

equally gorgeous locale. But the significant change was FIDESZ's coming to power in 1998. The discourse of the young liberals had become increasingly conservative and nationalistic. The Orbán government also added a tinge of authoritarianism. The leadership of the League started to doubt their alliance. The relation between ethnic and ideological sensibilities is an interesting thing to behold: it was not the Romanian Smaranda Enache but the Hungarian Elek Szokoly who forced the League out of its cooperation with FIDESZ, which he regarded as too nationalist and illiberal. The League's institutional involvement was withdrawn in 1997.

This decision needs to be considered fairly. It points to reasons that are deeper than simple options of doctrine, which are easily subjected to ideological abuse. The attention that minority rights activists give to fragile identities under pressure, such as the Hungarian identity under the pressures of Romanian nationalism, is legitimate as long as it is the expression of solidarity with the victims. As soon as it becomes a vehicle of identity-based revanchism, it turns the logic of identity activism into an anti-liberal instrument and squanders any legitimacy minority activism might have had.<sup>48</sup> Hence, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of a free spirit who is predictable in his acknowledgement of the ultimate reasons beyond intermediary goals. The leaders of the Pro-Europe League did not betray their power to tell right from wrong and appropriate from inappropriate. It is one of the reasons why I think dearly of Smaranda and Elek. Their presence in the leadership of the League is reassuring. It often happens that accumulated capital endows institutions with generations of technically-skilled specialists. But the specialists can sometimes lose touch with their basic ethical instincts.

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It was also in 1991 that the League felt compelled to launch a weekly publication that should compete with that of the city, which was somewhat of a scandal monger. The *Mureș Gazette* was first issued on November 5, 1991.<sup>49</sup> This "analysis and

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<sup>48</sup> This is the main issue with the habit of invoking Hungary's pre-1919 assimilationist practices in order to motivate anti-Hungarian nationalism within the Greater Romania and today.

<sup>49</sup> Smaranda Enache's editorial dealt with the opportunists that were sabotaging the unity of the political opposition adumbrated by the establishment of the National Convention for the Establishment of Democracy. The blamed parties included the Ecologist Movement (MER) and the Liberal Party (PNL).

information weekly” (the words on the frontispiece) launched investigations of corruption and abuse and provided information on international events, reports of the central media and local data. It introduced issues that were at the time uncommon (“Women in the Social Labyrinth”)<sup>50</sup>, or generous (ecology was a constant preoccupation), or sensitive (homosexuality).<sup>51</sup> The Roma were also represented. The editors had an eye for what deserved to be published – such as Mihai Fusu’s contribution in *Lupta*, “The Option for Bessarabia is Federalization”.<sup>52</sup> The weekly tried to encourage ecumenism and in 1992 it simultaneously published Orthodox, Uniate, Roman-Catholic, Protestant, and Mosaic religious calendars. Yet its request that the Romanian Orthodox Church (BOR) should return the communist-confiscated property of the Greek-Catholic Church was no less uncompromising.<sup>53</sup> Questions such as those of the dead of December 1989, the Târgu Mureș violence, and the miners’ crusade of June 1990 received timely attention. The *Gazette* campaigned for Emil Constantinescu and published articles by nationally renowned contributors who were ideologically close to the editors: Andrei Pippidi, Nicolae Manolescu, Adrian Marino, and William Totok, to name just a few.

The publication of the *Gazette* was broken off at the end of 1992 but the weekly was resurrected in May 1993, this time in a format that was closer to a magazine. It only lasted for another few months since was too difficult to turn a weekly read by a few Hungarians and hated by a Romanian majority (then dominated by the extremist Party for the National Union of Romanians, PUNR) into a financially self-sustaining enterprise. As a consequence, the League focused on (and was successful in) the kind of activity that is typical of NGOs: seminars and similar events, expeditions, specialized publications, positions, lobbying, projects.

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She referred explicitly to Radu Câmpeanu and Dan Amedeo Lăzărescu and their affiliations with the FSN and the PUNR. The *Gazette* took up national issues and typically focused on nationalism, which in Ardeal was organized politically around the party of Radu Ceantea. (“Natură moartă cu Parlament”, *Gazeta de Mureș*, No. 9, 1991).

<sup>50</sup> *Gazeta de Mureș*, No. 4, 1991.

<sup>51</sup> *Gazeta de Mureș*, No. 39, 1992.

<sup>52</sup> *Gazeta de Mureș*, No. 6, 1991.

<sup>53</sup> See the editorial aptly titled “Persistence into Sin”, *Gazeta de Mureș*, No. 2, 1992.

The list of the League's activities is impressive, and downright incredible if one considers the number of employees and the limited extent of outside support. To give a better idea of how much was accomplished with so little, let me list below LPE's activity log between January and July 1995, the period in which the League's most important initiatives (including the first edition of the "Tolerance Week" and the first issue of the *Altera* journal) took shape. The list is well-worth the space, especially because it says a lot about the League itself and other similar organizations which have been engaged, for the past years, in a wearisome and frustrating campaign in the name of lived rather than proffered ideals (democracy, human rights, healthy environment, tolerance). These are, one cannot fail to notice, the same ideals that the pawns of Romanian politics regard with anger or irony. Here is the League's report for the first half of 1995:

*"European institutions. Romania's integration into Europe. Perspectives"*, Democracy College, January 7, Târgu-Mureş; *"Minorities in Europe"*, Democracy College, January 14, Târgu-Mureş; *"The Pro-European idea in Romania"*, Democracy College, January 21, Târgu-Mureş; *"Legislative framework and judicial practice in the protection of national minorities"*, Democracy College, January 27-28, Târgu-Mureş; *"Women's and family's problems in the programs of local authorities"*, organized by the Women Department of the Pro-Europe League, February 21, Târgu-Mureş; *"Past and present in the Balkans"*, February 23, Târgu-Mureş; *"Mass-media and the minorities"*, February 24-25, Cluj; *"What to do about preserving threatened cultures and minorities?"*, LPE's Satu Mare branch, February 25, Carei; *"The ecological state of the Someş/Szamos river"*, LPE's Satu Mare branch, March 3-4, Satu Mare; *"Human rights in the new European and international context"*, Democracy College, March 11, Târgu-Mureş; *"Human rights and the criminal law"*, Democracy College, March 12, Târgu-Mureş; *"Modeling the new Europe"*, Democracy College, March 18, Târgu-Mureş; *"Democracy and daily life"*, LPE's Satu Mare branch, March 24, Tuşnad; *"Tolerance week"*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition,

