. A nationalistic propaganda was used among the Romanian population of villages in the Banat region: the forces of the Romanian nation broken up in history must be joined again. In several places, those who refused moving in village centres were threatened with various sanctions.

The mentioned attempts were shielded from the public as it also was kept from the public the intended deadline of mid-August to complete the resettlement project in the county. In county Maros, they wanted to eliminate 266 villages from 487. According to the plan, 91 small villages also would diminish to 76.

In county Hargitha, 110 villages from the 264 were listed for destruction. This network of Hungarian settlements goes back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and the churches were built in the 14–15<sup>th</sup> centuries. According to the original plans, after completion, the list of villages to be destroyed would have been published, and the nationwide execution of the urbanisation project would have begun from September. The public notification was delayed up to today, as a tactical delay.

The first information was leaked in August and stated that that destruction program would not be begun in September, and only the building of agricultural centres will start this year with minimal disruption and without the use bulldozers. However, these plans were also delayed. That is why dismantling or destruction works did not begin in Transylvania. If some of such cases can be found, then they are connected to earlier building plans. It must be mentioned that much misinformation was published about the initiation of the program in Transylvania, and it is also the consequence of disinformation by the Romanian authorities. But our press should screen those.

Another tactical modification was observable from September, in parallel with the delay of the execution of the plans. It is imaginable that only the name of the centre will remain from the villages to be integrated, that is, the little set-

tlements nearby will be attached to agricultural centres. These settlements can lose their name and live on under the name of the central village. For example, the name of Chiurus, the birthplace of Sándor Kőrösi Csoma would be attached to Brates, a village quite far from Chiurus, and the village will officially become a “street” of Brates. If small villages are then eliminated, it is not a settlement, such as Chiurus that will be eliminated, only a street.

This “rearrangement” would subordinate centuries-old Hungarian villages with very young Romanian settlements. According to the plans, the small villages Borosneu Mic and Dobolii de Sus belonging to the village Borosneu Mare will be attached to the township Valea Mare to be established. Valea Mare is a village with about 1,200 inhabitants, and at the moment belongs to the town of Intorsura Buzalui. It is a completely newly established settlement inhabited by Romanian majority. Borosneu Mic has 500, Dobolii de Sus has 300 inhabitants, both of them are Hungarian villages. Borosneu Mic is one of the most ancient settlements in the region, Balázs Orbán indicates it in an article published in Székelyföld that the village was registered with 16 gates in 1567.

Another similar plan of “reattachment” betrays the same intention of Romanisation. The authorities are preparing to attach the villages Lisnau and Bicfalau from township Uzon to Dobirlau. Dobirlau is a village with 1,000 inhabitants, all of them Romanian, but it gained the rank of township a few years ago. It was established in a forest clearing location. However, Bicfalau was an independent parish already in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and Lisnau is a similarly ancient settlement, both of them are inhabited by Hungarians.

Another possibility that may soon be introduced is the slow choking of the condemned villages. Schools, shops, health service and transport will be eliminated in these settlements, and no new building permits or restorations will be permitted. This is a tool to force people to move in the newly established centres. In county Covasna, there are at least 30 such small villages.

For example, Ceauşescu’s declaration in Pecica – one day before the Romanian-Hungarian summit meeting in Arad – where he stated that the resettlement plan should take into account the values of the past and the present and both must be preserved, was an attempt to confound public opinion.

By September, the press was given instructions to slow the propaganda effort. They did not have to write about the different phases of the execution anymore declared by Ceaușescu. Later, 2010 was cited as the final deadline for completing the project instead of the earlier mentioned 2000.

In the meantime it became clear that the Government considers everything that is against the resettlement program as a mortal sin and these sins are immediately punished. The replacement of Mihnea Gheorghiu the former President of the Academy of Political and Social Sciences and the proceedings against Nicolae Iorga and several researchers of the Institute of Historical Sciences illustrated this fact. It could occur because the plan was too strongly connected with the name of Ceaușescu.

At the full session of the Romanian Communist Party on 28–30<sup>th</sup> November, the Secretary General was dealing with the village destruction plans relatively much. He emphasised that the plans must urgently be executed. In this sense, he strengthened the village destruction program. We can evaluate the situation like this, because the session passed the speech edited based on the April Theses. Ceaușescu in his April speech spoke about the elimination of a few hundred townships and he said that it is necessary to eliminate 50 % of the villages. He declared the plans must be finalised in a few months. The unchanged character of the final aim is indicated by the declaration in the speech given on 28<sup>th</sup> November that 558 agricultural-industrial centres will be established with the development of existing villages. At the same time – evidently for tactical reasons – he was speaking about the issues from different perspectives once again. He said that up to 1995 in the towns, and until 2000 in the whole country, in its main outline, the housing issue will be solved. Apart from his speech in March, he did not speak about the fate of the 13,000 villages, but only about the 2,300 townships to which administratively all the villages will be attached. Despite his speech given in April, he declared that the number of townships will be preserved, but he could do it easily, since if the village destruction project is completed, 6,000 villages will remain; that is, more than 2,300 townships. According to his declaration owners of houses outside the borders of the settlements do not have to destroy their houses, but new buildings can be built only within the borders. This also suggests a silent intention to go ahead with the village destruction project. In a village, a family can have a plot of 200–300 square metre, including the house, the courtyard and agricultural activities. These

criteria can make for significant further changes possible, since there aren't such small plots practically anywhere in the country. In the end, Ceaușescu said that the establishment of modern dwellings in the villages is an objective requirement to be provided by socialism, and he is convinced that serious steps will be taken in this field in the next decade. Ceaușescu spoke about assisting the population with building materials and credits, which reveals that the Government was aware that the available resources of the state are insufficient to carry out the resettlement plan and the population should take at least part of the burden.

