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Visions of Minority Hungarians in Transylvania: Prospects and Obstacles[1]

Introduction

Considerable confusion characterised the circles of Hungarian public life and thought in Transylvania in the summer of 2003. The political fault lines that divided the mother country had a conspicuous effect in Transylvania. Besides this, the clearest sign of confusion was perhaps that following the short, analytical silence ensued after the last, 7th Congress of the Democratic Alliance of the Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) held in Szatmár (Satu Mare) in January 2003, public life became strikingly lively (all the analytical silence managed to conclude was that, despite the hopes, no significant move had been made with respect to the policy of RMDSZ, advocate of the interests of ethnic Hungarians in Romania). The revived public life more and more often brought to the surface hardly reconcilable conceptions at the various fora of ethnic Hungarian public life concerning the future of the minority and the path that should be taken. Besides the discourse termed as the success propaganda of RMDSZ because it emphasises the significance of the political achievements (linguistic rights in administration, restitution of private, collective, and ecclesiastic properties) bullied out in the in the past 7–8 years (in a different interpretation: 2–3 years), not only those – moderate – critics edge in a word who, occasionally, do draw the attention to the price of these achievements. Besides them, the outlines of an increasingly marked conviction have become perceptible especially in the Székelyföld (Secuime). According to this conviction, the policies of RMDSZ advocate not the interests of the ethnic Hungarians in Romania, but Romanian political will in the Romanian political system. Therefore, these policies foreshadow a disaster with respect to the objectives of national and minority policies concerning the Hungarians as a whole and the ethnic Hungarians in Romania as well. The manner and circumstances in which the first important events of the otherwise rather natural development process toward different directions took place can also be interpreted as signs of confusion. These events were: the organisational change within Reform Tömörülés (Reform Group, RT), the convening and formation of the Initiating Committee of the Autonomy of the Hungarian National Council in Transylvania and the Hungarian National Community in Transylvania, and the registration of the Magyar Polgári Szövetség (Hungarian Civic Alliance, MPSZ) – a choice for those disappointed with RMDSZ –, as an independent organisation.

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[1] The present study is a revised version of the talk given at the "Ethnopolitical Discussion" organised by *Domus Hungarica* on 27 March 2003.

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The question as to who is right, seems well-founded. Are those right who believe that the vision of the desired achievements can be reached through the strategy of co-operation with the acting Romanian administration? Or are those right who offer a vision to the ethnic Hungarians in Romania based on the situation described by the notions: "oppressed national community" and "oppressive majority power that seeks to eliminate the community"?

Naturally, this dilemma does not cover all the possible alternatives concerning the visions of the minority. I firmly believe that a vision, which would embody the chance for a more profound influence on the processes, would have to take several further questions into account.

This study does not seek to answer these questions directly. In the present confusion, it is quite a challenge just to try to consider, more or less calmly, all the tasks that would have to be carried out in order that we could get nearer to more informed and less prejudiced answers given to the emerging questions. I will try to accomplish this through the critical interpretation of certain elements of the prevailing vision, and the enumeration and comparative analysis of possible alternatives.

I will overview three main topics: (1) following the discussion of a few instructive examples connected to the onerous legacy of national policy thought, (2) I will seek to sum up the current automatisms that have a negative influence on minority public thought with respect to the formation of a healthy vision, and finally (3) I will take into consideration those important directions of action, including alternatives that interpret the circumstances and the range of opportunities differently, which, I believe, should be considered by all those who take upon the responsibility of delineating a vision.

1. A Past to Be Digested

Should an investigator of the present, who lacks the comprehensive knowledge of a historian, try to find points of reference in the inheritance of the great predecessors that would help him understand his own age, he has numerous occasions to be amazed at the parallels that the recent chapter of the political history of ethnic Hungarians in Romania since 1989 has already presented in comparison with the happenings of the period between the two world wars; and amazed at all the noble thoughts and still topical ideas that have been suppressed in the region since 1920 by way of forcing a series of thinkers, endowed with some prophetic power and committed to easing the vital problems of ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania, to leave Transylvania with the intolerable feeling that their warning would be disregarded and that the vision they profess would remain an unviable path for the Hungarians in Transylvania.

Let me recall only two yet all the more dramatic examples: those of Miklós Krenner (Spectator) and Sándor Makkai. In the case of Spectator, most of whose writings can be read today as if they had been written to the people of today, it is

clear that he emigrated primarily because of the intellectual isolation and the feeling of being ignored. However, I feel there is something deep behind the actions of Makkai, his unexpected decision to emigrate, and the minority history riddle of his *It cannot be* thesis. Can these be connected to the fact that the events of the five years, which passed after the publication of *Magunk revíziója* [Our Self-Revision], all proved for the bishop that the revision he urged, the fundamental reformation of the self-observation and determination of the objectives by the Hungarians in Transylvania, could not take place in the given circumstances of that era.

The vision that unfolds from a few well-known sections of *Our Self-Revision* leaves no space for doubt:

> "Ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania," wrote Sándor Makkai in 1931, "have to take account of the facts that entered their life so decisively. Ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania, in order to survive, need the truth of life and the obedient compliance with this truth (...) There, we can hear the sad clattering of the carriages of expatriates and repatriates, and behold those thousands, who rejected the facts by having avoided their orders (...) All these attempts at rejection entail the false paths of self-deception and delusion, mistake and confusion for us, who stayed here, who are here, and who will have to remain here – observing the legal order – Hungarians forever."[2]

Further on, Makkai writes on what would have to be done for the realisation of the vision thus conceived:

> "The first and foremost task of Ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania is to revise their conception of the past in a way as to exclude prejudices hostile to life and establish a sound form of self-defence and self-assertion (...)"[3].

In order to accomplish this, no less would have been indispensable than

> "a critical approach to national spirit and past; the familiarity with and the application of facts instead of views and explanations; and a practical position taken on matters of life instead of moral truisms"[4].

We all know what happened following this rather practical programme declaration. The emigration of Sándor Makkai can be considered a factual, while the underlying *It cannot be* position a thematic proof revealing that the revision of the

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[2] Magunk revíziója [Our Self-Revision]. (1931) in: Makkai, Sándor: *Egyedül*, Kolozsvár, Erdélyi Szépmíves Céh, 215–216.
[3] op. cit. 217.
[4] op. cit. 254.

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objectives of self-assertion and community as delineated in the above-mentioned notions was a there and then unfeasible path for Hungarians in Transylvania. This is all the significance that could be attached to this in minority history should the experiences of the past fifty plus years had not indicated that we would have to return to the idea of self-revision again and again. Besides the sad clattering of the carriages of the expatriates, we have not yet found any other viable alternative.

Beyond the examples of the supplanted, like Miklós Krenner and Sándor Makkai, we can find edifying those experiences as well that were accumulated by those Transylvanian thinkers who opted for staying and found that only inner solitude and a lack of responses awaited them despite the moral superiority of their perseverance.

Dezső László, a leader of the *Erdélyi Fiatalok* [Transylvanian Youth] movement and one of those who remained faithful to Transylvania throughout their lives, set forth the main elements of a minority vision in 1935:

> "Real life in a minority starts with *I am*, continues with *I know*, and manifests in actions through *I want*. As soon as we get rid of the conceptions of the old world – we accept that we share a minority's fate, which is not a resumption of pre-world war Hungarian life but the beginning of a new Hungarian life, devoid of any historic analogy – the reflex of life stirs within us if we want to survive at all. We, the people who live in a minority, have to establish a whole new existence: our existence as an ethnic Hungarian minority. And this is a positive programme; a completely, fundamentally new programme."[5]

It is relatively easy to find, despite the ideological differences, those common elements in the warnings of Sándor Makkai and Dezső László that are recurrent not only in other visions in the history of thought of ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania subsequent to their work, but also in various programmes of action embraced by *Transylvanian Youth*, *Hitel* [Trust], the manifesto of the Meeting in Vásárhely, *Korunk* [Our Age] of the 1970s, the defectors' movements of the 1980s (*Ellenpontok* [Counterpoints], *Limes*, and *Kiáltó Szó* [Word Crying Out]), and the Working Group on Communication Anthropology in Csíkszereda (Miercurea-Ciuc), which started out, capitalising on a firm institutional history, after the changes of 1989. These programmes, although cannot be compared in all respects, share the conviction that critical self-knowledge and the "Metamorphosis Transylvania" that derives from it comprise an indispensable stage in the effective organisation of minority society. Considering this, it is rather odd that we should be still constrained to return to the same questions after 70 years; that, while life goes on driven usually by the will and interests of external forces, the continuously

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[5] Kisebbségi életünk alapkérdései [Fundamental Questions of Our Minority Life]. in: László, Dezső: *A kisebbségi lét ajándékai*, Kolozsvár, Minerva Könyvek, 1996, 92.

decreasing ethnic Hungarian community in Transylvania should reformulate, by way of their representatives, the vision based on the same unfeasible tasks; and should, from time to time, this minority turn out to be incapable of mobilising the energies needed to move on at last.

