

THE HUNGARIAN MINORITY AND COMMUNIST REGIME IN ROMANIA: RELIGION AND NATIONALISTIC POLICY, 1968-1989

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In the first years of Communist regime, the Hungarians living in Romania enjoyed a privileged treatment as compared with the interwar period, being one of the most favored minorities¹. The creation of an autonomous region for communities living in the East of Transylvania – the Hungarian Autonomous Region (HAR) – came as an implementation of the Stalinist model of territorial reorganization, the national question being thus given a “solution” in the internationalist spirit². The region functioned after principles similar with those applied to other administrative units. However, its ethnical composition was obvious, as underlined in its appellation. (In time, the region would gradually lose its autonomy³). The administrative-territorial reorganization of the 1950s did not solve the question of the Hungarian minority: there were many Hungarians living outside the Autonomous Region. Moreover, the creation of the HAR had caused considerable discontent among some of the Romanians, who had a vivid memory of the humiliations suffered during the Horthist occupation. Nonetheless, one may assume that this territorial-administrative reorganization, by which the borders of the old counties had been dissolved, persuaded many Hungarians in Romania to accept the territorial *statu-quo* established at Trianon and reconfirmed by the Peace Treaty of February 1947, and search for new solutions to their specific problems, within the framework provided by the institutions of the Romanian State⁴.

The adhesion of the great majority of the Hungarians, after 1947, to the cause of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP/RWP), or to the Hungarian Popular Alliance (HPA), is still subject to debate. There are several sources illustrating the gathering of an anti-Communist opposition in the Hungarian community,

¹ Robert R. King, *A History of the Romanian Communist Party*, Stanford, 1980, p. 129

² Smaranda Enache, *The Unitary State Versus Minority Rights*, in “Uncaptive Minds”, vol. 9, 1997, nos. 3-4 (33-34), p. 81.

³ Lucian Nastasă, *Studiu introductiv*, in *Minorităţi etnoculturale. Mărturii documentare. Maghiarii din România (1956–1968)*, eds. Andreea Andreescu, Lucian Nastasă, Andrea Varga, Cluj, 2003, p. 46.

⁴ Zoltán Kántor believes that the year 1945 marked the end of the irredentist dream; *Nationalizing Minorities and Homeland Politics: The Case of the Hungarians in Romania*, in *Nation-Building and contested identities: Romanian and Hungarian Case Studies*, eds. Balázs Trencsényi, Dragoş Petrescu, Cristina Petrescu, Constantin Iordachi, Zoltán Kántor, Budapest-Iaşi, 2001, p. 271, n. 15. However, things seem to have been far more complicated: based on archive sources, Prof. Dumitru Şandru believes that many Hungarians living in Transylvania, at least in 1944-1946, were still nurturing revisionist hopes – *Minoritatea maghiară din Transilvania după 23 august 1944*, in “Acta Musei Porolissensis”, t. XIX, 1995.

especially in areas in the Szeklers' Land, around Bishop Márton Áron, head of the Roman Catholic diocese of Alba Iulia, an ecclesiastic figure enjoying great popularity in the rural Catholic region. The Hungarian village, as well as the Romanian village, remained conservative and tributary to the old cultural and religious tradition, at least in the first decade of the Communist regime. The Hungarians and the Romanians were living under the same totalitarian regime, whose atheist dimension prompted some individuals to seek ways to collaborate or work towards the settling of a "non-aggression pact". The former Orthodox Bishop of the Army, Partenie Ciopron, seems to have tried to approach the Catholics, in an attempt to oppose the "Communists without God". At the end of 1948, the *Securitate* noted that Partenie Ciopron and the Catholic prelate Márton Áron had agreed "not to attack one another, and thus give satisfaction to the «pagans»"⁵. Bishop Márton Áron was arrested a few months later and, based on some allegations of having undermined the territorial integrity of the state, was sentenced in the Summer of 1951 to forced labor for life⁶.