In our opinion, the temporal enumeration of the facts – partly based on the public announcements, partly on the experience and information of the population – clearly expose the original intentions of the Romanian Government. It showed that it was not a withdrawal, but just the introduction of tactical modifications. A decision was made about the application of deceptive methods and the delay of the beginning of the project. Ceaușescu never said – although the deputation of the Christian Democratic Faction of the EU Parliament also encouraged him to do so – that it would give up his plan of village destruction, he even made it reaffirm by the extended forum of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. This evaluation is nearly unanimously accepted by the body of diplomats in Bucharest, at most a few of them are silent, having no opinion. When Ceaușescu was in power no decision was ever withdrawn, at most, some were not carried out. That is why, it is not only necessary, but it pays to continue with the public counter-propaganda.

In our opinion, we still have to compare facts with Romanian propaganda. From a point of view of human rights, we also have strong arguments. We can prove that there are serious contradictions in this year's publications at different occasions – mainly based on Ceaușescu's speeches. Our main argument is that despite the many warnings, the village destruction project was not given up or withdrawn, and tactical steps did not deceive anyone in the world. We can also emphasise that Romania is also responsible for exaggerating press positions in the same way that is responsible for the original plans. Since they do not provide credible information, despite the high-level contacts, they refused any fact finding possibilities. At the same time, we have to bring to light other forcible and discriminative measures of assimilation against the ethnic minorities apart from the plans of village destruction,

namely the cutback of native language education and the lack of cultural facilities, the exchange of population and the forcible relocation of students.

The popularisation of the program in the country or in Transylvania is imaginable, since according to the people's economic plan of next year, 40,000 dwellings will be built in rural environment, and according to the five-year plan, this quantity of flats will be doubled. This number was taken over by the propaganda after the extended session of the CC of the RCP on 28–30<sup>th</sup> November.

The opinion of the report stating that “only tactical modifications were introduced, the decision was made about the application of deceptive methods and the delay of the beginning of the project” was supported by the events that happened next year. It is not only about villages to be eliminated will not be destroyed, but they will let them perish “on their own.”<sup>60</sup> The political leadership applied ever increasing manipulative means when they tried to make people leave their ancient settlements on a voluntary basis. In the first phase, village assemblies were convened, and these assemblies “democratically” voted the integration of neighbouring settlements in certain counties. The integration of the settlements of mixed population required separate tactics. The “interests of assimilation” could also be realised on the other way round; that is, also Romanian villages could be integrated into villages of Hungarian population. These times, the remaining Hungarian population was “attenuated” by changing the original ethnic composition. Furthermore, on top of this, the decision-making process does not follow the stated guideline whereby economically weaker settlements should be attached to stronger ones.<sup>61</sup>

Gyula Fejes, the first Vice President of the Committee of Hargitha county, in the beginning of February 1989, sent “credible information”

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<sup>60</sup> Süle, R. Andrea : Terület- és településrendezési tervek Romániában (Plans of the rearrangement of settlements and territories in Romania). *Regio*, 1990. 1.

<sup>61</sup> Maros megyei községek megszüntetése (The cessation of townships in Maros county). Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary, Bucharest, 10 May 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 77. d. 112/Szt/89.

to the Hungarian ambassador about the processes taking place in the county.<sup>62</sup>

So-called village assemblies were convened in all of the townships in Harghita. Residential integrations were voted at such assemblies. According to this plan, the representatives of the villages were convened to Miercurea Ciuc, and the modification of the village system was voted here. The county forwarded the results of the votes to the Nationwide Commission of People's Committees in order to be "passed". Finally, the "configuration" of the new townships was consecrated in a presidential decree. It is assumed that these presidential decrees will not be published, since Romania would then document a new phase of village destruction to the outside world.

In county Harghita there were no mass protest because of the village integration, but relatively many people protested individually: they did not want to participate in village assemblies and in the voting process. Therefore, many people were arrested and these people were usually locked by the police for several days. The county director of the National Savings Bank – who was born in a village condemned to elimination – tried to agree with the county Secretary of the Party. A. Costea told the financial director that they had to carry out instructions from Bucharest and there is no room for discussion, and if he does not want to have an "unpleasant experience", he should stop protesting.

Other incidents also reveal the execution of the village destruction program with new means. In county Harghita, 19 collective farms were also eliminated or integrated. 6 of them are of the villages to be eliminated, 13 are of other settlements. As far as Gyula Fejes knows, 700 kilometres of electric grid wires are planned to be uprooted in the county, which is also connected with the elimination of small settlements.

There are also Romanian villages among the settlements to be eliminated. Usually, it is considered a "tactical element" so that it can be said that not only Hungarian villages are subject to elimination. But the integrations

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<sup>62</sup> A falurombolási program új szakasza. (The new period of the village destruction project). Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary, Bucharest, 3 February 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 1989/74. d. 37/1/Szt/89

are not sustainable on the long run, since in several cases settlements are at a distance of 10–15 kilometres are attached together. For example, Pauleni Ciuc is nearer to the seat of the county Miercurea Ciuc (6 km) than to Frumoasa (15 km) where it was attached; that is, the intention to eliminate later must be present in the background of the integrations.

Gyula Fejes thought that the present methods of village integration were similar to the period of the violent establishment of collective farms when “everything was signed against the will of the population.”<sup>63</sup>

A female language teacher of Hungarian and French who migrated to Hungary from Targu Mures in February 1989 spoke about similar experience. During her administrative procedures, she met with representatives of several villages along the river Nirad who turned to the country authorities with their complaints. They told that the presidents of the committees of 8 villages near Miercurea Nirajului were called in the town where they were informed that for now the elimination of the villages will not take place, but the electric and gas supplies will be cut-off, coupons for bread, oil, and sugar will not be accepted and from September, the school will close. The Embassy in Bucharest decided to check the credibility of the information on condition that if it proved to be true, they would turn to publicity, informing the Centre of Human Rights of the UN and the Swedish Government coordinating the nominations of special representatives.<sup>64</sup>

Information such as the above and also similar cases contributed to put in the foreground the problems of the Romanian Hungarian relations when the Department of International Party Relationships of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Worker’s Party made a proposal about the situation of the socialist countries and the relation of Hungary with the socialist countries for the Committee of Legal and Administrative Affairs. The argument of the report clearly reveals the controversy of the ambivalent and contradictory party logic of a leader-

<sup>63</sup> See: Oláh, Sándor: A hatalomgyakorlás intézményei és eszközei az ötvenes évek székely falusi társadalmában (The means and institutions of practicing power in the Székely rural society of the 1950). In: *Fényes tegnapunk* (Our splendid yesterday). Pro-Print, Miercurea Ciuc, 1998. 22 p.