To demonstrate the details that may recur in history, let us touch upon a few further examples. The first is the position that the writings (1927) of one of the Spectators takes in connection to the situation of the Hungarian Party: it undertook the advocacy of ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania in those times but came to a crisis because of "inadequate organisation and little political skill", and the lost chance of inner democratisation. Spectator remarks "with a heavy heart" in May 1927:

> "I shall persevere in the principle of Hungarian unity. I cannot, however, maintain the old thesis of mine, which stated that the existence of two Hungarian parties in Romanian would be a tragedy. Not because I was deluded by the individuals but because, considering of the historical failures, I now feel the existence of a new Hungarian party not only possible but indispensable as well. The reason is clear and stems from a cruel reality. The existing Hungarian party could not integrate everywhere and entirely the democratic strata. This has to be the task of the new party. If it fails, however, these elements will dissolve into the Romanian parties, which have already carried off too many people. I had rather have two Hungarian parties than seeing part of the Hungarians scatter into Romanian parties."[6]

Ten years later, shortly before the dissolution of the National Hungarian Party, Dezső Albrecht, a leading ideologist of *Trust* summarised the essence of Hungarian politicising during the short-lived Romanian democracy as follows:

> "Hungarian public life (...) organised not a society but a rhetorical school, (...) it established a political order that guarded its influence jealously and draw the line between its existence and the other manifestations of life of the nation rigorously. The concept of national policy narrowed down to politicising, and the unity of national policy based on the co-operation between cultural, economic, and social policies and politics could not develop because of the preponderance of politics positioned high above the other manifestations of the life of nations. (...) Even our well-intentioned leaders turned a deaf ear to innovative changes, which could have brought a fresh breeze of life. According to their inherent convictions only their stratum was endowed with political knowledge and leadership skills. They feared that should the control of political life end up in the hands of others, who are strangers to their mentality because of their age or social status, that would result in the decay of the nation."[7]

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[6] Fagyosszentek után [After the Icemen]. in: Krenner, Miklós (Spectator): *Az erdélyi út*, Székelyudvarhely, Haáz Rezső Kulturális Egyesület, 1995, 145.

[7] Albrecht, Dezső: A második kör [The Second Circle]. in: Záhony, Éva (ed.): *Hitel. Kolozsvár 1935–1944*, Bethlen Gábor Könyvkiadó, 1991, Vol. I, 79.

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If we disregard the fact that some of the concepts had a different meaning in those times, we might infer from the quote that it was written by a present-day journalist in an anachronistic style. This, no matter how we look at it, may indicate no less than the recurrent inability of the Hungarians in Romania to develop and operate the institutions of democracy within their own community.

Mutatis mutandis, a further historical analogy lies underneath the parallel between the Vásárhely Meeting and the Forum of March convened by László Tőkés in Kolozsvár on 14 March 2003. Both were organised under the inspiration of the idea of re-established unity and a return to a vision deemed correct, and in response to the tyranny of political mentality. The initiating committee appointed by Bishop László Tőkés would have the task to establish the Hungarian National Council in Transylvania, which would become the leading body of the Autonomy of the Hungarian National Community in Transylvania and as such would "exercise autonomy". According to the bishop ousted from RMDSZ, the shortest path toward the unity of ethnic Hungarians in Romania would be if RMDSZ looked for and found its place in the framework of the Autonomy of the Hungarian National Community in Transylvania, and submitted to its leaders. An interesting parallel can be established between this initiative and the Hungarian Alliance that the Vásárhely Meeting "demanded emphatically". As an "ideal of popular organisation"[8] that would overarch all institutions of ethnic Hungarians in Romania imbued with the idea of unity, it thought to provide for the "comprehensive framework of national self-protection"[9].

It is interesting to note that Dezső Albrecht believed that the Hungarian Alliance was a

> "*moral principle*, which would have to manifest in the behaviour and co-operation methods of the existing institutions regardless of their organisational form. We look for, search for, and wait for those leaders who, having recognised the imperative of the moment, can work off their prejudice, forget about the hits given and received during the fights, and, with the seriousness and humility that the service of the nation requires, unite our institutions in creative work. Furthermore, we look for, search for, and develop the morale that can be independent enough to constrain our leaders, who are reluctant to co-operate, to co-operate, and strong enough to substitute them if necessary. We do not have another twenty years to be wasted on internal struggles"[10]

These are, again, oddly topical lines, since the basic question behind the initiatives of the 2003 Forum of March of Kolozsvár is whether the leaders of the Hungarians in Transylvania and the whole of public thinking among the Hungarians in

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[8] Mikó, Imre: *Huszonkét év* [Twenty-two Years]. Budapest: A "Studium" Kiadása, 1941, 192.

[9] Dániel, Antal: Egy évvel a Vásárhelyi Találkozó után [One Year After the Meeting in Vásárhely]. in: Záhony, Éva (ed.): op. cit., 117.

[10] Albrecht, Dezső: Magyar Szövetség [Hungarian Alliance]. in: Záhony, Éva (ed.): op. cit., 120. Emphasis added in the original.

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Transylvania can be expected to achieve what it could not realise in a similarly decisive moment 70 years ago. Dezső Albrecht set forth the following diagnosis (a message to us as well) about the minority policy conception prevalent in his times dominated, in his interpretation, by the National Hungarian Party:

> "Although we do not know what the Hungarian Alliance could have developed into should its operation have been allowed". It seems plausible, however, that the correct interpretation of national policy would have required "the independence of cultural and economic organisations from the political party. Or their existence as equal partners, so that their co-operation, presumably underlined by a higher national policy conception, could embrace all fields of national life."[11]

A dramatic realisation of Dezső László, connected to the fact that the vision he proclaimed would have to face serious challenge and even rivalry, offers a further example of parallels. In 1939, only 4 years after the above quoted lines, he formulated the following thoughts:

> "It is a tragedy of present Hungarian life that the most valuable forces in the life of the nation turn against each other in the lack of a single collectively accepted impelling force, and mutually slow down each other (...) One of the reasons of the recent confusion of our minority community is that we have not had the courage to face the importance of the new national trend [the *new, total, and integral conception of the nation* - LS] and our relationships with it sincerely and openly. The most universal value of the spiritual possessions of our minority, the Transylvanian character or the conception of Transylvania, receives the gravest accusation from this new national trend. Recently, it has been declared openly that the conception of Transylvania was so much of a liberal and humanist idea that it was totally unfit for the protection of national values. Therefore, its conscious advocacy would mean open opposition with the conception of the nation."[12]

Today, the "new, total, and integral conception of the nation" means the union of the Hungarian nation in a cultural sense transcending all borders. From the perspective of some 50 years, the situation with respect to the unresolved relationship between these parts of the nation and the mother country, has not changed a bit.

In possession of more knowledge on history, we could probably go on enumerating analogies. Yet, I believe that these provide enough examples in order that we could conclude: it would have be useful to prepare a study on the changes of thought with respect to minority visions in Transylvania since 1920; on the more or less detailed community programmes that offered short-time prospects for the persons who assumed a public role in the name of the community; and on their results and the reasons of their failure.

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[11] Albrecht, Dezső: A második kör [The Second Circle]. in: Záhony, Éva (ed.): op. cit., 79.
[12] Új erdélyi tájékozódás [New Orientation in Transylvania]. in: László, Dezső: op. cit., 139–140.

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A work prepared with due thoroughness could offer valuable insights as to what were, beyond the regulations that history forced upon us, those decisions (or the lack thereof) brought by us and our leaders that could be blamed for the failure of the more or less competently elaborated visions. Decisions, which can be blamed for the absence of reactions to the activity of so many committed minority thinkers of ours, their gradual isolation from public life, or their emigration from Transylvania.

2. Present-day Automatisms in Minority Public Thinking

Should we have the indicated study on minority visions at our disposal, it would be a less risky and more objective task what I shall attempt in the following section: the compilation of a problem inventory comprising of the conditions and automatisms that hamper the formulation of a vision, which would be more available and could be more comprehensively embraced by the ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania.

I shall categorise the problems in four groups: (2.1.) prevalence of dilettantism in public speech; (2.2.) lack of themes in public life; (2.3.) no accountability with respect to one's role in public life and political programmes; (2.4.) lacking tradition and institutions of consensus-making. All four groups include several problems, most of which would require separate and more extensive analysis. In the present study I can only outline them.