Robert King and other authors saw in the year 1956 a crucial moment in the life of the Hungarian minority. The anti-Communist movement in Hungary, also voicing territorial claims, determined the leadership of the RWP to monitor the public opinion very closely⁷. On October 24, 1956, the Political Bureau of the CC of RWP decided that the Catholic Church should be placed under surveillance, and Bishop Márton Áron to be retained in house arrest in Alba Iulia⁸. Márton Áron would actually be confined to his quarters until the autumn of 1967. After 1956, in response to the suspicions at the top leadership of the RWP, new additions were made to the "object of interest" of the *Securitate* – all the potentially dangerous individuals in the records of the political police – under the rubric "irredentists". Their number would increase year after year, as the regime was opening its eyes to the benefits of "national" Communism. The merging of the two Universities in Cluj in the spring of 1959⁹ rose considerable concern among the Hungarian intellectuals in Transylvania, as well as among the Communist leaders in Budapest, who, during their talks with their comrades in the RWP, asked for an explanation.

The aim of this study is to shed light on the attempts made by the *Securitate* to employ the clandestine Greek Catholic clergy and believers in the annihilation of the so-called "irredentist danger" embodied by some priests and prelates mostly Roman Catholic, such as believed the organs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

⁵ The Central Historical National Archives, the General Department of the Police fund, file 75/1946, p. 447

⁶ Ovidiu Bozgan, *România versus Vatican. Persecuția Bisericii Catolice din România comunistă în lumina documentelor diplomatice franceze*, Bucharest, 2000, p. 49.

⁷ 1956. *Explozia. Percepții române, iugoslave și sovietice asupra evenimentelor din Polonia și Ungaria*, eds. Corneliu Mihai Lungu, Mihai Retegan, Bucharest, 1996, p. 25.

⁸ *Ibidem*, document no. 12, p. 77.

⁹ For details, Rafael D. Chelaru, *Crearea Universității «Babeș-Bolyai» și reforma învățământului în limba minorităților. Cazul János Fazekas*, in Romulus Rusan (ed.), *Anii 1954-1960: fluxurile și refluxurile stalinismului*, Bucharest, 2000.

Both the (Romanian) Greek Catholics and the (Hungarian) Roman Catholics were perceived as “dangerous elements” by the Communist regime. However, starting with the end of the eighth decade, the *Securitate* considered employing the national feeling as a weapon against the Hungarians living in Romania, who were identified with the “national-irredentist” camp. In order to facilitate “collaboration” in exposing “irredentism”, the censorship of the national-communist period encouraged or closed an eye to the “recuperation” by Romanian historiography of some Greek Catholic clergymen who had not returned to Orthodoxy, and who not very long before had been considered guilty of “crimes against the State”. One should also note the significant developments in neighboring Hungary, which influenced the propaganda and activity of the Communist regime in Bucharest in its national and religious policy. The present approach, which lays considerable focus on Bishop Márton Áron, is mainly based on the *Securitate* sources : reports, synopses, informative notes of the First Direction (Internal Intelligence), DIE/CIE (Romanian Espionage Service) or of the County Inspectorates of the *Securitate*. Specialized studies and memoirs were also employed.

In the early 1950s, the Roman Catholic Church was in a difficult position: tolerated in the Communist Romania, it nevertheless suffered persecution. The Roman Catholic prelates such as Márton Áron, Anton Durcovici, Alexandru Cisar, Hieronymus Menges, Augustin Pacha, János Scheffler, and Iosif Schubert were arrested one by one, or were confined to their residences. After the suppression of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church by the Stalinist decree of 1948, its theological academies also disappeared. Thus, the young clandestine Greek Catholics turned to the Roman Catholic establishments for higher theological education. The only institute of Latin Rite in Romania being in Alba Iulia, several Greek Catholics interested in studying Theology applied there, with the knowledge and consent of Bishop Márton Áron. The assistance provided by the Roman Catholics to the Greek Catholics was placing both parties in great danger, as the *Securitate* was keeping under close scrutiny all the Latin Diocese Centers. General Nicolae Pleșiță, former head of the *Securitate* in the Cluj region (1962-1967), making reference to the severe surveillance of the Bishopric of Alba Iulia, convened that, “while keeping Márton Áron under surveillance, at a certain point, we found that there was no more room for the file cabinets. Everything was being recorded”¹⁰. Moreover, in order to discourage the Romanian Greek Catholics from attending the Roman Catholic churches in the Banat and Transylvania, the authorities took some aberrant measures: for example, in the spring of 1956, the use of the Romanian language in the churches of Latin rite belonging to the Hungarian and German communities was banned¹¹. The absurdity of these

¹⁰ *Ochii și urechile poporului. Convorbiri cu generalul Nicolae Pleșiță. Dialoguri consemnate de Viorel Patrichi în perioada aprilie 1999-ianuarie 2001*, Bucharest, 2001, p. 147.