<sup>64</sup> Információk erőszakos, magyarelles lépésekről Romániában (Information about violent anti-Hungarian steps in Romania). Embassy of the People’s Republic of Hungary, Bucharest, 20 March 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 1989/75. d. 00685/4/89.

ship on the verge of change of the regime: while it wants to accuse the Romanian Government of not following the principles of Lenin's ethnic policy, it wants to represent the issue of the defence of minorities referring to the universal character of human rights at international forums.<sup>65</sup>

Humanitarian issues – in accordance with international tendencies – were put in the foreground both in the relations and in the internal practices of the socialist countries. It is our basic interest that a modern interpretation and a civilised treatment of human right issues should be outlined in the socialist world. It is inevitable to urge the solution of the problem, because the national-ethnic issue inherited from the past still strongly influencing the system of relations of the region has become an acute problem in all of the multi-national socialist countries, and it is an organic element of bilateral relations. The force of the common model, the requirement of monolithism covered this problem earlier, but it could not prevent the survival of tensions, it rather lead to their extension. The national-ethnic element is a basic factor of multilateral relations that – lacking advanced solutions – deepens distrust hindering cooperation in every sphere. However, the improvement of cooperation seems to be the hardest in these fields.

It means a serious burden that the Romanian ethnic policy and practice seriously violate the general norms of human rights, the Leninist principles. The oppression of the nationalities in Romania discredits socialist thinking and worsens the conditions and atmosphere of the multilateral cooperation between the two countries. All of this harms common interests. The inevitable problem, due to its connection to human rights, became an international affair and led to the isolation of Romania. The main reason for this are is not Hungarian foreign policy, but the internal policy of Romania.

Under such circumstances, bringing these set of issues, at least in their general conceptual connections, to a common forum should not be delayed for long. We always have to take into account the measure of expected support. Our experience in the vote at the human rights congress held in Geneva

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<sup>65</sup> A szocialista országok helyzete; hazánk kapcsolatai a szocialista országokkal (The situation of socialistic countries; Hungarian relations with the socialistic countries). Department of International Party Relations of the CC of the HSWP. 10 May 1989. Committee of International, Legal and Administrative Affairs 9 June 1989. NAH M-KS 288. f. 62/5. ő. e.

shows that when problems like these come up, we can, at most, count on silent goodwill or neutrality from our partners. The level of support should be measured on a case by case basis.

In bilateral relations, we have to aspire to facilitate a political and moral atmosphere necessary to solve concrete questions at hand and at the same time push for the observation of the individual and collective human rights in all countries where ethnic Hungarian live.

We have to take into account the historical fact that anti-Hungarian activities were always part and parcel of Romanian foreign policy ever since Great Romania was created. In relation to this, we have to assess signs in this leadership that for them the principle of natural borders is not an alien concept. The persistent or strengthening impulses of nationalism of a country suggests that their leaders will consider nationalism as an appropriate tool to channel internal social or political tensions.

The open anti-Hungarian foreign policy of Romania could not lead to open military confrontation due to the still existing, although weak ties of the Warsaw Pact<sup>66</sup>, while Moscow finally gave up the intention “to at least preserve the traces of peace between the two countries”.<sup>67</sup> The deadlock of the conflict can be dated to the weeks before Ceaușescu’s failure. News of more or less reliability about the operations of the Romanian Army arrived in the entire year<sup>68</sup>, but all of this was overcome

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<sup>66</sup> Borhi, László: „Magyarország kötelessége a varsói Szerződésben maradni” – az 1989-es átmenet nemzetközi összefüggései magyar források tükrében (“It is Hungary’s duty to remain in the Warsaw Treaty – international connections of the changes in 1989 in the mirror of Hungarian sources). *Külgügyi Szemle*, 1007. summer-autumn.

<sup>67</sup> Ripp, Zoltán: *Rendszerváltás Magyarországon 1987–1990* (Change of the regime in Hungary 1987–1990). Napvilág, Budapest., 2006. 503 p.

<sup>68</sup> “After the rearrangement of the division of Moldavia that was done in the end of last year, in Transylvania where massive military forces were ordered from different areas of the country, the population gave information about military operations. At the same time, a serious number of reservist officers were called in.” ABTL Intelligence Reports. Romania in 1989 was planning a military offensive against Hungary. Allegedly they are convinced that they can quickly reach the line of the river Tisza unhindered before the Hungarian Army could mobilise its units in the Dunántúl region.” NOIJ summarising reports 21 June 1989. ÁBTL 2.7.1. 062111

by the information out of Budapest published in the Austrian press according to which Romania was preparing for military action against Hungary in the autumn.<sup>69</sup> The same information could be obtained by the Ministry of the Interior when the Ministry warned the Presidency of the HSWP<sup>70</sup> for the preparations of a military action against Hungary in its Informative Report of 19<sup>th</sup> June 1989. The Minister of Defence of the Németh-government was afraid of similar conflicts: “With my colleagues we concluded that that Ceauşescu Clan, to preserve their power, may decide on adventurous steps, and it is not even excluded that they will take some aggressive, provocative steps against Hungary.”<sup>71</sup> The negotiations between the Round Table of the Opposition and the Embassy of the Soviet Union in the second half of 1989 are a special event within this period. For the first time, Russian ambassador Boris Ivanovics Stukalin visited the session of the Round Table of the Opposition held in the Parliament on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1989. He replied to the question about the Hungarian population across the border diplomatically, without mentioning any concrete information: “We have to admit that on ethnic issues many deformations took place with the leninist approach, mainly in recent years.”<sup>72</sup> Two days later Ivan Aboimov, the Soviet Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs met with the representatives of the Round Table of the Opposition. József Antal drafted a position paper of the MDF (Hungarian Forum of Democrats) that may seem strange today. It stated that, if Hungary remains within the Warsaw Pact, it can