2.1. Prevalence of Dilettantism in Public Speech

The general consequence of this widely present phenomenon is that almost anything can be stated in the fora of Hungarian public life in Romania without the need to justify and support that statement or indicate its source. Furthermore, no formal or informal sanctions exist that could retaliate for these statements. (Taking upon the odium that precipitates because I cite an example out of its context to illustrate these cases, I shall present the following statement: "In the 20th century, the two terrible world wars and the 50 years of Communism, out of which 25 years were suffered under the Ceauşescu regime, did not altogether manage to cause so much damage to the ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania than these 10 years, during which one group and the same person led the Hungarians [this person is Béla Markó, whom the person making the statement compares to the Byelorussian Lukashenko on the grounds that he was the only one besides Béla Markó who had a chance to "exert control over his country, party, or national community undisturbed for ten years" – SL]."[13])

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[13] Makkay, József: A Magyarok Világszövetsége hű marad eredeti céljaihoz. Beszélgetés Patrubány Miklóssal, az MVSZ elnökével [The World Federation of Hungarians Sticks to its Original Objectives. Conversation with Miklós Patrubány, President of the Federation]. in: *Szabadság*, 29 January 2003.

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Another aspect of this issue is the essayist-moralising manner of the public discourse, in which the register and approach of public policy should prevail instead. This is connected to the inheritance of Hungarian public thinking in Romania. According to this, Hungarians in Transylvania studied public matters in the past usually through the instruments offered by literature and journalism, since they had not the appropriate institutions. This approach lacked the information and statistics so fundamental in the analysis of various phenomena, which specialised institutions produce continuously and with respect to the most varied fields of life in the case of communities in possession their own state. If we start out from a possible definition of public policy, according to which "public policy is the creation/generation of problems that can be resolved" (Aaron Wildawsky)[14], it becomes clear why we encounter so many problems in the public discourse of Hungarians in Romania that either have no solution or, when they have, the path leading to it is completely blurred.

Another related problem is that public thinking does not call for any research, which could lay the foundations of collective self-knowledge and visions better and more professionally. Furthermore, when such research does take place, public thinking disregards the results and conclusions carelessly.

The result of all this is what Sándor Szilágyi N. once described with the operation of a "dream machinery"[15]: a complex fabric of mutually lenient competences that manage to keep unaccountable the promises on the public agenda with seemingly unbreakable coherence. Such promises include: "the constitutionally guaranteed system of autonomy"; the autonomy of the Hungarian national community," which "is established after a general, secret and direct ballot (based on electoral registers prepared with the observance of the principle of free choice of identity)", and "the conformity of which is guaranteed by the state through separate legislation"[16]; "the institutional system of collective autonomies based on the principle of internal autonomy"[17]; and the utopian vision of a Hungarian nation unified across the borders.

2.2. Lack of Themes in Public Life

The lack of themes in public life means, in my interpretation, that at public debates considered automatically decided questions not on the agenda and not subjected to analysis dominate public thinking on the status and future prospects of the Hungarians in Transylvania.

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[14] Iris Geva-May–Aaron Wildawsky: *An Operational Approach to Policy Analysis: The Craft*, Boston–Dordrecht–London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997.

[15] Szilágyi N., Sándor: Emlékeztető az RMDSZ belső választásainak ügyében [Memo on the Internal Elections in RMDSZ], in: *Krónika*, 19–20 October 2002.

[16] *Programmódosító javaslatok* [Proposals to Amending the Programme], 7th RMDSZ Congress, Szatmárnémeti, 31 January – 2 February 2003.

[17] Totó, T. Tibor: *Közösségi érdekképviseletünk reformja. A polgári alternatíva* [Reforming Our Community Advocacy. The Civil Alternative]. Manuscript

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Illusions and prejudices, the consequences of which have never been considered, lay burden on public discourse regarding issues like:

– *Trianon* (The president of the World Federation of Hungarians can easily declare in connection to it that "those communities of the Hungarian nation that consider themselves as belonging to the World Federation have wiped out the legacy of Trianon"[18]. On the other hand, it is possible to refer back to it in trains of thought on corrupt practices, used by Zsolt Attila Borbély at one place. I would call the approach "voluntarily undertaken consciousness of Trianon" that challenges the right of those, who visit their homeland to look at "the pines, acidulous water, and the old moustached Székely", to state their opinion on the main issues of Hungarian politics in Transylvania[19])[20];

– *ethnic Hungarian identity in Transylvania*; more exactly, questions related to it. Questions, which have not been treated satisfactorily and with scientific care, but which are constantly pervaded by ideological bias according to the points of views of a Hungarian nation in a cultural sense, a sense of "Romanianness", or a blurred Transylvanianism (which does not take its consequences into account and recently has often made use of the modern vocabulary of regionalism);

– the *relationship between Hungarians in Transylvania and the Romanian state* (here and there the following statements can be read on this relationship: "concerning the essentials of life, there is an irresolvable conflict between the oppressed ethnic community and the oppressive majority power that seeks to liquidate this community"[21], that "the whole of the Romanian politics opposes the part of the Hungarians who want to survive and thrive"[22], or that "would it be possible to get rid of the mind and soul destroying influence of the Romanian state so that we could manage our fate ourselves"[23]);

– the *relationship with the Hungarian state* (the still not satisfactorily resolved debates connected to the Status Law and the recently filed applications for dual citizenship brought numerous unresolved problems to the surface);

– the *question of coexistence*, consistently disregarded by public thinking among ethnic Hungarians in Romania as if its consequences could be escaped and as if the mutual acceptance of the political institutions of coexistence could be avoided in the course of the realisation of the visions of ethnic Hungarians in Romania;

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[18] Makkay, József: op. cit.

[19] Borbély, Zsolt Attila: Összmagyar szemlélet vagy lelki Trianon [All-Hungarian Approach or Spiritual Trianon]. in: *HUNSOR Hírfutár*, 26 September 2002.

[20] The absurd consequences of the connected trains of thought on corrupt practices are remarkably exposed by Horváth, Andor: A nosztalgia visszája [The Wrong Side of Nostalgia]. in: *Erdélyi Riport* Vol. II. Issue 4, 24–25.

[21] Magyar alternatíva Erdélyben [Hungarian Alternative in Transylvania]. in: *HUNSOR Hírfutár*, 15, 17, 19 January 2003.

[22] Borbély, Zsolt Attila: op. cit.

[23] Borbély, Zsolt Attila: Vészfék [Emergency Break], in: *HUNSOR Hírfutár*, 21 October 2002.

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– the question of *autonomy* and the *various forms of autonomy* (of which we can state that "it would have been a question of Hungarian political will" to "accept the specific legally codified forms of collective autonomy, that is, the autonomy statutes"[24]);
– the *question of internal democracy* and the way its institutions could be developed (The Operative Council of RMDSZ declares on this: "One of the greatest values of RMDSZ is internal democracy, the coexistence of honest ideas, tolerance, and variety. The intolerance and short-sightedness of László Tőkés endangers this internal democracy, since, should a body decide against his will, he does all he can to annul that decision, even institutes proceedings in Bucharest against our Hungarian advocacy organisation."[25]);
– the nature and tasks of *Hungarian civil society in Romania*[26].

2.3. No Accountability with Respect to One's Role in Public Life and the Political Programmes

The result of the lack of accountability with respect to one's role in public life is, in my opinion, that it becomes impossible, first, to assess minority politics performance openly and, second, to evaluate the results, and, based on the evaluation, adjust the visions periodically in conformity with new developments or changing expectations.

The lacking accountability of political programmes bears also the results that the success propaganda of the current top leadership of RMDSZ gets along quite smoothly in the Hungarian public sphere in Romania inspite of the statements: "RMDSZ proved to be the most effective one among the Romanian political parties in the realisation of Romanian political objectives" and that "RMDSZ (...) represents Romanian political will within the Hungarian community"[27].

A further result of the lacking minority politics audit (or rather: the lack of competent authorities to perform the audit) is that indisputable achievements become contestable and concealable, while legitimate criticism becomes ignorable. This sustains the feelings of confusion and collective failure in the circles of ethnic Hungarians in Romania, continuously reproducing the appearance that "there is a yawning gap between emancipating and servile approaches and between pro-autonomy forces and collaborators not only with respect to tools but also objectives."[28]

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[24] Magyar alternatíva Erdélyben [Hungarian Alternative in Transylvania]. in: *HUNSOR Hírfutár*, 15, 17, 19 January 2003.

[25] Quoted by Borbély, Zsolt Attila: Vészfék [Emergency Break], in: *HUNSOR Hírfutár*, 21 October 2002.

[26] At the initiative of József Somai and Barna Bodó, this latter problem was put on the agenda in daily *Krónika*. This can be cited here as a good example because it triggered almost no reaction and vanished into the position of those who advocated the official RMDSZ civil policy.

[27] Magyar alternatíva Erdélyben [Hungarian Alternative in Transylvania]. in: *HUNSOR Hírfutár*, 15, 17, 19 January 2003.

[28] Ibid.