¹¹ The Romanian Intelligence Service Archives – Arhiva Serviciului Român de Informații, Documentary fund (hereafter ASRI, fund D), file 20, vol. 18, p. 26; Ioan Ploscaru, *Lanțuri și teroare*, Timișoara, 1993, p. 297.

measures taken against the Romanian language in the Transylvanian churches continued into the first decade of the Ceaușescu regime, claimed as the time for rediscovery of national values.

Nicolae Ceaușescu eliminated the Stalinist territorial structures: the administrative reform of February 1968 dissolved the Mureș Hungarian Autonomous Region and replaced it with 3 counties – Covasna, Harghita, and Mureș. When recalling this important moment, General Ionel Gal suggested that the opposition put up by the district bureaus of the RCP of Miercurea Ciuc and Odorheiu Secuiesc, with an important Hungarian composition, brought back to life some “nationalist, revisionist and revanchist organizations”, and fuelled the protests of the population in the Szeklers’ Land¹². On this backdrop, the fears and suspicions of the Communist power in Bucharest, in relation to the so-called Hungarian irredentism, rose. Nicolae Ceaușescu’s visit to towns with an important Hungarian minority (Sfântu-Gheorghe, Miercurea Ciuc, Odorheiu Secuiesc), shortly after his radical anti-Soviet discourse of August 21, 1968, on which occasion his warring spirit softened down, may have been made on purpose¹³. Probably it was not a simple paranoia: Gáspár Miklós Tamás recalls that in the Summer of 1968, the Hungarian intellectuals in Cluj “were acclaiming the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the troops of Brezhnev and Kádár, in the hope for a revision of Trianon [Treaty]”¹⁴. Moreover, the USSR could have turned to good account the discontent of the Transylvanian Hungarians.

The leadership in Bucharest considered that neither the Communist leaders in Hungary nor the Hungarians living in Romania had accepted the Trianon Treaty. Also, it was believed that the efforts to bring back into discussion “the question of Transylvania” had in fact intensified after 1945¹⁵. Following orders from the top leadership, the *Securitate* was keeping a close eye on the support offered to the clandestine Greek Catholic clergy by the Roman Catholic Church, especially by the Bishopric of Alba Iulia, perceived as disloyal and irredentist. Moreover, with the permission from the authorities, the representatives of this Bishopric maintained contacts with the Holy See, a state “having supported the irredentist cause” in the past. Bishop Márton Áron continued to play an important role in the moral and even financial assistance provided to the Greek Catholics, and stated his position before the representatives of the Holy See¹⁶. The Roman Catholics from Moldavia were also offering spiritual and material support for the Greek Catholics.

¹² Ionel Gal, *Război și represiune în Ministerul de Interne 1965-1989*, vol. I, Iași, 2001, pp. 43-44. Many of Gal’s assertions should be taken with a grain of salt.

¹³ Robert R. King, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

¹⁴ G. M. Tamás, *Scrisoare către prietenii mei români*, in “Dilema”, IX, no. 416, 16-22 February 2001, p. 7.

¹⁵ For a general view, Cornel Burtică, *apud* Rodica Chelaru, *Culpe care nu se uită. Convorbiri cu Cornel Burtică*, Bucharest, 2001, p. 152.

¹⁶ Archive of the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives – Arhiva Consiliului Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității, Documentary fund (hereafter ACNSAS, fund D), file 69, vol. 3, p. 49.

The *Securitate* organs developed a real obsession with Márton Áron, and went as far as to draw up an accurate denominational map of Romania, which included, beside the Roman Catholic ordinariates, the vicariates etc., information on the attitude of every Roman Catholic priest. The clergymen of Latin Rite were labeled in relation to the position adopted towards the Bishop of Alba Iulia: agent showing attachment, agent with reserves, hostile-adept of Bishop Márton Áron, hostile without being an adept of Márton Áron, faithful to the regime, undecided-wavering, nationalist-without being an adept of Márton Áron, and, eventually, hostile and nationalist, adept of Bishop Márton Áron¹⁷. Without any doubt, all contacts with the exterior were being discouraged or kept under close surveillance. On November 20, 1967, Cardinal Franz König, Archbishop of Vienna, came to Romania at the invitation of Patriarch Justinian Marina, and insisted on meeting with the Roman Catholic higher prelates, especially with Márton Áron¹⁸. The request must have come as a surprise to the Communist authorities, since only on November 21, 1967 were the restrictions lifted. Márton Áron was brought to Bucharest, not before being asked – to no avail – to accept certain conditions¹⁹.