March 19-25, Târgu-Mureș;<sup>54</sup> “*The ecological state of the Mureș river*”, March 30, Târgu-Mureș; “*Working visit and documentation*”, Democracy College, April 3-5, Bucharest; “*The separation of powers. The relations between the government and the parliament*”, Democracy College, April 14, Târgu-Mureș; “*European and North-Atlantic Integration*”, Democracy College, April 15, Târgu-Mureș; “*The budget and its local administration*”, April 28-29, Târgu-Mureș; “*Stereotypes – a source of interethnic tensions*”, April 29, Alba Iulia; “*The Europe Napok Days*”, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, May 2-20;<sup>55</sup> “*Working visit and documentation*”, Democracy College, May 15-18, Budapest; “*Local authorities and the media*”, May 26, Târgu Mureș; “*Competencies and decision-making in the local administration*”, Democracy College, May 26, Târgu-Mureș; “*Tolerance and multicultural education*”, May 29, Sfântu-Gheorghe; “*Economic doctrines*”, Democracy College, June 10, Târgu-Mureș; “*The minority issue in party platforms*”, June 16-17, Poiana Brașov; “*Multicultural Camp*”, June 19-30, Sovata; “*Human rights and the rule of law*”, Satu Mare branch, June 27, Satu Mare; “*The protection of religious diversity – the crucial aspect of confessional tolerance*”, LPE’s Satu Mare branch, June 10, Negrești Oaș; “*Local authorities and the NGOs*”, July 11, Târgu-Mureș; “*Dialogue with the media*”, June 14-15 Tușnad; “*The Bálványos Summer University: Common Priorities in Transition*”, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, July 16-23, Bálványos; “*The Ecological Caravan on the Crișul Repede and Barcău rivers*”, Ecological Department of the LPE, July 18-August 2.

But LPE’s activities matched everybody’s tastes. The same year, the pro-Romanian Hearth newspaper *Cugetul liber* printed an article on the League entitled “Another Bucket is Washed Clean with the Help of the Pro-Europe League”.<sup>56</sup> One

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<sup>54</sup> March 19 – “The Tolerance Triangle” (I); March 20 – “The Tolerance Triangle” (II); March 21 – Opening of minority books exhibition; March 22 – Poetry and multiculturalism; March 23 – Faith and tolerance; March 24 – Poetry and dissidence; March 25 – Friendship platform, 5 years after; and Dialogue between the generations (concert).

<sup>55</sup> May 2 – Opening of travel exhibition “Markets of European Cities”/“Romania and European Integration”; May 9 – Launching of Adrian Marino’s book *Pentru Europa*; May 12 – Classical music directed by Horia Andreescu; May 20 – “Pro Europe” Contest, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

<sup>56</sup> *Cugetul liber*, March 21, 1995.

week later, in the March 28 issue, the same journal noted the following: “Under the sign of a generous call made by the Bible, the Pro-Europe League completed last week another of its typical activities designed to send us to ... Europe.” The dots in the original text were, obviously, ironical. As a matter of fact, the whole team of editors seemed obsessed with the ironic qualities of dots: “The penultimate round of the ... tolerance monologue,” was Cristian Eparu’s way of referring to another event organized by the LPE (*Cugetul liber*, March 30).

## 7. OTHER LOCAL BATTLES: CLUJ, OCTAVIAN BURACU, AND THE INTERETHNIC DIALOGUE

The *Laudatio* read on February 27, 1999, at the ceremony at which Octavian Buracu was granted the posthumous title of “Member of Honor of the Pro-Europe League”, asked this rhetorical question: “*Should we be surprised by the fact that, in his interview with the Mureș Gazette on the ethnic cleansing in Cluj, taken immediately after he was fired ..., Octavian Buracu stated that ‘as a Romanian I am even more outraged than Hungarians themselves’? Isn’t this dignified consistency a natural thing for a man of honor? And what could be more dignified than the excuses that this Romanian and European patriot addressed to the minorities on behalf of his ethnic group for the xenophobic aberrations of the mayor of Cluj? Was there anything more natural than the words of wisdom he uttered a few months before his death: ‘there are no good or bad peoples; there are only good and bad individuals’?*”<sup>57</sup>

Pathetic words? Grandiloquent words? Octavian Buracu had been a founding member of the Civic Alliance, of the Culture of Ardeal Foundation in Cluj, of the Romanian-British Foundation for Human Rights Education, and a member of honor of the Association for Romanian-Hungarian Friendship in Pécs. His name was, however, directly connected to the Association for Interethnic Dialogue, of which he had been the founder and president. These titles are not some beads carefully arranged on the string of a much too active pride.<sup>58</sup> People like Buracu were involved in countless activities aiming to change the misery around them. Each name on the list above is a testimony to the leisure surrendered for the sake of others. Remember that we are at the beginning of the 1990s, when working for an NGO was rarely a well-paying activity, and being a pro-Hungarian or pro-Westerner could turn out quite dangerous.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Szokoly Elek, “Laudatio pentru Octavian Buracu”, *Gazeta Ligii Pro Europa*, no. 2/1999, pp. 6-7.

<sup>58</sup> Men such as Buracu were too often the victims of ironic comments by intellectuals who were overly spectatorial when they mused on the surrounding world yet suddenly aggressive when it came to their own interests.

<sup>59</sup> In 2000, I accidentally stumbled upon an e-mail from an ex-employee of ACCEPT, the most important organization promoting gay rights, who had just left for the US. Imagine my surprise when I read the following: “I am ... surrounded by faggots.” Such words show how much our society has changed. You can now earn a decent living by promoting the rights of homosexuals while privately referring to them as

Starting with 1990, Octavian Buracu had initiated meetings, colloquia, associations, seminars, round tables, statements and public positions, communiqués, and collected signature lists for the benefit of Romanian-Hungarian friendship. His voice had become well-known. It was one of the few Romanian voices in the Ardeal region's capital that uttered the right words with respect to the sick excesses of Gheorghe Funar, the mayor of Cluj. Like Doina Cornea, he had no misgivings about the relationship between the vociferous ultranationalists and the political group coalesced around President Iliescu, who had just captured political power in Bucharest.

Cornea herself was as firm about the nationalist provocations of the post-1989 regime as she had been about the communist rulers.<sup>60</sup> After Gheorghe Funar, mayor of Cluj and president of the PUNR, had opened in the city's central square<sup>61</sup> an archaeological site in order to move the statue of Matei Corvin (the most important Hungarian monument in the whole of Transylvania), Doina Cornea wrote: *"I am sure that the diversion in Cluj has a larger stake than the local one. Funar is not crazed, as some like to say, but a tool in the hands of the powers that be (like all other extremists in his entourage, for that matter). It would not be too much to speak of a Yugoslavization of Romania, a move inspired by the KGB which serves the base interest of the self-preservation of power."*<sup>62</sup>

After the creation of the Romanian Hearth and of the PUNR in 1990, but especially after Funar was elected mayor, the city of Cluj, which had had a Hungarian majority before the World War II and in which 23 percent of the total population is now made up of members of this ethnic group, became a center of anti-Hungarian instigation. The city is not merely a center of Hungarian economic and academic life, but also of symbolic competition between its two main ethnic communities. It was

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"faggots". This is one of the unwritten laws that is equally true of liberal environments: wherever there are resources available, there are also people willing to exploit them for their own good alone.