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The more and more explicit manifestation of the thought that radical alternatives can indeed be advocated in Romanian public discourse is another phenomenon connected to accountability. Attila György made the following statement, which has since been quoted on various occasions, in reaction to one of the propositions of the open letter by Sándor Csoóri addressed to Béla Markó:

> "In conclusion, hardly any other path remains for the ethnic Hungarians who want to survive, persist, and thrive than, despite all the risks this will involve, trying the untrodden path: the establishment of a new, more consistent and honest political advocacy commitment, or even the boycott of Romanian political life by bringing civic disobedience and foreign relations into the limelight."[29] In reaction to the same proposition, Zsolt Attila Borbély writes that "this road [the one proposed by Sándor Csoóri] means lobbying in the West, conscious internal self-development, economic expansion, and cultural progres. Besides all this, should the work in Parliament be useless, it would mean the quitting of Parliament as well."[30]

He writes in another place:

> "For the issue of minority politics is an issue of security policy. If we, instead of emphasising that there is only one token to the stability of the region and it is Hungarian autonomy in Transylvania, convey the message to NATO that Romania has successfully resolved the minority issue, we cannot expect anything good in the near future."[31]

The following passage is from the unsigned document entitled *Proclamation of Hungarian Intellectuals in Transylvania* dated on 24 January 2003, which was disseminated through various Internet newsletters:

> "Our nation is in decay! We lose sight of our national objectives, we are unable to represent our community. (...) The fatal division and the controversies among us wear us out and weaken us. There are some who undertake the service of values alien from us. Others are overcome by the lethargy of meaninglessness and uselessness. (...) This is how we decay, this is how we give up our last fortresses, and this is how our nation drifts into peril. (...) We call upon our people, churches, and advocacy organisations (...) to join forces for the assertion of our interests and rights. We are almost the only people in Europe that has no right to autonomy and yet, we have eliminated every intention of fighting for it from our practices. (...) It should be in the focus consistently and we should fight for it. Not

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[29] Quoted, among others, by Borbély, Zsolt Attila: Vészfék [Emergency Break], in: *HUNSOR Hirfutár*, 21 October 2002.

[30] Borbély, Zsolt Attila: Összmagyar szemlélet vagy lelki Trianon [All-Hungarian Approach or Spiritual Trianon]. in: *HUNSOR Hirfutár*, 26 September 2002.

[31] Borbély, Zsolt Attila: Vészfék [Emergency Break], in: *HUNSOR Hirfutár*, 21 October 2002.

in arms but in Parliament, with the instruments provided by law and international law and order. Let us have a common objective: the fight for our autonomy! (...) So that we could have a home in this homeland!"

I presume that Sándor Fodor wrote the following statement in reply to the similar, and, on the level of common talk, even more radically formulated versions of this zeal:

> "I would bow my head in respect in front of the memory of those who sacrificed and would sacrifice their life so that the status of Hungarians could become similar to the Swedish in Finland, the Germans in Belgium, Austrians in Italy (South Tyrol), and the Catalans in Spain. However, nobody should expect me to respect those who want others to become the ones "killed in action" in our struggle for the attention of the world."[32]

2.4. Lacking Tradition and Consensus-Making Institutions

The lacking tradition and institutions of consensus-making, which some call the "Hungarian curse", exert a destructive influence not only on Hungarian internal affairs in Romania, but also on the relationships developed and maintained with the Romanian majority and the most important political players of the mother country.

This disastrous inheritance hinders the appearance of integrating figures and institutions, and maintains and continuously reproduces the practice of parallel discourses, which fail to react to each other, in the public thinking of Hungarians in Transylvania.

The picture presented above is far from being complete and it is far less subtle than it should be. Yet, it might be enough to help us consider the conditions that, first of all, encumber the elaboration of the visions – which could be taken seriously and which would take into account the criteria of feasibility – for the Hungarians in Transylvania; and second, prevent wider circles of Hungarians in Romania from adopting a vision elaborated with the above-mentioned criteria in mind. As long as there is no duly representative group or initiating body, which would manage to put the action plan of the elimination of the above-mentioned deficiencies on the agenda of Hungarian public life in Romania, and which would have the steadfastness to supervise and control the implementation of this plan, we will have to acquiesce in the fact that the stage of Hungarian public life in Romania is dominated by a farce of competing political ambitions. At the same time, the not really promising course of contemporary Hungarian minority history is drifting along in the backstage.

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[32] Fodor, Sándor: Veszélyt érzek… [I Feel Danger]. in: *Szabadság*, 26 February 2003.

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To illustrate what tasks an eventual initiating body would have to undertake, I shall discuss a few questions to which a Hungarian vision in Transylvania would have to find an answer in order to eliminate the deficiencies enumerated above.

3. Directions of Action and Alternatives for a Possible Vision

When pondering about the near and distant future of the Hungarian minority in Romania and, within it, that of RMDSZ, I believe we have to start out from two important circumstances. The first circumstance is that the organisation that has undertaken the political advocacy of the ethnic Hungarians in Romania has made it into the role of a key, on occasions, an unavoidable factor in Romanian domestic politics and on a political stage where the Hungarian and Romanian states are the actors. The second circumstance is that it had to pay a great price for this. This price was the resignation about certain elements of its programme, the damaged internal and organisational democracy, and the widening gap between the party and its voters and the community of the minority society. A further price of the political success emphasised by the leadership of RMDSZ is that the organisation is gradually becoming a tool – a client – of the governing party, which reveals authoritarian reflexes more and more often, through its willingness to accept compromises, which subordinate the interest of the whole society in the consolidation of democracy and the institutionalisation of human rights, to the short-term objectives of the advocacy of minority rights. The leadership of the party is to be blamed also for the fact that RMDSZ is not present with its full weight and importance in the international movement striving to assert the rights of minorities as a particular category of universal human rights.

Starting out from this assessment of the current situation, I shall comment upon the possible vision alternatives in connection to three problems: (3.1.) national integration, (3.2.) democratic advocacy of will and community organisation, and (3.3.) the international dimensions of the fight for minority rights.

3.1. Questions of National Integration to Be Answered

The behaviour and position of the politicians and spiritual leaders of ethnic Hungarians in Romania have been perceptively influenced for a while now by the circumstance that no professional debate has taken place on the appropriate level in the Hungarian public sphere on the questions of national integration. Without trying to foreshadow the outcome of this debate, which will have to take place sooner or later, we have to touch upon at least three aspects of the possible themes of the problem: (3.1.1.) the question of our relationship with the Romanian state, (3.1.2.) our relations with the Hungarian state, and (3.1.3) the problems of the internal, community integration of the minority society. I shall comment upon these in the following section.

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3.1.1. Relationship with the Romanian State[33]

Considering that on the basis of all the accumulated experience it would be irresponsible to entertain the illusion that if we want to survive as a community in our homeland, we can achieve this even *in contrast to the will* of the Romanian state, the responsible and thorough examination of alternatives concerning the relationship of Hungarians in Transylvania with the Romanian state appears to be a pressing need.

The most marked ideas in this respect have unfolded in the framework of the "Brasov model". This model, in the spirit of the resolutions of the RMDSZ Congress held in Brassó (Brasov) in 1993, regarded the Hungarians in Romania as a political community and sought to achieve its integration into the Romanian state structures as such.

The minority policy conception referred to as the "Brasov autonomy model" was characteristic of the early period of the post-1989 history of Hungarians in Transylvania, and can be interpreted as an answer to the presumed possibilities of integration and political mobility. Ideologically it reflected a "state in a state" minority society organisation model, which, starting out from the mobilising capabilities of a movement profiting from identity ideology, presented the demand on autonomy strategy. This approach, however, did not make the separation of functional components – the community and territorial dimensions – possible. With respect to political advocacy, the model functioned as a federation of the territorial organisations and institutionalised the operation of political platforms. However, following 1995 it became increasingly obvious that, as a power structure, it established a political structure that possessed the reserves of centralisation as well. As a deficiency of the model, we have to point out that it concealed the probable consequences of the integration of RMDSZ into the Romanian political system as a party (which was inevitable because of the circumstances). The fact that the Brasov autonomy model used up its reserves, spent on the renewal of minority policy, rather quickly is a further deficiencies (I shall touch upon other aspects of this question later on).

The depletion of the Brasov paradigm went parallel with the federation's inevitable internal centralisation,which was a precondition of the integration of RMDSZ into the Romanian party system. On the level of direct political action this was accompanied by two, mutually reinforcing processes: on the one hand a transformation of the discourse, through which RMDSZ brought those components of its programme into the limelight. These components could be connected

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[33] I discuss the options concerning the relationship between the Hungarian Minority in Transylavania by drawing on certain parts of the study prepared by Miklós Bakk, Andor Horváth, and myself. Cf. Bakk, Miklós–Horváth, Andor–Salat, Levente: Az RMDSZ 2003-ban – útkeresés integrációs határpontokon [RMDSZ in 2003 – Exploring the Possibilities at Integration Cut-off Points]. in: *Krónika*, 25 January 2003.)

to the reform-minimum[34] outlined in the rhetoric of the Romanian political parties. On the other hand, the coalition potential of RMDSZ has been gradually increasing since 1996. Despite all the tensions, which stemmed from the fact that the legitimacy producing operation of the Brasov model gradually came into conflict with the requirements of the integration into the Romanian party system, the integration had some important achievements. First, it contributed to the development and strengthening of trust in the direction of the Hungarian elite in Transylvania (and Hungarians in general). Second, it facilitated the practical implementation of certain components of the RMDSZ programme, which could be inserted into the above-mentioned reform-minimum.