Industrialization and the policy of homogeneization of the society put into practice by Nicolae Ceaușescu, and perceived by many minoritarians as a form of “Romanianization”, altered the Romanian / Hungarian ratio in the urban areas²⁰ and generated various protests. In a report by the First Direction of the General Direction of Internal Intelligence, dated March 5, 1968 and entitled *Date privind organizarea Vaticanului* (Information on the Organization of the Vatican), the following charges were brought against the Hungarian prelate of Alba Iulia: “Bishop Márton Áron, assuming the role of ‘defender’ of the co-inhabiting Hungarian nationality, has never ceased to show hostility towards our regime and fuel the hatred between the Hungarians and the Romanians. Therefore, during his meetings with two citizens of the Sândominic commune²¹, Mureș County, he declared, «yes, a complete Romanianization has been undertaken for years; it is what I fear most... These are terrible, unconceivable things. There is nothing we can do about this. For the time being, we can only bear up and keep our religion and nationality, whatever the cost. The fact is that we do not have a Germany to support us»²² And, further on the *Securitate* noted: “from the documents in the file, it appears that the person in question calls upon the priests in the diocese of Alba Iulia to carry out a more sustained religious activity, as the only means to maintain the spirit and conscience of the Hungarian nationality, to remind the

¹⁷ Ibidem, vol. 2, p. 23.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 15. The Archbishop of Vienna inquired precisely about the situation of the Roman Catholic Church, after denunciation of the Concordat, and the number of students at the Theological Institute of Alba Iulia.

¹⁹ Árvay Zsolt, *20 de ani de la moartea Episcopului Márton Áron (1896-1980)*, in “Actualitatea creștină”, XI, no. 9, September 2000, p. 11.

²⁰ Lucian Năstăsă, *op. cit.*, pp. 64–65.

²¹ The place of birth of the Hungarian prelate.

²² ACNSAS, fund D, file 69, vol. 2, p. 21.

Hungarian of their duty to act for the retrocession of Transylvania (sic!) and counteract the so-called process of Romanianization, allegedly taking place in Transylvania. On several occasions, against the advices of the Department of Religious Cults, Márton Áron called upon the priests in his diocese to intensify the catechization of school pupils. The purpose of this activity is to indoctrinate the children with the precepts of the Roman Catholic Cult in a nationalist and chauvinistic spirit, and constantly remind them that they are of Hungarian nationality. The children are being taught subjects exclusively linked to the life and activity of some chauvinistic personalities in Hungarian history and literature, and of some so-called Hungarian saints. It was assessed that M[árton] Á[ron] and most of the reactionary Roman Catholic priests are interested in making contact with the Vatican or the Catholic centers abroad, through legal and illegal means, approaching to this purpose tourists and people visiting their relatives, and transmitting information through these persons, some of this information being a secret of State²³. Márton Áron was actually accused of having shown hostility and providing “some slandering information about our country” to Monk Szócs Albert Dionisie, an American citizen of Hungarian origin. This was in general the jargon employed by the *Securitate* when priests or prelates conveyed information about the number of clergy imprisoned or having perished in the jails of Communist Romania. The bishop had noted that: “From the point of view of the Hungarian school and nationality, the situation is worse than it was in the darkest Fascist years”, and Fr Szócs Albert had assured him that, “in the USA he is regarded as a second Mindszenty²⁴, and that pressure *from the outside* had been exerted for his release and for an amnesty for the political prisoners. He also assured him that pressure would continue on the American senators to condition the signing of commercial treaties with the Socialist Republic of Romania on a number of concessions to the Church²⁵. It is difficult to assess the accuracy of the reported assertions of the Hungarian prelate, conveyed by informers or recorded through technical means of surveillance. Undoubtedly, they should be corroborated with other testimonies. A decade before, in the 1950s, prison had brought together Orthodox and Catholics of the two Rites, as well as Romanians and Hungarians. When the Greek Catholic priest Tertulian Langa insisted in the kitchen of the Aiud prison to confess to Márton Áron, the bishop had exclaimed: “what extraordinary things the Holy Providence has kept in store for me in prison ! The Romanians and the Hungarians have been enemies for hundreds of years, they hated each other, even if by the grace of God we have live and share the same air, the same bread, the same plot of land, and the same destiny in this world. Without this suffering brought upon us by the Communist regime I would have never known the Greek

²³ Ibidem, pp. 21-22.