<sup>60</sup> A chapter in her book of dialogues, *Fața nevăzută a lucrurilor (1990-1999). Dialoguri cu Rodica Palade* (Dacia, 1999) concerns the Hungarians and Hungarian-Romanian relations. Those interested can find there some extraordinary pages about the relation, totally lacking in *fair-play*, between the PNȚCD politicians, then a part of the Democratic Convention in Cluj, and the UDMR branch in the same city. This is precisely the context in which the significance of people such as Cornea – she also mentions Adrian Marino, Virgil Lazăr, Liliana Bocu –, who were doing their best to give a chance to Hungarian-Romanian coexistence, becomes apparent.

<sup>61</sup> Piața Unirii.

<sup>62</sup> Doina Cornea, "Conflictul de la Cluj nu este un conflict interetnic", 22, No. 28, July 8, 1994.

completely dominated by the position held by Gheorghe Funar, who was also the president of the PUNR, the second greatest party (in terms of Parliament seats) between 1992 and 1996.

Funar was a nationalist extremist whose actions and discourse were often verging on the pathological. Hungarian monuments were defiled, participants in Hungarian protest demonstrations were arbitrarily fined, threats were made that Hungarian statues would be moved, the flag on the Hungarian consulate was stolen at the instigation of the mayor, benches were painted in red-yellow-and-blue and so on. The Hungarians protested, demonstrated, walked the city streets in silent processions, warned about the conduct of the local authorities, and reacted sometimes peacefully and sometimes in anger.

But what prevented Cluj from becoming a theatre of violent clashes such as those in Târgu Mures? The explanation needs to take into account many factors. As noted, the numerical relation between the communities has an important causal relation to the transformation of tensions into direct conflict. The Hungarians in Cluj are too few in number to risk open confrontation. Those who cannot take the offence would rather leave. Moreover, for the manipulators Cluj was hardly a convenient place for large-scale clashes: a conflict similar to the one in Târgu-Mureş would have been more than a battle – it would have turned into a pogrom.

The composition of the Romanian majority of the city is also relevant. Cluj increased in size because it was deliberately populated with Romanian ethnics from other regions of the country. The famous Mănăștiur district was on three different occasions responsible for Funar's reelection (which is a really impressive performance, considering the character). And yet Romanians originally from Ardeal are numerous enough in the region. Their experience of cohabitation with the Hungarians goes back a long time. To them, Hungarians are a much more manageable companion than a mayor who hates their city and shames their birthplace. Hungarian and Romanian folksongs in Transylvania are melodically closer to one another than either of them is to Moldavian



folk music. Can one imagine a genuine connection between the spirit of Ardeal and the pathetic, newly-erected statue of Avram Iancu?<sup>63</sup>

There are other details in the absence of which the picture would not be complete. In Târgu Mureș the epicenter of the crisis was the issue of the segregation of schools. Ousting Romanian children from the Bolyai high school was an offense, *but it was also a serious practical issue*. Romanians had to leave the oldest school in the city. It was irrational for the UDMR leaders to so completely misjudge the implications of this move.

Three traditionally Hungarian highschoools were segregated in Cluj as well – one Catholic, one Reformed and one Unitarian. But the Romanian classes were relocated in a new school, the former “Avram Iancu” school for the kids of apparatchiks, with better facilities than those in the schools Romanian kids were forced to leave behind. As a consequence, there was less bad feeling.

All these factors explain, in part, why Cluj never experienced a bloody showdown. But they could not by themselves exclude the possibility of a violent outburst. And yet such a thing never occurred in Cluj. Looking back at the innumerable instigations of Funar and his thugs which, geographical and temporal distance notwithstanding, still fill me with anger and embarrassment, it seems difficult not to concede that the Romanians who forged an alliance with the city’s Hungarians were also responsible for preventing that greater evil from happening. The appeal of the Association for Interethnic Dialogue and of the Cluj branch of the Civic Alliance urging Romanians to march together with protesting Hungarians is probably the best example one could give.<sup>64</sup> In 1994, in one of the most tense moments in the city, the authorities decided to attach a plaque to the statue of Matei Corvin with the transparent purpose of defiling it. UDMR announced a march of protest while Romanian Hearth extremists feverishly organized their own columns for a counter-demonstration. Just think about it: two marching camps, two sides confronting each other! The smallest spark – a stone hitting a shoulder, a spit in the face – could ignite a disaster. But having a group of Romanians march alongside the Hungarians prevented that.

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<sup>63</sup> [explain]

<sup>64</sup> Smaranda Enache went to Cluj in order to take part in the demonstration.

Who were these Romanians? People such as Octavian Buracu, Doina Cornea, Dana Prelipceanu,<sup>65</sup> Virgil Lazăr,<sup>66</sup> Marius Tabacu,<sup>67</sup> Liliana Bocu,<sup>68</sup> and their colleagues, few in number, but breathing life into the city's civil society, played a part now easily forgotten or underrated in the prevention of a Târgu-Mureș type of bloodshed.

Militants for interethnic communication were present in many other cities and towns in the Ardeal region. In Satu Mare, Anamaria Pop (one of the most well-known translators from Hungarian into Romanian)<sup>69</sup> established a branch of the Pro-Europe League. Timișoara, probably the most cosmopolitan and the most multicultural city in Transylvania, has to be included in this picture. Its important associations – the local Civic Alliance branch, the Academic Solidarity, the Timișoara Society, the local subsidiary of the Writers' Union and, exceptionally, the leaders of the local religious communities – all reflected in their attitudes and membership the local tradition of tolerance. The anti-fundamentalist attitudes promoted by intellectuals such as Daniel Vighi, Mircea Mihăieș, or Adriana Babeți (the list is definitely much longer) invested the local stakes with a national significance.

As a matter of fact, the case of Timișoara is exceptional also in the context of the main topic addressed in this book. More than other cities, Timișoara has been ever since the early 1990s an important prize in the political competition. The revolution had Romanians gather around Laszlo Tokes so, at least in this instance, the city could be regarded, as Daniel Vighi once put it, as “transethnic”. The Proclamation of Timișoara, signed by UDMR, chained an additional ball to the ankles of those who saw in the conflict between Romanians and Hungarians the key to preserving their political influence. No wonder that a week after the Proclamation was launched its initiators were accused of fostering the separation of Banat.

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<sup>65</sup> She is currently president of the Association for Interethnic Dialogue.

<sup>66</sup> Among other capacities, Lazăr was a correspondent of the national daily *România liberă*. His articles were instrumental to the fair coverage of the events by this daily newspaper close to the opposition between 1990 and 1996, especially after its nationalist tendencies became more apparent.

<sup>67</sup> Tabacu was for a while a journalist in Cluj.

<sup>68</sup> She also initiated several programs for Roma children.

<sup>69</sup> In 1999 she took a position as director of the Romanian Cultural Center in Budapest.

Daniel Vighi's recent account<sup>70</sup> of the events corroborates the account furnished by my older conversations with George Șerban. Ion Iliescu wanted to visit Timișoara during his electoral campaign. Consequently, Corneliu Iordache, who had become by some mysterious circumstance one of FSN's important members, asked the leaders of the Timișoara Society to meet the President in Bucharest at the Cotroceni Palace. The meeting took place on March 19, of all days. And Iliescu was accompanied by his adviser Virgil Măgureanu, of all men...