Following the depletion of the Brasov autonomy model, three mutually exclusive variants of minority policy strategy can be considered with respect to the relationship of the Hungarians in Transylvania with the Romanian state: (3.1.1.1.) the rethinking of the autonomy model and its more careful and consistent implementation after having taken the circumstances into account; (3.1.1.2.) the acceptance of the consequences of integration into the Romanian political system openly and according to an established programme; (3.1.1.3.) the rejection of the Romanian political system as an unalterable circumstance and the consideration of alternatives that could make a "breakout" from that system possible. The current political practice is characterised by the continuous mixing of certain elements of these three alternatives, which is untenable if only because the visions of the community that point into different directions with respect to these consequences require different strategies from a public representation that takes itself and the requirement of accountability seriously.

3.1.1.1. Moral Instances Instead of Constitutionality

The ten years that have passed since the Brasov Congress prove that the elaborators of the autonomy model and the supporters of its implementation did not take into consideration neither the restrictive conditions inherent in the Romanian political system nor the state and the efficiency of Hungarian minority society in Romania. I shall not set out to overview what would be needed for an adequately nuanced minority institutional framework, which could balance the functions of social control appropriately, to perform all those functions that the Brasov paradigm of minority autonomy would have been destined to fulfil in the life of Hungarians in Romania.

The attempt which seeks to examine the chances of the rehabilitation of the Brasov model has to start out from the presupposition (which we shall not subject to criticism here) that the institutional presence of autonomy and its successful

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[34] See on this the excellent thesis of: Márton, János *A romániai magyar társadalom sajátos kérdései az RMDSZ 1996–2002 közötti programjaiban és politikájában* [Particular Issues in Hungarian Society in Romania in the Programmes and Politics of RMDSZ Between 1996 and 2002].

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operation depends exclusively on the will of the community and, as such, remains independent of both the conditions of the Romanian political system and the approach of relevant players in the international arena. This hypothesis means no less in the language of political science but that the Hungarians in Romania consider themselves an autonomous political community – at least according to one of the competing discourses of the political elite of the minority.

Let us accept this hypothesis as a starting point and examine what follows from it. We can find several definitions of the concept of political community in modern political science literature. However, their majority is closely connected to the idea of sovereignty: political communities are usually interpreted as state formations recognised by the international community. Recently, thanks to the attempts at the theoretical analysis and practical transcendence of those tensions and conflicts between the autonomy principle and the sovereignty principle, which captured the international community's attention especially with respect to democratising multinational states, certain opinions appeared stating that one has to take into consideration the conditions of competing political communities in ethnoculturally sharply divided societies. In the context of such an approach[35], the concept of political community infers that the community aspiring to the said status: (1) is in possession the institutions of centralised decision-making and implementation that can ensure the effective operation of the community objective definition and resource allocation; (2) is in possession, as much as it can be, of the monopoly of political authority and legitimate force; (3) is the bailee of political identity and loyalty based on periodically renewed support. The three functions are referred to instrumental, coercive, and identity displaying functions. In the case the community that aspires to the said status is a properly functioning, complete political community, then these functions mutually maintain each other and continuously reproduce the conditions of their efficiency.

If we look at the Brasov autonomy model from the perspective of this criteria system and try to interpret and develop it further, we can draw the following conclusions.

(1) With respect to the instrumental function, the Brasov model is, in theory, adequately balanced, since it includes decision-making and executive bodies competent in defining the objectives and allocating the resources. The problems that occurred with respect to this function in the past years were connected to the gradually diminishing role of the decision-making bodies, accompanied by the parallel increase in the importance of the executive bodies (the Managing Board and the Operative Council).

(2) The deficiencies of the model become more obvious with respect to the coercive function: neither the Federal Code Supervisory Board nor the Federal Ethics and Disciplinary Board could consistently ensure that decisions were made independent of the federal leadership's interests. Fur-

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[35] Don MacIver (ed.): *The Politics of Multinational States*, London, MacMillan Press, 1999, 4.

thermore, both boards proved to be unable to implement their decisions effectively and fully. Accordingly, it is legitimate to ask whether the federation organised according to the Brasov model possessed the monopoly of political authority and legitimate force in its own sphere of authority or not.

(3) RMDSZ, which proceeded in the spirit of the Brasov model met the requirements of the identity displaying function from formal aspects, since its results at the elections have been rather uniform. However, there are increasingly more analysts who point out that, in lack of alternative and, therefore, competition, ethnic voting can be considered neither a reliable touchstone of loyalty nor an authoritative feedback mechanism for the support of the defined objectives.[36]

The lack of certain functions of a complete political community and the gradual disappearance of others contributed to the fact that the federation started to function as a political party from various respects, the legitimacy of which could be considered adequately grounded exclusively with respect to the Romanian political system.

On the basis of all this, two fundamental corrections would have to be made for the rehabilitation of the Brasov model: first, mechanisms would have to be established for the prevention of the monopolisation of legitimacy and, second, the effective management of the coercive function would have to be ensured.

The prevention of the monopolisation of legitimacy would infer, first of all, that the federal leadership could not modify the codes that describe the powers of the bodies as its pleasure. The formulation of the Constitution of the Hungarians in Romania would be indispensable. The first step toward it would be the convention of a Constitutional National Council, which could dispose of the rules of its election and, later on, would perform the tasks of the Hungarian Minority Parliament in Romania that would appoint and monitor the accountability of the executive bodies. The endeavour of the effective performance of the coercive function would infer no less amongst the given circumstances but that the constitutional authorities be substituted with moral instances, which would prove sufficient at all times with respect to the internal disputes of the community.[37]

We do not know the answer, but we still have to formulate the question: on the basis of the happenings of the past 12 years, can we hope that the Hungarian minority society in Romania possesses the reserves – primarily human resource and equally important moral reserves – necessary to accomplish all this? In this respect, first we have to answer the question as to how homogeneous the community of the Hungarians in Transylvania can be considered in the sense defined by Bibó, that is, based on the unity in "the correct definition and undertaking of

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[36] Bárdi, Nándor: op. cit.

[37] László Tőkés, honorary president of the organisation, instituted proceedings in order to force the leadership of RMDSZ the observation of previously made decisions and the statute.

tasks on the basis of the perception of reality" and whether it demonstrates a demand and willingness to "take part in joint undertakings."[38] As opposed to this, the experience of the "disintegration of collective forms"[39] characterises the community. It is an everyday experience that the members of the community integrate into various local, professional, and many other ethnically not a bit segregated networks and structures according to their individual interests.

The situation has become even more serious since currently only the leadership of RMDSZ could initiate the convention of the Constitutional National Council with due legitimacy. It could take actions in this respect on the basis of various approaches: it could apply the corporative principle, starting out from the functional sub-systems of minority society (elected bodies of representatives, positions in local government, civil society, minority publicity, cultural institutions, educational and knowledge producing institutions, and churches); or it could apply the achievement principle and invite figures to perform these historic duties who have accumulated lasting merits in the organisation of the community in the past ten years. That RMDSZ does not act (or in the case it does not act) can be seen as a proof that this strategic alternative is not reconcilable with its interests.

3.1.1.2. PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF THE DIVISION OF POWER

With its recent "party-like" practice RMDSZ has basically undertaken *de facto* integration into the Romanian political system; it has integrated into the Romanian party system in a way that makes the achieving of results, which are impressive from a certain aspect, possible.[40]

According to several analysts, the coalition potential of RMDSZ developed by 2000 (the touchstone of which is its role in the government between 1996 and 2000 and, following November 2000, the coalition agreements signed with the ruling governmental party) have raised the possibility of the development of consociational democracy in Romania.[41] Accordingly, a government consensus would be

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[38] Bibó, István: *Válogatott tanulmányok* [Selected Studies], Budapest: Gondolat, 1990, Vol. II, 615.

[39] op. cit., 616.

[40] According to certain analysts, the statute amendments adopted by the 7th RMDSZ Congress can be perceived as manifestations of this proinciple on the level of principles.