<sup>69</sup> Embassy of the People’s Republic of Hungary, Vienna, 3 August 1989. TÜK Declassified documents, Austria 1989. NAH KUM XIX-J-1-j. 20. d. 003390

<sup>70</sup> The proposal of the Department of International Party Relations of the CC of the HSWP forwarded to the Presidency about our participation at the session of the Political Negotiating Body of the Warsaw Treaty held in Bucharest. 30 June 1989. NAH M-KS 288. f. 59/1. ő. e. 2. o.

<sup>71</sup> Kárpáti, Ferenc: A román forradalom és Magyarország, 1989 (The Romanian revolution and Hungary, 1989). Egy volt miniszter emlékezése (The memories of an ex-minister). *História*, 2000. 4.

<sup>72</sup> Az Ellenzéki kerekasztal ülése, a Szovjetunió nagykövetének látogatása 1989 augusztus 18 (The session of the Round Table of the Opposition, the visit of the ambassador of the Soviet Union 18 August 1989). In Bozóki, András (ed.): *A rendszerváltás forgatókönyve. Kerekasztaltárgyalások 1989-ben* (The scenario of the change of the regime. Round table negotiations in 1989). Vol. 3. Magyarétó, 1999. 245 p.

be a guarantee against the attacks from neighbouring states, and naming Romania he said that “the possibility of attack cannot be excluded”.<sup>73</sup>

The session of the Political Council meeting of the Warsaw Pact held in July 1989 gave an opportunity for the party leaders of both countries to meet. Since upon the request of Rezső Nyers, the meeting was considered an “unofficial negotiation of comrades”, the proceedings of the meeting were not published.<sup>74</sup> The president of the Hungarian Party brought up the issue of political relations that since the meeting of Arad, not only did not improve but, on the contrary, reached a low point. In fact, no proposals of the Hungarian side were answered and all were ultimately rejected. The declaration on nationalities planned at the meeting of Arad was not prepared and the debate over the resettlement program had international repercussions and was continuing. “It is true that this is a Romanian internal affair – Rezső Nyers added – but it generates nationality problems in nationality areas, transcends our borders and worsens our relations.”

Ceaușescu responded in a sharp tone: Romania is an independent socialist country that solves its problems on its own. On this basis, the Romanian Government will not allow the presence of an international control commission to monitor the resettlement program. In his view, this Hungarian initiative amounts to nothing less than a deliberate attack on the friendship of the two peoples.”

Regarding the resettlement program, Ceaușescu said that such phenomena can also be observed in other places. The program was started 20 years ago, with the aim of improving the living conditions of village residents. He agrees with the earlier proposal that a Hungarian delegation should visit Romania in order to study the issue as soon as possible. He pointed to the fact that it is the Hungarians who do not want to receive a Romanian counterpart delegation; at the same time, the Hungarians are emphasising the control functions of their proposed delegation. International visitor rules designate the host country as organizer of the visitor’s programs. However, the Hungarian delegation may visit

<sup>73</sup> Memorandum about the meeting of Ivan Aboimov with opposition politician 17 October 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Soviet Union/1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 84. d.

<sup>74</sup> Rezső Nyers’s report to the Operative Committee of Political Affairs 10 July 1989. HSWP KB Információs jelentések. 1980–1989. évi iratjegyzék. 288. f. 11. cs. 890708 ő. e. 213–219 p.

counties with a Hungarian majority, but visitors should experience the entire territory of Romania. Romania “is one of the few countries” – declared Ceaușescu – where, in the widest sense of the world, there is native language education, local and national newspapers are published in the language of the nationalities as well as functioning theatres.” He called it strange that these facts are not known in Hungary, or if they are known, then the Hungarians distort these facts. The Romanians would like, he added, “that Hungarian citizens of Romanian descent would enjoy the same rights as the nationalities in Romania.”

At the height of the senseless negotiations between the parties, Nyers even commented that “along the Hungarian-Romanian border, tourists are literally undressed, and even the newspaper *Népszabadság* [Hungarian daily paper] is confiscated. Such incidents are not present in any of our other borders. (...) We consider the restriction on *Népszabadság* against the principle of free movement.” Ceaușescu’s response contained the usual phrases: Romania cannot allow the import of press material containing views with which we cannot agree. “If *Népszabadság* publishes only articles about Hungary, then it will be allowed in Romania. But if it propagates the Western socialism, arguing for the supremacy of the West, then it would not be allowed in.”

Despite the above, at the session of the Political Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1989 agreed in its resolution that a delegation of the Hungarian Parliament should travel to Romania in the near future to study resettlement issues, and with a similar purpose, a Romanian delegation should be received in Hungary.<sup>75</sup>

Hardly a week later, the proposal went nowhere. On 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1989, György Fejtő received Romanian ambassador Traian Pop at his own request, and the Ambassador handed the following memorandum to the Secretary of the Central Committee, in the name of the Romanian Communist Party and Government:

The leadership of the Romanian Communist Party and the Government of the Romanian Socialist Republic considers the interview with Mihai, former King of Romania aired by the program “Panorama” of the Hungarian television on July 31<sup>st</sup> as an anti-Romanian, anti-socialist and fascist provocation, and a direct attack against the independence and sovereignty of Romania.

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<sup>75</sup> NAH M-KS 288. f. 5/1072. .d. e.