Naturally, on March 19 and in the presence of the future SRI director the conversation had to reach the sizzling Hungarian issue. George Șerban, Vasile Popovici and Daniel Vighi suggested a "march of friendship" led by Iliescu, Tökes, and Smaranda Enache. *"There's nothing to be done about this. These marches are utopias. There's no bridging of the gap between Romanians and Hungarians,"* Iliescu promptly answered while his councilors were incessantly going in and out the room with news from Târgu-Mureș. (The guests, on the other hand, were totally in the dark with respect to the events in the beleaguered Transylvanian city.) *"The Ardeal is a gunpowder barrell. You'll see it yourselves!"* Măgureanu added, knowing that future history would prove him right. Back to the Writers' Union offices that very evening, Daniel Vighi was the first to hear the news from Târgu-Mureș. (The writers' opinion is another chapter in the story.)

One should also mention Brașov and Sibiu, and perhaps other cities as well. But I shall not dwell on these other instances – we already have an appropriate "model" now.

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<sup>70</sup> [note]

## **8. GDS, THE 22 WEEKLY, AND THE MINORITIES**

In an over-centralized country such as Romania, small victories in the province would have counted much less globally, had the bridge between Hungarians and Romanian not been constantly tended in Bucharest, the place where the high political stakes were (and still are). Even the UDMR has had to focus on Bucharest, in spite of the fact that 98 percent of the Hungarians live in Transylvania.

And so it happened that a small group of intellectuals who founded at the end of 1989 the Group for Social Dialogue came to play a key part in Hungarian-Romanian relations. As used in these pages, the “Group” also refers to the GDS weekly, 22, named after the day on which the communist regime was toppled. Made up mostly of ex-dissidents (Doina Cornea, Mirecea Dinescu, Dan Petrescu, Radu Filipescu etc.) and intellectuals who had explicitly refused any affiliation to the communist ideology (Mihai Şora, Andrei Pippidi, Gabriel Liiceanu, Radu Popa, Andrei Pleşu and others), the GDS immediately acquired immense prestige. As occupants of what was, in that particular context, a liberal-democratic position, the members would be contacted, invited and invoked by their Hungarian counterparts. They responded by participating in eventful meetings such as the dialogue of Romanian and Hungarian intellectuals in Budapest (March 17-23, 1990) that were symbolically powerful.

How did we at the GDS manage to play this part – a historically relevant one, I might add – in the relationship between Romanians and Hungarians? Note that it was a role we had assumed in the absence of any conscious planning. In a previous chapter I asked whether the lack of modern political culture “affect[ed] the importance of the GDS for Romanian-Hungarian relations?” The future was to show that the GDS did not need specialized political knowledge in order to do what it had to do (and eventually did).

The first issue of the Group’s weekly (January 20, 1990) printed an “Appeal” by the Hungarian Helsinki Committee addressed to the Romanians, who had just overthrown their own dictator. The third issue (February 2, 1990) contained articles and statements signed by Zoltán Biró and János Szász, together with an interview with

Károly Király and some quotes from György Konrád.<sup>71</sup> Most of the Romanian intellectuals at the March 19-20 colloquium reuniting Romanian and Hungarian intellectuals, held in Budapest, were members of the Group. (The “Appeal” issued at the colloquium was signed by Gabriela Adameșteanu, Sorin Antohi, Mircea Dinescu, Thomas Kleininger, Gabriel Liiceanu, Alin Teodorescu).

Naturally, many of the reasons that prompted some members of the Group to take a stand on the Hungarian issue were “external” – many Hungarian intellectuals and politicians saw in the GDS the democratic partner that could sympathize with their concerns. Yet few members of the Group were interested in the details of the Hungarian-Romanian issue. Even fewer possessed the conceptual culture necessary for understanding the complexity of these relations. There were of course exceptions. The late Radu Popa, a historian and archaeologist who had authored important studies on the old history of Transylvania, was not only a man of rare virtues but also one with a penchant for multiculturalism. Mihai Șora, the first Minister of Education, had helped Hungarians with their requests – which were vocal as early as January 1990 – for school segregation, in part also because he was intimately aware of the issue’s history. Andrei Pippidi was possessed of expertise in the field as well. Hence the promptness of his excellent article of February 1990 (exact, nuanced and very important in that context) concerning the statements of Francois Mitterand in Budapest on the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania and on the policies of the Bucharest regime.<sup>72</sup> The statements reiterated the principle of the inviolability of national frontiers, mentioned the contemporary significance of the principle of nationalities, and stated that the Bucharest regime is, with respect to its nationalist attitude, a follower of the previous one. Iliescu and his group reacted vehemently and called the statements “a blunder.” “A blunder indeed, but whose blunder?” replied Pippidi in his response. He was concise, substantial and perfectly balanced in tone and attitude.

I think it bears repeating that not all of the Group’s members were so open toward the question of the relationship of the Romanian majority to the Hungarian minority, especially as it became so hot an issue immediately after 1990. For various

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<sup>71</sup> [footnote]

<sup>72</sup> “O gafă”, 22, no. 3, February 2, 1990.

reasons, the Group as a whole would follow, in the years to come, the line of its most active members. The weekly 22 also emphasized its pro-minority stance. However, there was also a “silent” subgroup that would have walked a different path, but it had to wait until the late 1990s to have, at least in part, its way.

The weekly 22 throws some light on the pace at which the Bucharest intellectuals’ awareness of the Hungarian issue grew. At the end of April, Răzvan Theodorescu was invited by the Group to “offer an explanation” of the way the TVR channel covered the events in Târgu Mureş (and elsewhere). A lot of other materials were presented by the GDS members in Budapest on March 19-20. There was a very interesting article by Dan Petrescu called, “Where do we measure democracy?”.<sup>73</sup> Dan Petrescu answered a lot of accusations made against him in his capacity as secretary of state in the Ministry of Culture (a position he eventually had to vacate). In his unmistakable style, Petrescu militated, from a position of radical elitism bordering on an offensive stance with respect to “ordinary people”, for the priority of individual over collective rights and for dissolving the “minority” issue – a word he repudiated – into the issue of democracy (which was certainly a simplification). Yet what was important was his criticism of the leading idea behind and the activity of the nationalist Romanian Hearth.<sup>74</sup>

Back then the Hungarian problem was at bottom the problem of dealing with the most abject characters in Romanian political life: the founders of the Romanian Hearth and of the PUNR, of the *România Mare* magazine and the eponymous party, and of the periodical *Europa*. From this perspective, GDS’s attitudes towards the extremist nationalism manipulated by the most aggressive group in the officially extinct Securitate were almost singularly precise and consistent. As time went by, however, the Hungarian issue came to need a different understanding, in which civic militancy had to be accompanied by the conceptualization and codification of civilized interethnic relations.

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<sup>73</sup> 22, No. 14, April 20, 1990.