[41] Gabriel Andreescu and Dan Pavel raised the question first in Romanian journalism. Later a debate of a professional level ensued in *Provincia* as well. See: Molnár, Gusztáv: A konszociációs demokrácia esélyei Erdélyben [The Chances of Consociational Democracy in Transylvania]. *Provincia*, October 2000; Bakk, Miklós: Az eredettől a kezdetig [From the Origin to the Beginning]. *Provincia*, November 2000; Gabriel Andreescu: Az RMDSZ kormányon maradása jelentené a román konszenzuális demokrácia első szakaszát?[RMDSZ to Stay on Government – The First Phase of Romanian Consensual Democracy?]. *Provincia*, November 2000.; Szász, Alpár Zoltán: A demokrácia modelljei Romániában – esélyek és realitások [Democracy Models in Romania – Chances and Realities].*Provincia*, March 2001.; Kántor, Zoltán: A konszociáció Erdélyben. Folyamatok és modellek [Consociation in Transylvania. Processes and Models]. *Provincia*, April 2001.; Gabriel Andreescu: A Szociáldemokrata Párt és az RMDSZ megállapodása [The Agreement Between the Social Democratic Party and RMDSZ]. *Provincia*, February 2002.

the model to bring stability and positive results with respect to the future of Hungarians in Romania. This government consensus would grant governmental positions to RMDSZ, the (maybe mutual) right to veto in a few questions concerning the preservation and reproduction of minority culture, and would establish some political-institutional guarantees to accompany that (and ensure proportionality in certain fields).

The consociational model entails government by an elite cartel in societies deeply divided into political subcultures. It aims at establishing stable democracy amongst the circumstances of segmented political culture. Its constituents are: great coalition that comprises most segments of society (1), the assertion of the principle of proportionality in the election system, the employment of civil servants, and the allocation of public money (2), sectorial or segmental forms of autonomy (3), and mutual or minority veto (4)[42].

There is an ongoing debate in contemporary political science on whether the consociational model of Lijphart has a normative or only an empiric relevance value.[43] This rather exciting debate could take us far but let me mention only two of its consequences with respect to Hungarians in Romania. One stems from the early but still embraced conviction of Lijphart that the consociational model does have public policy relevance. More specifically, the political leaders of culturally divided societies need encouragement to implement political innovations that would endorse the spirit of the consociational model. With respect to Hungarians in Romania, the main question is not whether the (theoretically necessary) conditions are ripe in Romania for the implementation of the model, but whether there is political will that would promote and realise it. The other consequence worthy of consideration is connected to the warning of the opponents of the consociational model with respect to the concessions related to three concepts introduced by Lijphart (consociational, consensual, and power-sharing democracy) that result in deviation from the traditional Westminster model of majority democracy. It is rather clear that these statements are usually manifestations of more or less open hostility towards minorities.

Therefore, the following questions can be raised with respect to the prospects of minority visions: 1. Can the increased coalition potential of RMDSZ and its participation in the government, which seems continuous and more and more maintainable, lead to the development of a Romanian consociational model; 2. If there is some chance for this, what bearing this strategy will have on the survival objectives of the Hungarians in Transylvania?

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[42] Arend Lijphart: *Democrația în societățile plurale*, Polirom, Iaşi, 2002.
[43] Alpár Zoltán Szász exposed this dilemma most markedly in the above-mentioned professional debate. Interesting recent development of the debate: Matthijs Bogaards: The Uneasy Relationship Between Empirical and Normative Types in Consotiational Theory, in: *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 2000/10, 395–423, systematic critique; and the reply to it: Arend Lijphart: Definitions, Evidence, and Policy. A Response to Matthijs Bogaards' Critique, in: *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 2000/10, 425–431.

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Several conditions have to be met in order that RMDSZ could represent the Hungarians in Transylvania, an institutionally defined "pillar" of Romanian society, genuinely and effectively. We can conclude from the way the institutional (government technical) conditions – proportionality in the employment of civil servants and the allocation of public money, the veto – have been enforced so far, that currently these do not constitute the rules of co-operation but they themselves are subject to and result from random bargains as well. That is, the coalition potential of RMDSZ means basically the opportunity for the federation to enforce the principles, which are the principles that constitute the system itself in functioning consociational state system, occasionally, and in a specific or random form (sometimes in the form of secret political bargains that serve the individual interests of the political elite).

Not only the constitutional ambiguities, which make clientele development possible in the Romanian political system, are responsible for the undermining of the chances of a consociational system, but also RMDSZ. For the coalition potential of the federation reflects its conformity to a belated "political structure", maintained by a Romanian society, which lags behind in the development of its middle class. This does not leave a chance for the evolution of the consociational model. Since the complete and effective division of the branches of government have not been carried out in Romania, RMDSZ cannot limit itself to seek its objectives on the level of legislation and political decisions only: the implementation of the legislation and the achievement of specific results requires RMDSZ to build upon the clientele development processes of the Romanian governmental parties. This, however, facilitates the reproduction of an "elite structure" within the federation and makes the Hungarian elite in Romania resemble the "elite structure" within the Romanian parties.

RMDSZ violates the logics of the consociational model by clinging to the ambiguity based on a permanence of randomness (by reproducing continuously the collective illusion of internal autonomy on the level of political discourse and, at the same time integrating organically into the Romanian political system on the level of political practice) in two ways: (1) it does not endorse it openly and with pragmatic consistency what this model could offer to the Hungarians in Romania; (2) it fails to make use of those opportunities for political bargaining in the course of which it could make the Romanian political leadership accountable for everything entailed by the consequent implementation of this model, which seems clearly advantageous in the process of Romanian integration.

The implementation of the consociational model in Romania would be important for the Hungarians in Transylvanian for several reasons. The more visible and effective integration of the representatives of the Hungarians into the Romanian political system could have a relevant confidence-bursting effect in the medium term, which, in the long run, could facilitate – essentially in conformity with EU norms – the reform of the Romanian state and political structure. This might even result in the constitutional institutionalisation of the conception of

internal autonomy, which might seem rather naive for the time being, and which the Romanian political elite has been recurrently refusing with reference to the "danger Hungarians constitute".

3.1.1.3. ALTERNATIVE FOR BREAKING OUT OF THE SYSTEM: THE REGIONAL PATH

According to analysts who orient themselves according to the current trends of Romanian political reality, the Romanian political system, which embraces the principle of reform minimum, does not augur well in the short and medium term concerning the prospects of the third alternative. However, in theory, we have to take the option of this "breakout" into account. In this respect, first we have to answer the question as to whether the integration of Hungarians in Transylvania as a community (which does not infer the presence of atomisation, the first stage of assimilation) is possible *without the transformation of the constitutional structure of the Romanian state*. If, on the basis of practical or theoretical considerations, we find a negative answer more likely, it will have to be clarified (1) what constitutional (relative to territorial division, transformed administrative system or governmental power) structural change would make it possible for the Hungarians in Transylvania to "find a home" in Romania and (2) what political and strategic tools could offer the best chances for the realisation of a minority policy vision adjusted to this.

So far, two concepts have been set forth on "constitutional integration" – although they are little elaborate in their details, they are nevertheless markedly embraced as concepts that indicate strategic directions. One is the tripartite autonomy concept formulated in the first half of the 1990s (connected primarily to the name of József Csapó); the other is the strategic concept aimed at the "devolution of Transylvania" (formulated by the *Provincia*-group). The first was embraced primarily by the opposition within RMDSZ, while the second was formulated outside the federation. Yet, both are present in the programme of RMDSZ: the tripartite autonomy concept in the form of short thesis sentences, while the opportunity for the "devolution of Transylvania" implicitly in the chapter on regional interests in Transylvania.

Although the reception of the two concepts has been different, in general we can conclude that the failure of both in the short run can be explained first of all by the firmness the nation-state ambition that constitutes a common denominator for the Romanian political elite. Furthermore, the formulators of the tripartite autonomy concept can be blamed for the roughness of the concept, the lack of a satisfying clarification of the adjustability of the concept to the Romanian constitutional structure and the existing administrative institutional system. This gave further boost to the mistrust in the direction the concept. Besides, it has not been thought over what new forms of coexistence this autonomy would produce between Romanians and Hungarians, majority and minority. In the absence of this, there is little to wonder that no alliance could be established around the plan in domestic politics that would have tried to put the proposal on the agenda as part of the general reform of the Romanian state structure.

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Mutatis mutandis, the same remarks can be made in connection to the regional strategy of the "devolution of Transylvania", which aims at a much radical reform of state structure than the tripartite autonomy concept. There is an essential complement to it, however: although the development of the regional and "transethnic" platform seems plausible in the short run, it would nevertheless require the overcoming of the same nation-state mentality that has been an obstacle to the autonomy concepts as well.

The discussed strategic options, although they are mutually exclusive, can all serve, at different times, the reform of the constitutional system. The elaborators of the visions based on them will have to focus on the realisation of the circumstances and the development of forces needed in achieving these objectives.

3.1.2. The Relationship Between the Hungarians in Transylvania and the Mother Country

In order to liberate the vision of Hungarians in Transylvania from any burden, it is indispensable that Hungarian public thinking in Romania got rid of certain illusions (reproduced through the nature of the relationship) with respect to the relationship of the detached parts of the nation and the mother country.