In view of the nature of this action the leadership of the Romanian Communist Party and the Government of Romania vigorously protests to the leadership of the Hungarian Socialist Party and the Government of Hungary. At the same time wishes to convey the following measures taken:

- 1.) Romania withdraws the invitation for the visit of a Hungarian delegation to Romania.
- 2.) The Romanian Ambassador to Hungary is recalled for consultations.<sup>76</sup>

The continuing propaganda war evidently contributed to a darkened mood in Romania reinforcing reasons to leave the country, even illegally. This is why new regulations nominally issued to defend the Romanian borders, but really to stem illegal border crossings caused an outcry in public opinion, but also in the Bucharest diplomatic corps.<sup>77</sup> The State Council of the Romanian Socialist Republic in the middle of July (official bulletin 26. 17. 07. 1989.) with Decree number 170/1989 issued regulations regarding the use of weapons, munitions and explosive material in the border areas, with a Decree number 367/1971. issued regulations modifying earlier border control operations, that is the Government Decree number 678/1969. In section 36 of Decree number 367/1971 (published on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1976, with subsequent amendments) there were regulations and conditions governing the use of firearms.

Point h./ of the section 3 of Decree number 678/1969. (republished on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1981.) was modified as follows:

Technical work are performed done and signs are installed in the border zones and in the region defined in point g./ of the present section in order to explore, identify and arrest persons committing border crimes. The length of defence and control fences established within the frameworks of the technical works cannot reach:

– 47 km along the Hungarian border

<sup>76</sup> György Fejti's report to the members of the Operative Committee of Political Affairs about the negotiations with the Romanian ambassador.

<sup>77</sup> The execution of the Cabinet Decree about the defence of the borders of Romania. Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary, Bucharest, 10 September 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. d. 171/Szt/89.

- 35 km along the Yugoslav border
- 20 km along the Bulgarian borders
- 33 km along the Soviet borders

The Decree about border defense, was updated with the following amendments:

- the width of the direct border areas has been modified to 1,000 m from the earlier 50 m, where exclusively plants of low stature can be planted
- hunting and fishing permitted along running waters near the border has been modified to 1,000 m comparing to the earlier 500 m
- the depth of the borderline zone (that was between 30 and 40 km up to now) has not been changed, but the regulation about the building of "control and defence fences" constitutes a new element. (However, the phrasing of this is not clear either in the Romanian text or in the Hungarian translation from more than one and half a month later.)

The diplomats accredited in Bucharest also received the Decree of the State Council with serious misgivings. In their view, the deliberately ambiguous language makes differing interpretations possible regarding the necessity, the subject and the purpose of the Decree. Many of them considered that the Romanian border guards had already authorization to fire, and from then on, the classification of crimes happening inside the zone and the necessity of the use of firearms are left to their own judgement. A leading American diplomat said that "this Romanian measure can serve as prevention of a military attack from abroad." The number of fences to set up is not specified; therefore, they will certainly be put up in the strategically important areas. A Swiss diplomat informed us that he visited the competent official in the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with reference to the complexity of the phrasing, in order to interpret the decree. From there he was sent to the Ministry of Defence, but there they were also unwilling to cooperate, and referred the diplomat to the Ministry of the Interior. He remarked ironically that in none of the places were they inclined to explain the new border regulations, or to make the complicated text clear to him. According to a leading Soviet diplomat, with the new border defence regulation, Romania would like to end all forms of interaction of residents in the

border areas, since with these regulations the presence of outsiders will become doubtful.

The Hungarian Embassy reaction to the new regulations was that in comparison with earlier regulations, it was clear that Romania became even more stringent regarding restrictions in the border zones. By building the 'fences', Romania increased its isolation from the outside world. By increasing the restrictions of freedom of movement and tightening up the rules of transit made more stringent an already over-regulated border transit system affecting the resident population. The new ones did not define border crime, but it stated that "if the subject persecuted in the zone has committed earlier a serious crime and crossing the border would cause extraordinarily serious danger, firearms can be used against them." This, in the last resort, meant absolute freedom in the use of firearms. These measures only strengthened the probability of the rumours that the cruel Romanian police and army would want to commit murder to prevent the flight of refugees into Hungarian territory. Such stories were not alien to public opinion, and the press was especially fond of publishing alleged or actual stories like these, some of which elicited international interest. The so-called "Gyula affair", gained political, legal and symbolic notoriety in early 1989.

### *3. Embassy detours*

The real purpose in leaving Romania was not always to settle down in Hungary. Both Hungarians and non-Hungarians used it as a transit country, in large numbers. Those cases are more peculiar when people willing to escape from Romania wanted to reach Hungary without crossing the Hungarian-Romanian border. These atypical instances also turn our attention to the differences in perceptions and solutions related to the handling of refugees at the time of the fall of the Iron Curtain, in spite of comprehensive international regulations, that in turn, were dependent on the variations in the perception of refugee capacity and security.

On 26<sup>th</sup> November 1989, the Danish Refugee Council made a decision-setting precedent, in the issue of the first, seven-person group of the 200–230 people fleeing from Romania arrived in Denmark on the 31st of December, 1988. The Council – agreeing with the admission refusal of Danish immigration– did not grant political asylum to them. In con-

formity with Danish asylum laws, the authorities did not return the refugees to Romania. But, since the refugees came from Hungary, they would be able to return to Hungary if authorized by Hungarian authorities. The reasoning could be viewed as recognition of Hungary's status of in the human rights arena: the Danish authorities consider Hungary a 'safe country' from the refugees point of view since the returning refugees would not be sent back to Romania. According to the Hungarian Embassy of Copenhagen, half of the refugees were ethnic Hungarians, but half of the applicants did not want to return to Hungary, because of family reunification considerations. A further motivation to stay in Denmark was the perception that if the refugees gain refugee status, Danish authorities would be more effective in handling the family reunification effort. At this point Danish and international public opinion took interest in the case. Andras Back the Hungarian consul stated that Hungary would be open to review an immigration request on part of the refugees provided that is voluntary and not the result of Danish expulsion. But no such request was received by the Consulate.