²⁴ Several pastorals of Cardinal Mindszenty circulated in 1945 in the Romanian space, especially among the Hungarian Roman Catholic priests in the eparchy of Alba Iulia – ASRI, fund D, file 2327, p. 286. The special services of the time believed that the head of the diocese, Bishop Márton Áron, kept contacts with the Vatican through Mindszenty; ibidem, file 2325, p. 627.

²⁵ ACNSAS, fund D, file 69, vol. 2, pp. 21v.-22.

Catholic Church such as I know it now. In freedom, we were apart. A different understanding of history kept us apart, and we failed to see that we are all children of the same Father. If this is the only reason why I am now in prison, then I thank the Lord for having brought me here, to come to know the Greek Catholic Church and love the Romanians”²⁶. If the words of the bishop were recorded accurately by the *Securitate*, they should be understood in relation to a particular framework: since 1959, the Hungarians living in Transylvania had ceased to have an University²⁷, and since the end of the seventh decade, their share in the urban population had been on the decrease; all these aspects must have raised the concern of the prelate.

In 1975, the informative-operative surveillance work undertaken by the *Securitate* and DIE, was faced with a new and unexpected element: the Pope appointed a new bishop to the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church (for the diocese of Hajdúdorogh, which had survived the action of liquidation of East European “Uniatism” of the Stalinist time). This appointment was the starting point of some genuine theories of conspiracy, woven by the Intelligence service of the regime in Bucharest. A report by the *Securitate* noted that, “The purpose of the Vatican is unknown, but it can be related to the fact that, according to some information not yet corroborated, the situation of the former Greek Catholic Church in Romania can only be solved under the terms of an autonomy of Transylvania, or of its incorporation into Hungary, where there is a Greek Catholic Bishopric recognized by the State (the Bishopric of Hajdúdorogh) that would grant complete liberty to the Greek Catholics. This question has occurred and has been ever more frequently brought under discussion in the West, and it remains to be settled whether it has been raised by the Greek Catholic immigration of Romanian origin and the Hungarian immigration, or by other circles making irredentist propaganda, be they from the Vatican. On the other hand, it remains to be settled where the former Greek Catholic clergymen in contact with Bishop Márton Áron of Alba Iulia were in fact influenced by the latter into activities detrimental to the security of the Romanian State”²⁸. The question of the Greek Catholic Bishopric of Hungary seemed to be a familiar subject for some leaders of the RCP: General Nicolae Pleșiță declared that Emil Bodnăraș, who was in charge with the religious cults, had pointed out that this diocese played an evil part in the Magyarization of the Romanian area in northern Hungary²⁹.

The text quoted above is relevant for the image the *Securitate* had of the Romanian exile – in the service of the foreigners, ready for treason, etc. – and the survival of the clichés dating to the Stalinist time, if not to older times: the label of

²⁶ Tertulian Langa, *Dulci bucurii amare trăite în închisoare*, in “Viața creștină”, XI, no. 6 (244), March 2000, p. 6.

²⁷ Several professors at János Bolyai University decided to commit suicide before the merging with the Victor Babeș University; Magdolna Csegedi, Andrea Varga, *Relațiile româno-maghiare în anii '50- '60*, in “Sfera Politicii”, 2001, nos. 97-98, p. 84, n. 12.

²⁸ ACNSAS, fund D, file 69, vol. 3, p. 144.

²⁹ *Ochii și urechile poporului*, p. 140.

irredentist applied to Bishop Márton Áron, the Vatican supporting the anti-Romanian cause, etc. It is in fact an unjust accusation that the Catholic prelate was nurturing irredentist feelings, and a simplistic and more than questionable vision of the genre: “the Hungarians employ the Roman Catholic Church in their secessionist activities”³⁰. In stark opposition with the above, it was asserted that “Márton was a Hungarian, but a wise Hungarian”, and the testimonies of several Greek Catholic clergy are significant in this respect. One cannot deny, however, that certain Hungarian prelates, Catholic or Protestant, took anti-Romanian stands before and after 1989³¹, or showed only too little loyalty towards the Romanian State³². As noted by the Transylvanian Hungarian scholar G. M. Tamás, some Hungarian intellectuals living in Transylvania still held revisionist views in the seventh decade. On the other hand, the nationalist side of the regime in Bucharest could not foster loyalty from the Hungarian community in Transylvania.