I believe that one has to draw the conclusions from the fact that with, respect to the relationship with the mother country, the dominant modernisation patterns result in processes and trends that are fundamentally contrary to the vital interests of those parts of the nation that live in the successor states, among them the Hungarians in Transylvania. These modernisation patterns, which postulated or created nations (in the modern sense) as culturally homogeneous political communities, started to be copied by the Hungarians with great delay, first at the time of the Reform Era and then following the Compromise, with dramatic consequences in terms of the history of Hungarian statehood. In order that the country could be modernised more or less successfully, the price that had to be paid was the loss of the ethnically mixed territories.

We might consider the situation of the mother country satisfactorily resolved, while the parts of the nation detached from it found themselves in a difficult situation in the course of their post-Trianon history for two reasons. First, because the states that annexed them followed the modernisation patterns that were based on the alternativeless presupposition of national homogenisation. Second, because they, within their minority community, saw a chance for the survival as a community only through the promotion of the illusion of "small Hungaries." Their elite have since been stubbornly rejecting to make people realise those facts that "entered their life so decisively" (Makkai) and, for more than 80 years, have been waiting for the elaboration and organisation of a peculiar "analogue-less" Hungarian existence, which can adjust to the circumstances (Dezső László). In the meanwhile, Hungarian existence in Transylvania based on this self-deceiving conception has divided into gradually shrinking little worlds that are hardly connected between

themselves any more. There is no way to pass from one into another, there are no answers to the questions that the members of the community come across every day, and, as a result of all this, the little worlds become more and more restricted from the point of view of their members.

It might seem a paradox at first but the vision that could ensure the survival of the detached parts of the nation would require the Hungarian cultural nation to acknowledge with respect to the mixed areas that the Hungarians have lost this war, which was based on the strategy of a *mutual neglect* of cultures. Furthermore, the Hungarian cultural nation should declare that our vital interests require us now not only to make the majority realise the advantages inherent in cultures mutually recognising each other, but also to force them to try to profit from those advantages – for the benefit of all of us – in the context of the European integration processes.

With respect to the examined relationship that the Hungarians in Romania will inevitably need to make a change and stop formulating its vision, which constantly reproduces the conditions of its dependence, as a province of two centres (Budapest and Bucharest) independent of them. Instead, the Hungarians in Romania will have to try to imagine that they themselves are a centre. The way out from the system of relations termed "infantilising"[44] by Péter Huncik is constituted by the concept of a "contractual nation"[45] formulated by Imre Borbély and László Szarka.

The consequences of the fact that the questions connected to national integration had not been thought over were manifest in the Romanian statements and debates on the Hungarian Status Law. The most important question to be answered in this respect, as formulated by Nándor Bárdi, is: "How can the Hungarians beyond the borders be conceived as a group in legal terms through the individual members of their group, that is, how can the personal sphere of Hungarian-Hungarian relations be institutionalised?"[46]

Although it would probably be a mistake to underestimate the symbolic value of the Status Law adopted in Hungarian Parliament by an overwhelming majority, its consequences and effects on national integration are unforeseeable for the moment. Posteriority will surely consider an enduring merit of the initiators of the law the act that, for the first time since Trianon, that they managed to put the issue of the still unresolved situation of the detached parts of the nation on the agenda of European politics without triggering a unanimous denunciation and isolation

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[44] Huncik, Péter: *Etnikai immundeficites szindróma* [The Ethnic Immune Deficiency Syndrome], Manuscript, 2003.

[45] Borbély, Imre: Szerződéses magyar nemzet, szerződéses magyar nemzetszerkezet [Contractual Hungarian Nation, Contractual Hungarian Nation Structure]. in: Bodó, Barna (ed.): *Romániai Magyar Évkönyv 2001*, Temesvár–Kolozsvár, Szórvány Alapítvány–Polis, 2001, and Szarka, László: Szerződéses nemzet [Contractual Nation], in: Kántor Zoltán (ed): *A státustörvény. Dokumentumok, tanulmányok, publicisztika*, Budapest, Teleki László Alapítvány, 2002.

[46] Bárdi, Nándor: op. cit.

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within the international community.[47] However, it is still to be see who will be right with respect to the likely consequences of the implementation of the law: those who submitted it and expect the revaluation of one's Hungarian identity thanks to the benefits granted individually to the Hungarians of the successor states; or those who expect the continued fragmentation of minority communities and their gradual resignation of the hopes attached to their survival in their homeland.

RMDSZ is also in a difficult position with respect to this dilemma. After having expressed its unconditional support for the facilitation of the implementation of the Status Law with respect to the ethnic Hungarian citizens in Romania, and having been promoting the formulation of Romanian-Hungarian bilateral agreements that would acknowledge the legitimacy of legal relations between the Hungarians in Romania and the mother country, it will have to follow closely after the implementation of the Law, should it stay true to its own *raison d'être*, whether the Law serves really the revaluation of the identity of the ethnic Hungarians in Romania in their homeland or it degrades gradually into an artful instrument of the emptying of the detached territories. In connection to this, those concerned should not neglect the fact that the concept of benefits granted individually is permeated by the logics of the nation-state and that the unilateral character manifest in the spirit of the Law does not facilitate the endeavours aimed at the establishment and legitimisation of the political institutions of coexistence.

3.1.3. Integration Within the Community

While two nation-state conceptions struggle to win the soul of the members of the Hungarian minority in Romania, the questions in reality are whether the self-interest of these Hungarians necessitates the formulation of the internal integration of the community as a political objective or whether the reason of existence, to which political programmes that use the concept of complete minority society refer, can be considered given or not.

Given that political will cannot decide and cannot consider as *ab ovo* answered questions of such significance, more rigorous and objective data would be needed on the status, reserves, and resources of the minority community if we wanted to see more clearly in this respect. Another must is a more effective operation of the mechanisms for the democratic formation and advocacy of will.

3.2. Democratic Advocacy of Will and Community Organisation

The events of the recent past seem to prove that while the performance of RMDSZ is increasingly better in the Romanian political arena, it drifts farther and farther

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[47] This statement might stand even if the current representatives of the Hungarian state cannot always master the situation when they have to argue on the minority policy significance of the Law in the various international fora.

from the masses it represents and their everyday problems. The communication between RMDSZ and the Hungarian public opinion in Romania is stalling and the feeling of relatedness is vanishing from the Hungarian community in Transylvania.[48]

The loss of balance between the two branches of RMDSZ activities is, in my opinion, an inevitable consequence of the not clarified (more or less purposely blurred) question as to what the federation really is: a political party or an umbrella organisation of advocacy. Even though political opportunism, which is, up to a certain point, is understandable, prevented the unfolding of a debate on this, the time has come when delaying this discussion and preserving the confusion can cause more harm than do any good.

Furthermore, our experiences indicate that the incomparability of the performance of the two main branches stems also from the fact that competences of different nature and different criteria ensuring the democratic nature of collective formation of will are needed with respect to the organisation of party activity and the organisation of a society-sized community. The same individuals can hardly perform both tasks effectively at the same time.

Therefore, it is necessary to consider the institutional separation of the two basic spheres of authority of RMDSZ. A minority *party*, which has practically integrated into Romanian political life, acquired satisfactory prestige, and has made good use of its coalition potential, could more effectively advocate the interests of the Hungarians in Romania in that state framework, in which live. At the same time, an *umbrella organisation*, which would take upon the tasks of social self-organisation and would sovereignly dispose of the mobilisable resources, could finally begin a work, focusing primarily to Transylvania, that RMDSZ has so far neglected.[49]

3.2.1. Democratic Formation and Advocacy of Will

The clear separation of spheres of authority gives a chance to make manageable not only national integration and integration within the community, but also several deficiencies of organisational democracy.

Besides political advocacy and the struggle for minority rights, which is fought with the tools of parliamentarianism and aims at the gradual transformation of the legal framework, a Hungarian party present in the Romanian political stage could have a further function: by making use of the position it has so far acquired, it should begin the consideration of the enumerated strategic options, the phasing and appropriate timing of priorities, and the implementation of the formulated

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[48] From this respect, the way RMDSZ "danced attendance on" the efforts aimed at the implementation of the Status Law in Romania could be considered counter-productive as regards its objectives and its own reason of existence.

[49] The need to separate the spheres of authority emerges from time to time in Hungarian publicity in Romania. Sándor Szilágyi N. was the first to raise the idea on the establishment of the two independent organisations to perform the mentioned duties in: Mi lesz veled, RMDSZ? [What Will Happen to You, RMDSZ?]. in: *Korunk* 1991/2.

action plans. The demand present on the level of party politics, namely, that the Hungarians in Romania – according to the implicitly prevailing logics of a (consociational) system based on power-sharing – want to integrate into Romanian society *individually* in the medium term and demand the positions that derive from this (that is, it wants proportional representation in the Romanian state institutions) might trigger strong resistance in the short run. However, this is a demand hardly rejectable in the spirit of the prevailing European norms, and it could play a major role in the long run in the establishment and promotion of an atmosphere of trust, which in turn could lead even to the constitutional evolution of the self-organisation of minority society.