<sup>74</sup> Andrei Pleşu, on the other hand, failed to sanction Smaranda Enache’s demotion at the Puppet Theatre in Târgu-Mureş orchestrated by the Hearth’s men.

In 1992, the UDMR had adopted several documents concerning the rights of the Hungarians and had endorsed them by means of several statements. The terms that were going to resonate throughout the Romanian public opinion – autonomy, special status, self-government, collective rights – had made their first public appearance. My involvement with these Hungarian issues had grown progressively and my relations with Hungarian leaders had become closer. This is the reason why, at some point, I thought that the GDS should improve its own approach to these questions. I arranged for a GDS meeting with the UDMR leaders. The roundtable was an attempt to change the venues of communication between “us” and “them”, and an opportunity to discover the limits of our involvement in issues for the resolution of which human decency is not always sufficient.

## 9. THE WRITERS' UNION AND THE CIVIC ALLIANCE IN THE EARLY NINETIES

Throughout Communist Europe, writers' unions have generally enjoyed a advantaged position by comparison with other organizations. Since they served institutions of propaganda and since the authorities acknowledged the writers' sway over the symbolic space, writers' unions were granted special privileges. In Romania, Bulgaria or the USSR the writers were among the few professional groups who could visit, many barriers notwithstanding, some of the Western countries. Let us recall the situation in Romania: writers had access to the Union's resources (bank credits, holiday villas, and later the right to own a second home "for creative purposes"), which were commonly refused to ordinary citizens. Some writers might be dismayed by my reference to these special privileges: after all to whom, for how many, and under what circumstances were these special facilities granted?

Well, they were granted nonetheless. To the rest of the population, the mythical aura of the writer-status and the writers' privileged access to resources were a part of the general image, if not of reality itself. Honest witnesses from within are well aware of this. In a book of dialogues edited together with Sorin Antohi, Adrian Marino mentioned the "sinister or, if you will, providential institution of the Literary Fund. ... One could see in there the huge amounts owed by illustrious Romanian writers."<sup>75</sup>

All these things contributed to the visibility of the writers' unions in the communist countries. In Romania, where there was virtually no "workers' resistance"<sup>76</sup> during the final years of the Ceaușescu regime, the symbolic space controlled by writers was decisive in the context of the 1989 changes. The General Assembly of the Writers' Union convened on January 27, 1989, elected Mircea Dinescu as president. One of the most well-known dissidents of the Ceaușescu regime, very popular for his way of communicating with the audience, Dinescu was and still is – as future events amply demonstrated – incapable of regimentation. He turned his profound antipathy for

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<sup>75</sup> Sorin Antohi, *Al treilea discurs. Adrian Marino în dialog cu Sorin Antohi*, Iași: Polirom, 2000, p. 18.

<sup>76</sup> In spite of the fact that there were independent union organizers, such as Vasile Paraschiv, Ionel Cană or Brașoveanu (see Gabriel Andreescu, "Dissidence in Romania", in print).



protocronism and nationalism into a popular show brimming with humor and naturalness. I would attribute to him the success of the “second edition” of the weekly *Academia Cașavencu* – a magazine especially popular among younger people but enjoying a much wider audience –, whose contempt of nationalism and orthodoxism has considerably limited the career of fundamentalist idiocies.

Some believe that Dinescu was especially sensitive to the Hungarian issue because his wife was half-Hungarian. Even so, this does not diminish his merits with respect to the Hungarian issue. A close relationship between the Hungarian writers in Budapest and the members of the Writers’ Union in Bucharest was established immediately after the revolution. The Union has systematically refused to be involved in the anti-Hungarian propaganda to which the regime and some of Iliescu’s in-house collaborators invited it. The general attitude of the Union’s magazines, with *Contrapunct*, the revelation of 1990, at the forefront, was anti-nationalist. Naturally, the founders of *România Mare* (both the magazine and the party) were themselves writers. But, symbolically speaking, they were the exception, while the Writers’ official association acted as a bridge for good relations with Hungarians.

One might argue that the very fact that some of the writers compromised by their deplorable support for Ceaușescu embarked on the nationalist cause was decisive for the anti-nationalist stance of the Writers’ Union. On the evening of March 19, 1990, after his meeting with Ion Iliescu, Daniel Vighi stopped by the offices of the Writers’ Union, then in Calea Victoriei 155. He found several dozens of writers under the shock of the (doctored) news coming from Târgu-Mureș. Most of them had been mobilized against the Hungarians, doubtlessly also by the deliberate efforts of some of the people there. It was extremely easy to create collective hysterias in those days, especially among writers possessed by their own egos. As late as 2001, one of the participants at the heated meeting at the Union’s headquarters (Angela Marinescu) pointed the finger to the GDS intellectuals, accusing them of a pact with the Hungarians.<sup>77</sup>

It is clearly impossible to put Dinescu, Ana Blandiana, Ioana Mălăncioiu, Mircea Martin, Alex. Ștefănescu, or Gheorghe Grigurcu in the same ballpark with

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<sup>77</sup> In an interview published in *Adevărul literar și artistic*.

Eugen Barbu, Adrian Păunescu, and Corneliu Vadim Tudor. Appealing to the latter group might have been a mistake on the part the scriptwriters and directors of Romanian nationalism. By exploiting such indecent cultural characters, they compromised once and for all their chances of eliciting anti-Hungarian responses among the large (and weighty) writers' group, as well as among members of other artistic unions.

If things actually turned out the way they did, it is also because of the crucial distance that the Writers' Union put between itself and nationalist politics. A comparison to its counterpart in Yugoslavia is doubtlessly worth a much more in-depth investigation. But although the Romanian Writers' Union has never been a militant in the field of Hungarian-Romanian relations, in the way the Group for Social Dialogue was in the early 1990s, it firmly supported the strong relations and the framework upholding the common interests of the two countries.

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The largest civic organization in Romania was founded in the fall of 1990. The origins of the Civic Alliance (Alianța Civică) lie in the crisis triggered by the miners' crusade of June 13-15, when Romania was on the brink of turning into a dictatorship, with the pro-democratic parties too weak and too removed from the people to react. It is difficult to believe that these parties would have been followed by the population in an appeal to defend the rule of law against the authoritarian upsurge. There were, throughout the country, only a few civic organizations one could count on in supporting human rights, democracy, and interethnic peace. But what could they do in front of political forces that had conquered the administrative apparatus, military institutions included?

Building the Civic Alliance was an operation that started at the Group for Social Dialogue around the end of June. This fact explains the multiethnic conception of the project.<sup>78</sup> Of the six organizations invited to cooperate in building the Alliance (the Group for Social Dialogue and the Independent Group for Democracy in Bucharest, the

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<sup>78</sup> Following the great anti-Iliescu demonstration of June 1990, several public personalities of the period, among whom Ana Blandiana, Petre Mihai Băcanu, Sorin Dumitrescu, Constantin Ticu Dumitrescu, gathered together at the headquarters of the daily *România liberă* in order to think up a solution for mustering civil solidarity. This nucleus of people, which was later going to play a crucial part in the life of the Civic Alliance, was invited to take part in the strategy initiated by the Group for Social Dialogue.