On 27<sup>th</sup> January 1989, the head of Consular Affairs of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed the information about the decision of the Refugee Council to the Hungarian consul. The Hungarian consul, after outlining the refugee status set in Hungary and the Government's measures for solving the question, provided information about the regulatory framework of the Hungarian-Romanian agreement on termination of dual citizenship and the unresolved family reunification matter. The Danish side assured the Hungarian Consulate that there will be no forced repatriations. After the police had formally asked Hungary's position on the matter and considering that most of the refugees did not want to return to Hungary, the Danish Refugee Council revisited her decision. The international significance that overgrew the concrete case was that the Danish authorities, from the point of view of human rights, declared for the first time Hungary as a state suitable to receive political refugees.<sup>78</sup> A year and a half later, a similar case took place in Finland.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Danish point of view about the pleas for asylum of Romanian refugees. Report of the Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary, Copenhagen, 27 January 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. d. 15/89.

<sup>79</sup> The admittance of Romanian refugees in Finland. Report of the Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary, Helsinki, 3 August 1989. Declassified documents

A totally different situation took place in Moscow, an episode with overtones of absurdity, in the middle of 1989. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of July, a Romanian citizen of Hungarian nationality living in Miercurea Ciuc requested the Hungarian Consulate's assistance to travel to the People's Republic of Hungary, where he wanted to apply for residence. He said that he had been to the Soviet Union with a group of tourists with his wife and he left their hotel before the day of the trip home. He has informed his wife of his intentions and she agreed with his decision. He stated that his decision was a matter of conscience. He was a skilled labourer earning good wages, owner of a house and a car, spending 20,000 ROL for their trip. He had two sons from his first marriage who are raised by his parents and a 7-year-old daughter from his second marriage. From his parental branch, he has cousins in Budapest, but he would like to settle in the countryside, where he has acquaintances.

At the request of the Consular Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs the Hungarian Consulate in Moscow and contacted the Consular Office of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Information was given on the petition of the Romanian citizen and requested to explore the possibility of sending the petitioner from the Soviet Union to Hungary. While no immediate response was received the Soviet side gave assurance that the case will not be shared with the Romanian side. After two hour consultation with various staff members the Soviet authorities provide the official response: the only way to resolve the issue was for the two parties involved work out a mutually agreed solution. The Soviet side cannot and does not want be involved in matters concerning Romanian-Hungarian relations, particularly on an issue that the Romanian side could perceive as unfriendly.

Afterwards, the Hungarian Consulate informed the applicant that they cannot help him since the Soviet authorities are the only one able to authorize travel. And furthermore, they are obliged to follow the guidelines of their bilateral agreement with Romania. They further advised him to contact the Romanian Embassy as soon as possible – preferably from the airport – and try to give a quite credible explanation for falling behind from his group and ask their assistance to return home. They also told him any further attempts may carry the risk of being handed over to the Romanian authorities. Nevertheless, he made another

attempt to travel to Hungary. The representative of the Hungarian airlines informed the Consul's Department that the man asked for their help at the airport office in Moscow that day at eight o'clock, to travel to Budapest. His request was refused, and they recommended him to register at the Romanian Embassy immediately. After that, he was seen heading to the offices of TAROM, the Romanian airlines. "Since then there have been no developments in the case".<sup>80</sup>

The most complicated – and so least researched – situation was set in Sofia where a Transylvanian group asking for refugee status lived at the Hungarian Embassy for five months. The first report of the case was published in the official weekly paper of the English Communist Party in November of 1988. Beside the title of the report – "Taking Refugees from Ceaușescu" – the subtitle precisely indicated the delicate and extraordinary situation: "Romania's treatment of its own Hungarian minority resulted in a diplomatic incident without precedent in Bulgaria." The paper related that on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1988, five children and seven adults left a tourist group arrived in Bulgaria from Romania and asked for help in the Hungarian Embassy to join their relatives living in Hungary. Although the Hungarian diplomats ordered a strict news blackout, the information about the defection reached the journalists from the leader of the Hungarian delegation participating in the conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union held in Sofia at that time. At the end of the year, the English reporters turned to the Hungarian Ambassador in Sofia with the requesting to interview the refugees, since they did not receive any information from the staff. Ambassador Sándor Simics refused the request saying that adverse publicity could hurt chances for a positive outcome of the tense situation lasting for weeks then.<sup>81</sup>

Behind the scenes, political, governmental and diplomatic participants fought a great tactical battle from the beginning.<sup>82</sup> The diplomatic messages exchanged with the Romanian leadership made it obvious that

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<sup>80</sup> Plea of migration of a Romanian citizen. Report of the Consul's Department, Moscow, 10 August 1988. HSWP KAO.1988. NAH M-KS 288. f. 31/88.

<sup>81</sup> The letter of British journalists in the affair of Transylvanian refugees. Report of the Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary, Sofia, 4 January 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. d. 3/Szt/89.

<sup>82</sup> Transylvanian refugees at the Hungarian Embassy in Sofia. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Territorial Department III. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. d. 00172/1/89.

the situation could not be solved by a bilateral Hungarian-Romanian agreement. Bucharest insisted on the refugees' return to Romania, and that they should request to emigrate from their place of residence promising "readiness to grant it without delay". But the refugees – understandably afraid of the possibility of a serious reprisal – could not accept this in any circumstances, and from the Hungarian side it was considered that their safety was not guaranteed even returning back to Romania. On 4<sup>th</sup> of October 1988, the International Red Cross was asked for contribution through the Mission of Geneva, and was repeated by the Hungarian Red Cross in its letter of 17<sup>th</sup> October.

At the same time, diplomatic negotiations were begun with Bulgaria which was emphasising the importance of its neutrality from the beginning. Hungary took the position that the question cannot be solved without active contribution from Bulgaria. Finally, as a result of almost half a year of tactical fights, the situation changed. On the meeting of deputies of Foreign Ministers held in Sofia on 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1988, the Hungarian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs attempted to persuade his Bulgarian counterpart to allow the refugees to leave for Hungary or to a third country. Prior to this they sought the assent of Yugoslav authorities to agree to become the transit country. But the official Bulgarian position was invariably the solution rested in the Hungarian-Romanian agreement. At the same time, the Hungarian side was able to secure from Bulgaria assurances that, among the possible solutions, none would require the refugees to be returned to Romania.