The Final Act of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), signed in Helsinki on August 1, 1975, opened the way to international inquest on the treatment applied to the Hungarian community living in Romania. It also offered Hungary an important instrument of pressure and the opportunity to raise in the West the question of the limitations their conationals were faced with in Transylvania³³. The Final Act stipulated that the signatory countries pledged to observe the right of equality before the law of individuals belonging to national minorities, their human rights, and their fundamental liberties³⁴. The situation grew worse also due to the ever more frequent protests of some Hungarians living in Romania against what they considered to be a policy of assimilation and discrimination, culminating in the issuance of a *samizdat* in Hungarian³⁵. Király Károly himself, a Communist leader of Hungarian nationality, addressed several letters to the party leadership, expressing his discontent in relation to the treatment applied to the Hungarians living in Romania³⁶. The propaganda of the regime answered sharply: the official press, and even the history publications, began to publish the points of view expressed by some veteran Communists of Hungarian nationality, loyal to Ceaușescu³⁷.

Just as in the case of their colleagues of Orthodox faith or belonging to other denominations, only a small number of Hungarian Roman Catholic students of Theology or clergy were allowed to complete their education or make doctoral

³⁰ These clichés are still being used by former *Securitate* officers – *ibidem*, pp. 146-147.

³¹ For the post-December 1989 period, see the comments of Doina Cornea, a person no one could ever suspect of anti-Hungarian feelings; *Fața nevăzută a lucrurilor (1990-1999). Dialoguri cu Rodica Palade*, Cluj-Napoca, 1999, pp. 218-219, n. 88.

³² D. Șandru, *op. cit.*, pp. 402-403, 411.

³³ Dennis Deletant, *Ceaușescu și Securitatea. Constrângere și disidență în România anilor 1965-1989*, Bucharest, 1998, pp. 127-128.

³⁴ *Securitatea și cooperarea în Europa. Documente 1972-1989*, eds. Valentin Lipatti, Ion Diaconu, Bucharest, 1991, p. 39.

³⁵ Dennis Deletant, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

³⁶ Robert R. King, *op. cit.*, pp. 132 and 178, n. 33.

³⁷ Ladislau Bányai, *Aportul tovarășului Nicolae Ceaușescu la întărirea unității frățești dintre poporul român și naționalitățile conlocuitoare*, in “Revista de istorie”, t. 31, 1978, no 1.

studies abroad. The few who had the chance, continued their studies especially at the Germanicum–Hungaricum Institute of Vatican. Thus, during his visit to Romania of July 6–13, 1980, Theodor Beierle, rector of the Institute, insisted in his talks with the board of the Theological Institute in Alba Iulia that a greater number of students should be sent over to Rome³⁸. The hostility of the Romanian authorities towards the contacts of the Hungarian Theology professors and students with the West is quite evident. In his report of December 12, 1980 on the stage of the informative–operative activity among elements belonging to the theological establishments, Colonel Ioan Banciu noted that 97 “elements” especially were under informative surveillance, owing to their contacts with foreign citizens, heinous attitudes, and dissemination of information provided by capitalist radio stations. Most of them came from the Roman Catholic Institute in Alba Iulia, “where they are being inoculated Hungarian nationalist and irredentist ideas and beliefs”³⁹. Three professors of the Roman Catholic Theological Institute were accused of “having undertaken an activity of nationalist, chauvinistic and irredentist indoctrination among the pupils and students. As a result of this indoctrination, as well as of the education received by some of them in their families and at the parishes of origin, they carried on heinous activities materialized in a contestation of the continuity of the Romanian people on the territory of Transylvania”⁴⁰. The *Securitate* organs also resorted radical measures: a professor was questioned by the police, another lost his chair, and another one was under a sustained campaign which aimed to discredit him. To check off the possible creation of a common front against the regime, the *Securitate* sought to deepen the contradictions and create even more dissension within that community.