Timișoara Society, the Pro-Europe League of Târgu Mureș, the November 15 Association of Brașov, and Agora of Iași) at least three had multicultural affiliations or sympathies. Together, these groups laid the foundations of the Alliance, the emergence of which had a tremendous impact. Approximately 200,000 people answered to its appeals and took to the streets of Bucharest in the greatest political march since 1990. There had been no similar mobilization in the past.

The Civic Alliance Board of Directors included personalities such as Smaranda Enache and Péter Bányai.<sup>79</sup> The Târgu Mureș and Covasna branches of the Alliance consisted of Romanians and Hungarians, something exceptional in itself. Thought of as a multiethnic movement, it managed to persuade many people that an ample, nation-wide project could bring the two ethnic groups together. In January 1991, the Alliance elaborated and adopted a document on the Fundamental Rights and Freedoms and, in June, it issued a Statement concerning the rights of the minorities.<sup>80</sup>

The Alliance's great "interethnic test" came in the fall of 1991, when a new incitement campaign was on the verge of setting Transylvania on fire.

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<sup>79</sup> He will be the subject of later chapters.

<sup>80</sup> The first document was elaborated by Doru Cosma and Valeriu Stoica after I acted as an in-between for this initiative (which actually belonged to Mihnea Berindei); the second document was drafted by Smaranda Enache.

## 10. THE FALL OF 1991: THE 4<sup>TH</sup> ARMY IN TRANSYLVANIA AND THE STATE OF EMERGENCY

A bill on the organization of the Romanian Information Service (SRI) was submitted before the Romanian Parliament in the fall of 1991. The leaders of the former institution were practically asking for unlimited powers of surveillance, unlimited means of gathering and using evidence, and the right to own and operate businesses and engage in other economic activities. These were excessive powers to which the population was averse because the memory of the former Securitate's omnipotence was still fresh – after all, the SRI was operated by many of the old institution's cadres. The institution had to prove its usefulness once again, as it had done in the March of 1990. Moreover, Romania's Constitution was being finalized. Introducing a nationalist perspective in the Constitution was another important stake.<sup>81</sup>

The “Covasna-Harghita Report” was introduced before the Parliament as evidence of a Hungarian threat. The document directly incriminated the Hungarian population, which was the ethnic majority in the two counties, for having threatened and driven away the Romanians in the region. The scheme was an almost perfect replica of the anti-Albanian propaganda in Kosovo accusing the Albanians of having ousted the Serbs so as to justify repression.<sup>82</sup> For days on end the representatives of the extremist parties hollered accusations from the stand of the Parliament hall. The accusations themselves were hilarious, yet effective. The heat was being progressively turned up. Each new step of the extremist parties and their organizations was meant to amplify the instability.

The representatives of the Hungarian minority protested. Unrest was growing in Ardeal. To add insult to injury, the 4<sup>th</sup> Transylvanian Army, led by a general with close ties to the Romanian nationalist parties, declared the state of emergency. The carefully prepared, open confrontation seemed inevitable. A clash would have caused more dead

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<sup>81</sup> Principles such as “Romania is a national and unitary state” and “the foundation of the state is the unity of the Romanian people” made it into the final document.

<sup>82</sup> Recent studies have proven false the thesis which explains Serb immigration by means of an Albanian threat.

among the Romanians and the Hungarians, and would have pushed the the SRI empowering law through the parliament.

The *Mureș Gazette* (no. 2, November 11-18, 1991) described the situation in the following terms: “*recent military manœuvres in Harghita and Covasna, spectacular in their display of military arsenal, seem to spread to other counties as well. Sources within ROMPRES say that the citizens of Alba and Cluj counties will enjoy precious few silent nights this month, as the Commanders of the Transylvanian Army intend to operate a ‘chiefs of staffs application’ in which infantry, artillery, tanks and aviation sub-units will participate. A timely decision one might add, since if you read EUROPA, ROMANIA MARE or simply follow the TV series on Harghita and Covasna you might believe that an armed conflict between Romania and Hungary is imminent.*”

At that moment the Civic Alliance branch in Covasna had a literally life-saving initiative: it invited Romanian and Hungarians to fight together against the incitements. It was not a simple task to organize a meeting under the circumstances. Community leaders had to be involved. One had to have a significant number of protesters so as not to leave the impression of lack of support. And, by all means, provocations had to be avoided.

I left for the ethnically mixed city of Sfântu-Gheorghe, where I met Smaranda Enache, in order to address the townspeople. There were men in uniform all over the place. The demonstration attracted somewhere between 3,000 and 5,000 people. In the midst of the nationalist raging waters several thousand Romanians and Hungarians came together to say “No!” to extremism.<sup>83</sup> (Remember the Sarajevo demonstrations before the tragedy?)

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<sup>83</sup> The main part of the meeting consisted in reading the Appeal-Statement and the response to the demonstrators. Among the speakers: László Balogh (CA branch in Covasna), Diți Mihai (president of CA Covasna), Smaranda Enache (representative of the National Committee of PAC), János Papp (from the SINLAC Union in Sf. Gheorghe), Gheorghe Rățulea (an Orthodox priest in the city), Sándor Incze (Reformed minister), Rudolf Szabadai (UDMR Covasna). Among their views: any untrue statement in the Parliamentary Commission report on Covasna and Harghita acknowledged by the Parliament would create artificial and unjustified tensions; the report contains, alongside true events, a lot of fabrications and skewed interpretations. The Appeal stated that territorial separatism had never been a goal in the region and that peaceful cooperation was desired. It demanded that the authenticity of the documents that supported the report be ascertained, that the report itself be withdrawn, and that the denigration campaign be cancelled.

The meeting marked an important turning point in the evolution of events. The tension suddenly fell to acceptable levels. The Sfântu Gheorghe initiative during that heated fall showed how much the Civic Alliance counted in the prevention of bloodshed. In my view, this was the most spectacular instance of Alliance involvement in interethnic relations, before its enthusiasm for multiculturalism started to wane.

## 11. WHO ARE THE EXTREMISTS AND WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE?

What I've written so far conjures in my mind images of real, flesh-and-blood actors, people alive before a smokescreen. Yet the actors behind the screen of smoke are impossible to miss. Who are they? And how can we air out the smoke?

In some cases the true identity was never hidden. Such is the case of the Romanian Hearth (Vatra Românească), a nationalist movement among the founders of which was President Ion Iliescu. The Hearth gave birth, a year after its conception, to the Party for the National Union of Romanians (PUNR), a political group with a lot of regional clout and an anti-Hungarian platform initially headed by Radu Ceantea. PUNR became very visible under its next president, Gheorghe Funar (the incumbent mayor of Cluj).

As for the (then) second major actor of nationalist extremism in Romania, the Greater Romania Party (PRM), it was founded on June 24, 1991 by Corneliu Vadim Tudor and his fellow travelers from the *protochronist*<sup>84</sup> camp, the former Securitate, and the old lackeys of the Ceausescu regime. Although PRM has often referred to the Jewish and Roma issues, the anti-Hungarian dimension of its rhetoric is dominant. Both parties above have other ideological underpinnings, which I shall leave aside in what follows.