On October, 26, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on behalf of the Government of Hungary asked the Bulgarian government to mediate in finding a solution for the repatriation of the refugees to Hungary or to a third country. Minister of Foreign Affairs Péter Várkonyi negotiated with Bulgarian Minister of Foreign Affairs Petar Mladenov at the session of the Committee of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Warsaw Pact in Budapest on October 28, and asked for his personal involvement in a letter of November, 9. At the session, Péter Várkonyi made another unsuccessful attempt to change the Romanian position with Ioan Totu, Minister of Romanian Foreign Affairs.

On January 9, 1989, Prime Minister Miklós Németh met with Andrej Lukanov, alternate member of the Bulgarian Communist Party, Minister of Foreign Trade who was staying in Budapest on the 13<sup>th</sup> session of the Hungarian-Bulgarian Economical and Technological-Scien-

tific Cooperation Committee. At the meeting, besides the questions of bilateral and economic cooperation realised within the framework of the Committee of Mutual Economic Aid.<sup>83</sup> Miklós Németh brought up the case of the 12 Romanian citizens of Hungarian nationality staying at the Hungarian Embassy in Sofia for the fourth month. He pointed out that the Hungarian leadership is under an increasing pressure to find a solution by the domestic and international media. The return of them to Romania would be politically unacceptable to both Hungarian and international public opinion. But regardless of this, the Hungarian leadership could not return the refugees to Romania because they are like to suffer physical and psychological reprisals.

Miklós Németh explained that the well-known Romanian position made solution of the refugee problem unsolvable within the framework of Hungarian-Romanian discussions. Therefore, Bulgarian help was needed. He asked Lukanov to convey the Hungarian leadership's relevant request to the Bulgarian leadership and primarily to Prime Minister Georgi Atanaszov. He also asked that as a precondition to solution to keep the status quo and above all, not to take any unilateral steps regarding the refugees. Lukanov made a promise for this in the name of the Bulgarian leadership, but at the same time, he repeated the formerly known Bulgarian point of view. He indicated that the Bulgarian leadership understands the humanitarian character of the issue, and in this regard there are no doubts on the Bulgarian position. At the same time, however, there is an agreement between Bulgaria and Romania on how to handle these matters and that agreement cannot be altogether ignored, since it would not be positive for Bulgarian-Romanian relations. He suggested that another Hungarian-Romanian meeting on foreign affairs should be initiated in the issue of refugees.<sup>84</sup> Finally, Miklós Németh mentioned that the Hungarian party would find the solution of the issue of refugees before the meeting of Secretary General in Chief

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<sup>83</sup> Interpreter's report about Andrej Lukanov, alternate member of the CC of the Bulgarian Communist Party and Minister of Foreign Economy's visit at Prime Minister Miklós Németh (Sofian refugee affairs)a BKP PB) Ministry of Foreign Affairs Territorial Department III. 11 January 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989/1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. d. 00172/1/89.

<sup>84</sup> „Our department sees no sense in holding further Romanian-Hungarian negotiations. We are still encouraging the Bulgarian party to make an attempt to solve the problems.” Pro domo comment at the end of the document.

Károly Grósz and his counterpart Todor Zsivkov planned for this year and already agreed in principle, practical and useful.

On January 28th and 29th January the Embassy in Sofia made it possible to the Hungarian press and television to report on the refugees in a limited fashion. It was meant to be a signal for the Bulgarian party to demonstrate that in spite of their agreement, the dragging the affair further is not in the interest or power of Hungary.

Parallel to the coordination efforts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, contacts were made between the International Red Cross and the Bulgarian Red Cross and Hungarian Red Cross to find a viable solution to the refugee problem. They called the attention to the Bulgarian side suggesting that the danger of confrontation with Romania could be lessened if the refugees were turned over to an international organization, allowing the refugees to a third country. They also signalled (as alluded by Miklós Nemeth) that the Hungarian side is unable agree on a specific date for a high level meeting in 1989 until the refugees are staying in Sofia. These developments increase pressure on the Bulgarian leadership to find a solution for the refugee problem.

Finally, on 13<sup>th</sup> February 1989, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Marij Ivanov told the Hungarian ambassador that they will permit the refugees to leave for Austria with the travel documents and in company of the representative of the International Red Cross. After the thorough discussion of the conditions and details, the refugees left the territory of Bulgaria on February 17, 1989 on an Austrian plane arriving in Vienna. At the request of Bulgaria, the Bulgarian news agency released a press release with the news in the evening of 17<sup>th</sup> February.<sup>85</sup> A week after the successful outcome of the episode Ambassador Sándor Simics informed Minister of Foreign Affairs Péter Várkonyi in a classified memorandum about the unknown details of the events in Sofia.<sup>86</sup>

According to the preliminary agreement, Christina Kruck, representative of the International Red Cross after arriving to Budapest held a final coordinating discussion at the headquarters of the Bulgarian Red

<sup>85</sup> Report about the closure of the refugee issues in Sofia. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Territorial Department III. 21 February 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. d. 00172/3/89.

<sup>86</sup> The leave of refugees. Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary, Sofia. 22 February 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. d. 3/3/Szt/89.

Cross on February 17 at ten o'clock. There was only one question left to agree about. The Bulgarian news agency (BTA) wanted to publish the announcement immediately after the takeoff of the plane transporting the refugees or, else, after arriving in Vienna. Ms. Kruck adamantly decided against it and set the date for the announcement by BTA for Monday, February 20. Finally, it was acknowledged by the news agency.