A minority party, which has thought its functions and spheres of authority over in the said spirit, could manage the questions of internal democracy more effectively as well. (These would appear much less complex after the transfer of certain aspects to the sphere of authority of the umbrella organisation, and, having been simplified to questions of party discipline, they would ensure enhanced organisational effectiveness.) Furthermore, several further aspects could be simplified, which has not been possible because of the continuous confusion of spheres of authority (in other words: a one-party system which has been a burden on minority society).

An adequately flexible party structure, which is administered with due professionalism, could ensure that the political programme would be shaped and constantly updated with the participation of high-level experts and the utilisation of the results of the umbrella organisation as well. Their participation should ensure the accountability of the programme towards the voters, and guarantee that there is continuous co-ordination between the party, which performs a basically ethnicity-based advocacy, and every important player of the Romanian political arena. This could prevent that minority policy objectives be cyclically contrasted with the more general objectives of democracy.

Amongst circumstances set by political rules of game those relationships would also become more clearly perceptible, which the party would develop and maintain with the authorities in the mother country. This would not leave a chance for ambitions that try to discredit RMDSZ in the eyes of the Romanian public with reference to these relations.

3.2.2. Community Organisation

Within a legal framework gradually expanded by an effective minority policy advocacy organisation and in established and maintained the atmosphere of trust it would be possible to develop and systematically organise the self-organising activity of the community focusing especially to certain areas of Transylvania.

Given that, as we could see, there is little chance in the short run to have the Hungarians in Transylvania recognised as a political community by the Romanian

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state, the umbrella organisation vested with the spheres of authority of self-organisation should gradually develop the institutional system of *personal autonomy*. No spheres of authority delegated by the Romanian Parliament are needed for this; this form of self-organisation is in theory permitted by the legislation in force. Should there be willingness, readiness, and adequate organising force in the Hungarians in Romania for this form of independent activity, the formation and allocation of resources could be more effectively organised and, as a result of this, those community programmes could function more successfully, to which currently neither the Hungarian nor the Romanian state pays due attention. A community that can responsibly manage its resources could attempt to make the community programmes and objectives more practical and need-oriented on the basis of its basic attitude determined by mainly symbolic objectives. Furthermore, it could take important steps toward the establishment of the practice of accountability, together with the elimination of the unfair inflexibilities of *incompatibility* that are strongly intertwined with the minority political culture as of today. These entail the danger, among others, that the benefit system, rendered possible by the constitution of the mother country and granted from budgetary sources, may be seriously compromised in the eyes of the competent EU authorities.

Naturally, serious preparation, carried out by experts, would have to precede the elaboration of the script of the suggested separation of the spheres of authority of RMDSZ. Although it would not be too wise to guess what the results of this work will be, two questions will surely have to be included in the themes connected to this question. The success of the initiative requires the competent persons to make the system of resources and benefits, available for community organisation, public, transparent, and accountable in all respects. Another important condition is the preparation of a problem catalogue based on comprehensive and thorough research, which would enter in an inventory the problems of all types of *local communities* (including the smallest, diaspora-like ones and the largest, block-like communities comprising of the traditional regions of Székelyföld) that would have to be resolved. The *programme* of self-organisation could be prepared on the basis of this catalogue, which would ensure that a much larger proportion of Hungarians in Transylvania would see their problems reflected in the programme.

The advantages of such a programme would be manifest not only in an easier operationalisation and increased feasibility. Furthermore, it would be much easier to account for it before the members of the community, and it would be more likely to lay the new foundations of solidarity, which is hardly present any more, and which the vanishing ideology of unity has not been able to substitute for a long time now.

I believe that a minority policy vision thought over in the spirit of what has been discussed above, which considers both external an internal conditions, and sets and times the priorities accordingly, can offer a chance for the balancing of the multifaceted emigration pressure and the assimilation pressure that lay a heavy

burden on the Hungarians in Romania. Considering the recently published results of the 2002, this would be of utmost importance.

3.3. International Dimensions of the Struggle for Minority Rights

Following the collapse of the totalitarian world order, termed the last one of its kind, democracy received a new chance to spread in the world as the only legitimate form of government. Following the changes of 1989, however, those who worked on the establishment of democracy in the regions liberated from the dictatorial regimes. It turned out that liberal democracies, in order to prove effective, inferred ethnoculturally homogeneous societies. Where this is not present, there one can expect serious deficiencies, which might even endanger stability, on the part of rep-resentational democracy. Furthermore, it became clear that the protection system based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is biased, and discriminates against the citizens belonging to various minorities in the various countries.[50] At the same time, virulent nation-state ambitions appeared in various places in the regions liberated from dictatorships, which, in the short run, gave an ethnocratic tint to the declared institutional system of representational democracy.[51]

These challenges resulted in the mobilisation of serious intellectual and institu-tional potential all around the world. Today high-level work is carried out in nume-rous international – intergovernmental and non-governmental – organisations related to national autonomy, minority rights, and the questions of the political institutional of coexistence, the excluding consequences institutionalised through citizenship, and *good governance* in ethnically divided societies. A minority organisation, which takes its objectives seriously and which represents one of the largest minorities in Europe *as yet*, cannot distance itself from these activi-ties.[52] The active role of the properly prepared representatives of RMDSZ played

[50] For universal rights, which are guaranteed not by some neutral, supranational institutions but by the specific, ethnoculturally *not* neutral institutions of the individual states, give to preference to the citizens who belong to the majority, dominant culture. At the same time, they request *twice* the effort from the mem-bers of minority communities who want to remain faithful to their linguistic and other traditions in the case they want to orient themselves in the public sphere of both the dominant an the minority culture. This lack of equal opportunity results in assimilation, which can be balanced only by a guarantee of special licenses.

[51] This question has an impressive and dynamically developing literature. Major works are: J. Bugajs-ki: *Political Parties of Eastern Europe. A Guide to Politics in the Post-Communist Era*. Armonk, NY–Lon-don, England: M.E. Sharpe (The Center for Strategic and International Studies), 2002; J. P. Stein (ed.): The Politics of National Minority Participation in Post-Communist Europe. State-Building, democracy, and Ethnic Mobilization, Armonk, NY–London, England: M.E. Sharpe (EastWest Institute), 2002; Jack Sny-der: *From Voting to Violence. Democratization and Nationalist Conflict*, New York–London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2000; S. Smooha: "The Model of Ethnic Democracy: Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State", in: *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 8, 2002, No. 4, 475–503.

[52] Although we are far from drawing a minimum of minority rights that every candidate of Euro-atlantic integration has to comply with on the basis of wide-ranging international consensus, according to Will Kymlicka, on the basis of a comparative study of cases currently present in the world, it would be difficult to argue in an unbiased way *against* the fact that territorially concentrated national minorities have the

in these fora could facilitate not only the representation of the cause and options of the Hungarians in Romania in a manner accessible for an influential international circle of experts, but, based on the experiences gained in the international arena, it would also result in perfection and enhanced effectiveness of the tools that can be used in the struggle form minority rights in the domestic arena.

Epilogue

We could even welcome certain components of the development process that takes different directions now following the Congress of Szatmárnémeti – the reorganisation of the Reform Group into a movement, the foundation of the Initiating Committee of the Autonomy of the Hungarian National Community in Transylvania, and registration of the Hungarian Civic Alliance. It seems that the separation of spheres of authority suggested above was undertaken not by the leadership of RMDSZ but by the internal opposition in the federation. For the tie being it is hardly possible to judge whether self-restrictive professionalism or political stubbornness will determine the fate of the initiative. The initiative itself is, in any case, a challenge for the vision represented by RMDSZ and it would be probably a mistake not to take it seriously.

right to some form of territorial autonomy adjusted to the circumstances through negotiations, to comprehensive linguistic rights, higher education institutions in their mother tongue, consotiational structures, and the right to veto in issues connected to the aspect of the survival of the given national community. It will take long, however, before this evident momentum, which is more and more widely embraced by theoretical experts, will be accepted by the public opinion and politicians of the countries in concern. Today, the ruling political elite in East Central Europe still believe that a normal democratic state is a nation-state, in which a hegemonic national majority, which sets the rules of the game, and one or more marginalised, politically weak national minorities live together. These minorities are destined to vanish either through assimilation or emigration into the mother country. The lack of political consensus and the application of double standards in the case of EU member states and candidates often results in the absurd situation, points out Kymlicka at one place, that the majority look forward to EU integration wit the expectation that, following the example of France or Greece, they will have the right to consider themselves unified, centralised, and homogeneous nation-states. At the same time, minorities expect that, following accession, they will be treated similar to the Catalans, the Scottish, the Flemish, the Frisians, and the South Tyrolean. Cf.: Will Kymlicka: "Reply and Conclusion", in: Will Kymlicka–Magda Opalski (ed.): *Can Liberal Pluralism Be Exported?* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, 382–385.