So what is the identity of these two actors of Romanian extremism? I will let the following quotes (picked up from a study I co-authored with Renate Weber and from another by Valentin Stan) speak for themselves. It's a telling sample of the type of discourse PUNR and PRM are articulating at the end of the millennium (to save the best for last, I first quote Funar and then Tudor):

“As it is well-known, the nomad spirit and the barbaric lifestyle of the Hungarian people and its minority in Romania have hardly vanished during the last 1000 years. Maybe we, Romanians, will have to cure them of this embarrassment and turn them into a peaceful, civilized European people that will no longer covet foreign lands. God forbid they should once again extend their paws toward Romanian

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<sup>84</sup> [to be explained]

territories.” (Interview with Gheorghe Funar, October 27, 1994, *Informația zilei*, Satu Mare)

“Hungarians are ... the descendants of a barbarian people that came to Europe a thousand years ago. The period seems not to have been sufficiently long to make them adapt to the requirements of European, civilized behavior.” (PUNR communiqué published in *Cronica română*, Anul III, no. 616, January 27, 1995)

“Through our ancestors and forefathers we have twice reached Budapest. We freed them from the Soviets, then from the fascists, and God forbid we should get there a third time, because this time we would not come back and we’d turn Budapest into a Romanian province. It’s up to them.” (PUNR communiqué published in *Cronica română*, Anul III, no. 616, January 27, 1995)

“We shall add to all this the beastly train-attacks perpetrated by Asian hordes imbued with alcohol and sanguine hatred, beating poor Romanians with chains and poles simply because they speak Romanian!” (Corneliu Vadim Tudor, “Atenție la Ungaria” (5), *România mare*, Anul I, no. 18, October 5, 1990)

“Which is to say that the Hungarians, who come from Asia, are preventing us, who are Latin and European by descent, from playing a part in the concert of values of our own continent!” (Corneliu Vadim Tudor, “Ardealul, Ardealul, ne cheamă Ardealul!”, open letter to President Iliescu, *România mare*, Anul I, no. 27, December 7, 1990)

“We hold no grudge against anyone but if this people is mocked at and deliberately agitated, then there shall come a time when this country’s healthy forces shall ask for a National Referendum to show whether known traitors should live in this country, and if they shouldn’t – then they should be thrown out for good! For the peace of over 20 million Romanians it’s worth to rid ourselves of a few bad apples, no matter what what Western occultists will say about it.” (Corneliu Vadim Tudor, “Trădarea de țară”, *România mare*, Anul I, no. 9, August 3, 1990)

“It is in the best interest of European peace and stability that paramilitary bodies and political tumors such as UDMR should be immediately silenced, in order to save human lives and to observe human rights and international treaties.” (PRM



communiqué, “Pactul cu diavolul horthyst”, PRM Press Conference of February 3, 1995, reprinted in *România mare*, Anul VI, no. 240, February 10, 1995)

“It is my belief that in mentioning the descendants of these barbarians we are not offending the Hungarian nation – on the contrary, we are providing authentic, historical texts which prove that their origins were those of primitives, something we ourselves have never been.” (Corneliu Vadim Tudor, speech of February 7, 1995, at the working session of the PDSR, PUNR, PRM and PSM, published in *România mare*, Anul VI, nr. 241, February 17, 1995)

“Some people have mentioned a so-called cleansing in the armed forces requested by Mr. Funar, but here is what representative Col. Ioan Tanasă showed me ... ‘information on the Mountain Rangers battalion from Miercurea-Ciuc: over 50 percent are Hungarians from the region. This means they have 1000 armed soldiers.’ We have to take steps. Naturally, according to our Constitution, members of minority groups enjoy equal rights. But when there is such a potential for conflict, when we know only too well that they organize themselves in paramilitary fashion, grouped according to their home address, street, locality, town, city, by means of military draft... do you realize what a few platoons consisting of several thousands of armed soldiers could do? ... Can we let Hungarians hold key positions with the Mountain Rangers? ... Should we let Hungarians get their hands on Mountain Ranger guns?” (Corneliu Vadim Tudor, speech of February 7, 1995, at the working session of the PDSR, PUNR, PRM and PSM, published in *România mare*, Anul VI, nr. 241, February 17, 1995)

## 12. THE FAMILIAR FACE OF CHAUVINISTIC NATIONALISM

What did the anti-nationalist attitudes in the press which helped save Romanian-Hungarian relations in 1990 and 1991 look like? Here is a sample<sup>85</sup> – now a thing of the past, both in terms of style and substance – published by the weekly 22 under the title “The Familiar Face of Nationalist Chauvinism”:

**“What nationalism is not.** The great perversity of chauvinistic nationalism comes from the fact that it claims to be something it is not – chauvinistic nationalism is the opposite of national interest, economic development, and the nation’s spiritual affirmation. Wherever it arose during the past century – in Germany, in Japan, in today’s (or yesterday’s) Yugoslavia – the nationalist neurosis proved harmful. The preoccupation of small communities with their destiny (witness the recent liberation of the Baltic states) is not a similar example, for chauvinistic nationalism does not focus on the identity of self-proclaimed communities – rather, it constrains and attacks the identity of others. In other words, *chauvinistic nationalism is not a form of traditionalism*. The way in which the 1<sup>st</sup> of December was celebrated a year ago, or the hilarious commemorations of the 119<sup>th</sup> year or the 173<sup>rd</sup> year since this or that particular event are actually a mockery of Romanian symbols. This kind of boastful nationalism compromises the very spiritual identity it so ardently advocates.

**Chauvinistic nationalism does not care about collective values.** On the contrary, it speaks to individuals with a penchant for authoritarianism, to adventurers, to the paranoid and the frustrated. To what class of politicians do political clowns such as Radu Ceantea, Vasile Moiş or Gh. Dumitraşcu belong? How did they get to speak in our name and to decide what our national interest is? Of what service can their aberrations be, and how can the behavior of the Greater Romania and the Romanian Hearth assist us in our tasks?

**Nationalistic chauvinism is not a social resource but a mechanism that exhausts the nation’s energies.** What are the promises made by nationalism? It seeks to outlaw groups that defend human and minority rights or foster good relations with the

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<sup>85</sup> [date, author]

West, treating them as groups pursuing anti-Romanian goals; to bury a growing share of the budget into the Ministries of Interior, Defense or the SRI; to create border tensions, to worsen our international relations by blocking precisely the positive assertion of Romanian society which it demagogically claims to support! These are hardly the adequate means of securing Romania's position in the world. Today's nationalists are, simply put, working against the national interest.