Ms. Kruck asked the Hungarian ambassador to do his best to keep the news from all unauthorized individuals, particularly the Hungarian press. The Ambassador proposed that one of the diplomats could accompany the refugees to Vienna to provide language assistance but Ms. Kruck declined the offer.

In order to provide the news blackout needed for the safe transport of the refugees, the internal and external telephone lines of the embassy was blocked at 11 o'clock in the morning. From then on, only one out- and incoming line was in operation at the secretariat. At noon, the administrative staff was allowed to leave except for the chauffeurs. From this particular time no one could leave the building of the embassy and no one could come in. At 13.15 the Ambassador in the presence of two Embassy employees described the developments that took place, the decision of the Bulgarian Government, and its importance to the eight adults. They were informed about the circumstances of their meeting with Christina Kruck, representative of the International Red Cross held at 14.30, the details of their trip, reception of their travel documents and the need to sign the required release documentation.

They were reminded on the importance of disciplined behaviour and the need to look out for each other in the remaining few hours. They were also advised to bring only the most essential luggage such as sports bag for each. They received assurances that the rest of their belongings will follow by truck as soon as possible. The Embassy staff provided allowances of 2,000 HUF to each married couple and 1,000 HUF to each child. The refugees received the information in and orderly and were well prepared for the departure. On Wednesday, after the photo shots, they started packing their belongings.

At 14.35 the representative of the International Red Cross arrived, and was accompanied by Ignatov, Marinov the head of Department of International Relations, M. Karaszimeonov, the international lawyer of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the deputy head of the Consul's Department and a representative of the "competent authorities". According to

the preliminary agreement two specialists participated and recorded every signature on videotape at the handover ceremony. Immediately after arriving at the embassy, Karaszimeonov informed his Ministry of Foreign Affairs by telephone, and Ms. Kruck also informed her headquarters in Geneva about the events that have taken place. By that time, the 12 refugees were seated already in the small reception room upstairs by that time. First, Ms. Kruck expressed her thanks to the Bulgarian Government and the Red Cross for allowing them to close the case in such a positive way and allowing her to leave. She described the flight schedule in detail, mentioning the Austrian capital as a destination. Ms. Kruck handed the international Red Cross's documents to the adults concerned personally, after being introduced. After that, the refugees signed the documents and the statements prepared by the Hungarian embassy in two languages, in Bulgarian and in Hungarian at the request of Bulgaria. It stated: "I, the undersigned, categorically state my refusal to return to the Romanian Socialist Republic, and I leave the Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary in Sofia of my own free will to travel to Vienna<sup>87</sup> with the assistance of the Bulgarian Red Cross and the International Red Cross Committee of Geneva. I certify that I have received on my behalf (and my children's) this document issued by the International Committee of the Red Cross."

At the end, two small mistakes happened during the carefully orchestrated scenario. It came to light during the handover that the Bulgarian Red Cross, in spite its commitment, did not pay for the airfare because the ticket office would have only issue them in exchange of American dollars. Finally, the Hungarian Embassy provided the \$3,042 needed for the transaction. A few minutes after 3 o'clock, the refugees got on the bus of the Bulgarian Red Cross waiting on the street outside the embassy – which proved to be too large despite the agreed upon arrangements, hence it could not be manoeuvred into the yard of the embassy – and they went to the airport. To check the luggage and examine the travel documents, the Bulgarian authorities provided a separate room for the refugees. As agreed no embassy staff accompanied them. Finally, the ambassador, referring to the state security activity observed: "We experienced that the competent Bulgarian authorities were present

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<sup>87</sup> This could refer to complications around the selection of the target country where Vienna was typewritten in the blank space provided in the declaration at a later date. Otherwise, refugees flown to Vienna arrived in Budapest on the same day.

nearby our embassy in force, but in a very conspiring way on route to the airport.'

However, the action of Sofia surpassed the story of the single rescue. A similarly unknown situation but identical in its initiation was also set in Budapest half a year later. In the summer of 1989, 140–150 refugees from the GDR (German Democratic Republic) entered the Embassy, Consulate, and Department of Visa Affairs of the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany) in Budapest, with the intention to travel to the West, to the FRG. At the Embassy of the FRG, they enjoyed diplomatic immunity, but could not leave, because the Hungarian authorities did not let them cross the Austrian border at that time, and according to the bilateral agreement they were liable to be handed over to the German Democratic Republic. The stalemate in the Hungarian-FRG-GDR triangle was resolved by mediation of the Red Cross. In the Committee established to find a solution to the situation were: the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the representative of the International Red Cross, and an Officer of the Hungarian counter-intelligence services. Finally, on August 24, 1989, 101 citizens of the GDR arrived in Vienna from Budapest on a plane of the International Red Cross. The timing could not be accidental, since Miklós Németh and Gyula Horn arrived to the FRG for the invitation of Helmut Kohl next day...

#### *4. Instead of an epilogue*

The sources cited highlight the fact the complex problems associated with the migration process are truly a big challenge to both the Hungarian political leadership as well for all organizations, whether of the state or not, that participate in the execution of the relevant tasks. We can see today in the resolution of these tasks that changes in regulatory systems and institutional techniques, and perhaps even more the legal culture, are a little ahead of the changes in other areas of transformation of the constitutional state. This, of course, is related to the fact that the effective and humane management of refugee affairs was adapted to the prevailing legal order in harmony with the international human rights norms. At the same time we should be mindful of the fact that when the prevailing political interest demanded it, then, and

depending on the situation, the application of the (international) legal standards could be placed in brackets.

But the international influence did not prove to be one-sided; hence, the experience was also useful the other way around. The appearance of Romanian refugees in Hungary and the solution of their situation is almost a model tableau for the new migration wave that started in the 90's, after the collapse of the communist system, already from 1988 onward. Therefore, those experiences learned Hungarian solutions strongly contributed to the fact that the Western European countries received the migration wave in a relatively – though with delay – more prepared manner. Finally, in spite of the various mistakes and occasional failures, the newly formed migration system answered unknown before challenges with essentially operational solutions 20 years ago.