**The problems of the minorities are the problems of the majority.** Like in any other unfortunate place in the world, the nationalist crusade is targeted at the ethnic minorities (the Hungarians, the Gypsies and the Jews) or at the religious ones (the Greek-Catholics). Romanians who have spoken on behalf of others' rights to a specific identity were harshly criticized. They were blamed for not taking care of the rights of Romanians: shouldn't we, Romanians, take care of our own problems first of all? Indeed we should. But the problems of minorities are also the problems of the majority. The position occupied by the minorities is a close reflection of the level of tolerance and civilization prevalent among the majority group in that particular society. The laws that defend small groups against the arbitrary will of larger ones also protect the majority against the evils that can come from within itself. It is for this reason that the modern world has turned minority rights into an index of democratic health. If we wish to live in a democracy, we have to defend the Western standards in this respect. We have had the opportunity to see the relation between the two at work, albeit in a negative manner. The rebirth of the Securitate after the violence in Târgu-Mureș hurt the Hungarians but it hurt us as well. The loss of credits due to collective *vendettas* is measured in dollars per head. Ethnicity does not matter. But leaving financial or image issues aside, we still have to ask ourselves what kind of respect for our own community can coexist with the need to limit the identity of others?

**Self-consciousness and learning from others: complementary rather than opposite.** There is something shocking in the behavior of our co-nationals: the total lack of interest in the logic of the phenomena that surround us. Their self-sufficiency and self-infatuation are the first signs of xenophobia. Some people in the Romanian Parliament vociferously claim that we do not need to be given lessons from anybody.

Mr. Vulpescu threatens us with closing the borders. Is this a sign of self-consciousness? Facing one's condition does not mean that one should not learn from others. Self-consciousness and willingness to learn from others are not opposites but complementary attitudes. The Japanese are a living proof: in their country, which is closed to immigration, and in the midst of their powerful (and authentic) traditionalism, they can discover, record, follow, change and copy what they feel is worth emulating. They do it with modesty, the corollary of which is the willingness to receive. Their resounding success doubtlessly owes something to this as well.

**Ludicrous nationalism: Art. 4 of the Constitution.** Art. 4 of the Romanian Constitution, according to which the "State foundation is laid on the unity of the Romanian people", with Romania being "the common and indivisible homeland of all its citizens, without any discrimination on account of race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, sex, opinion, political adherence, property or social origin" was voted by the Parliament on September 12. But the state is determined by the territory and by legislative unity. For this reason, the distinctive sign of belonging to a state is citizenship, not ethnic origin. To define the state by means of an ethnic group, as Art. 4 does, it is to say that its citizens are not equal. UDMR's concerns, which prompted the resignation of Károly Király, are understandable. But, again, let us not focus on the others' responses. What is really important is the embarrassing fact that our Constitution contains articles, the dilettantism and bad faith of which ought to make us feel ashamed.

**Is our nationalism fascist or communist?** Communism is (or was) internationalist; fascism was nationalist. These ideological connotations are almost worthless for the purpose of coming to terms with the evolution of post-totalitarian societies in Eastern Europe, a region which is now going through a period of nationalist revival. The Romanian Securitate has been preparing for several decades a nationalist diversion as an antidote to social unrest – hence the effectiveness of nationalism after the revolution. Eugen Barbu, C.V. Tudor and the other nationalist mercenaries close to *România mare* and *Europa* used to be communist mercenaries. It is no less true that notorious fascists – such as, first of all, Iosif Constantin Drăgan – were part of the

chauvinistic, antisemitic, and xenophobic propaganda. The latest available evidence shows, however, that fascist networks in the West have been unscrupulously used by the communist secret services.<sup>86</sup> Today, those who belong to these ideological groups have mixed with each other. Labels do not matter any more. What matters is to get back in power and, in Eastern Europe at least, nationalism seems to be the best means to that end.

**The critics of anti-nationalism.** A reproach, natural up to a point, leveled against the critics of our nationalist and chauvinistic forces, whether “independent” or regimented (PUNR or PRM), is that they do not simultaneously accuse Hungarian nationalists, or gypsy representatives who do not pay enough attention to the rate of crime in their community etc. Those who reject nationalism, it is said, reject it no matter where it comes from. But it would be hilarious to add to one’s criticism of *România mare* a similar criticism of *Tromf*. There is also a more profane explanation of this asymmetry: while Romanian language is widely accessible to Hungarians, the opposite is not true. Such a limitation would have to be overcome, had the issue not been somewhat different. It is natural for us, Romanians, to pay more attention to our failings, just as it would be natural for Hungarians to attend to theirs. No side has been, so far, intransigent enough with respect to the excesses of their co-nationals (indeed, Hungarians have a dismal record in this respect), which suggests that, for the future, intransigence toward chauvinism could be a solution to the national crisis.

**Political hypnosis.** There is a discouraging lack of political culture not only among those who have all the reasons for falling (or letting themselves fall) into the trap of chauvinistic nationalism, but also among those really interested in democratic values and human rights. Nationalist texts or statements have been published over the past couple of years in *Dreptatea*, *Agora* (the journal of the Anti-Totalitarian Democratic Forum in Cluj), in *Contrast* in Costanța etc. Maybe these were innocent, youthful excesses. But it has become apparent that not making mistakes yourself is hardly sufficient. For almost a whole year nationalism has become a major political issue. It might become downright explosive in the days to come. Faced with such circumstances

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<sup>86</sup> See Thierry Wolton, *KGB en France. Le réseau Caraman*, Paris: Grasset, 1986.

politicians seem to act as if under hypnosis. Virtually no political group (with the Civic Alliance as a notable exception) has turned the question of nationalism into a constant issue of its policy. (PAC continues to include among its documents the Statement on Ethnic, Linguistic and Religious Communities voted at the AC Congress.) When confronted with the primitive diversion known as the Harghita Report, opposition MPs behaved as if it were possible to actually misunderstand the nature of this document. As a matter of fact, members of the PNL, PNȚCD, MER and of the parliamentary commission all signed the Report. Can they fail to see that its target were not the minorities but democracy itself? Can they fail to see how irresponsible these ethnic games are?

In the summer of last year, as he was busy building bridges to the Romanian Hearth, Petre Roman was warned that his own quality as a “true-blue Romanian” would sooner or later be contested. Which is precisely what *România mare* did in its campaign against the prime minister before his fall. Few people are aware of how Roman was attacked a few days ago, as he asked FSN members to exercise more caution in voting the anti-minority articles of the Constitution. (Tomorrow it will be the turn of Radu Câmpeanu and other former exiles who consented to this duplicitous game.) The Front had already been swallowed by the Romanian Hearth before it was constrained by post-electoral necessities. This connection between the Front and extremism brought about the victory of old apparatchiks (now members of FSN, PUNR, PRM, PDAR etc.) in political, administrative and probably also in economic life. That all restraints have been let aside should be obvious to all of us. We should not have been surprised when Dan Mărțian started counting in the Parliament; when Alexandru Bârlădeanu requested that voting procedures in the Parliament be suspended; when the basic instruments, the Constitution and the Local Administration Act took the shape of pathetic expressions of political obtuseness; or when Gen. Cheler started to play war in the middle of the Ardeal.

Nationalism is wrecking havoc in Yugoslavia. It is experiencing revival in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and the USSR. Ethnic and racial crime is on the rise in Western Europe. There is not much on the continent today that is truly