Any sign of solidarity with the «irredentism» disguised in clerical clothes was severely punished, regardless of the political or social position of the perpetrator. In 1980, Bishop Márton Áron died. On the occasion of the funeral service, the Hungarian Communist leader János Fazekas himself sent a crown of flowers, without notifying Nicolae Ceaușescu. The act of the vice prime-minister of Hungarian nationality, kept under the surveillance by the *Securitate*, was not without consequences: János Fazekas was taken under discussion by the Executive Political Committee, and was eventually forced out of his office under the pretext of an early retirement⁴¹.

In the mid-1980s, the tension in the Romanian–Hungarian relations was evident. The Hungarian Communist leaders were not only under the pressure for democratization and pluralism in their own country, but also required to become involved in the defense of the rights and liberties of the Hungarian minority in Romania. As noted by the literary historian Csaba G. Kiss in his essay of 1987, “the last fifteen years proved by means of very powerful arguments the incongruence of the idea that any interference of Hungary would be detrimental to the Hungarian national minorities in the neighboring countries. The Hungarian

³⁸ ACNSAS, fund D, file 69, vol. 2, p. 72.

³⁹ Ibidem, p. 65 v.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, pp. 65 v–66.

⁴¹ Rodica Chelaru, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

nationality in Romania lives its most precarious moment in its history of seven decades, and in Czechoslovakia a worsening in the condition of the Hungarian community has also been noted”.⁴² However, in the early 1970s, the Department for Science, Education and Culture of the CC of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party decided to encourage research on the cultural life of the Hungarians living in the neighboring countries, a scientific effort which materialized in the middle of the ninth decade⁴³. Thus, the bilateral Romanian-Hungarian relations embarked upon their most strained phase in 1986, with the publishing under the aegis of the Hungarian Academy of Science of 3 volumes devoted to *The History of Transylvania*⁴⁴. A year later, during a meeting of the Hungarian intellectuals at Lakitelek, historian Lajos Für pointed out to the necessity to assume historical responsibility, which implied an ever more increased preoccupation with the situation of the Hungarian minority living in countries neighboring upon Hungary⁴⁵. This point of view was eventually adopted by the Communist leaders, who were being faced with the acute problem of Hungarian refugees from Romania, and, on the other hand, wished to shed the image of an “antinational” party.

Tension in the Romanian–Hungarian relations also deepened owing to the attempt by the Communist power in Budapest to get the Hungarian Dissent of populist orientation, the Hungarian Democratic Forum, involved in a “democratic socialist” partnership⁴⁶. This organization was the expression of the nationalist and rural-Christian tradition, and the situation of the Hungarians living in the neighboring countries was a major preoccupation for its members. The demonstration organized by the Forum on June 27, 1988, under police protection, in support to the rights of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, created irritation in Bucharest. In the given context, some Greek Catholics – otherwise “hostile” and “dangerous” – were invited to contribute with material to the official anti-Hungarian propaganda. They were to make an inventory of the persecutions against the Romanians in Transylvania, and demonstrate the thesis of Romanian continuity north of the Danube. Some *Securitate* officers suggested, in various analyses, the recruitment of Greek Catholic intellectuals, who were to be encouraged “to present, within the country and abroad, their struggle against the policy of Magyarization by authorities in the Austrian–Hungarian Empire...”⁴⁷ In this way, the authorities would have been well served, and the activity of the clandestine Greek Catholics would have desisted. A report dated June 22, 1989 on the informative-operative

⁴² Csaba G. Kiss, *Europa Centrală, națiuni, minorități. Studii, eseuri, articole*, Sf. Gheorghe, 1997, p. 170.

⁴³ Gábor Vincze, *Intrigile campaniei antimaghiare din România*, in “Sfera Politicii”, 2001, nos. 97-98, p. 85.

⁴⁴ Katherine Verdery, *Compromis și rezistență. Cultura română sub Ceaușescu*, Bucharest, 1994, p. 209.

⁴⁵ Laszlo Deme, *Liberal Nationalism in Hungary, 1988-1990*, in “East European Quarterly”, t. XXXII, 1998, no 1, p. 61.

⁴⁶ Adrian Pop, *Tentația tranziției. O istorie a prăbușirii comunismului în Europa de Est*, Bucharest, 2002, p. 231.

⁴⁷ ACNSAS, fund D, file 69, vol. 3, p. 55.

stage in the Greek Catholic sub-problem, drawn up by the First Service of the *Securitate* Inspectorate of Prahova, noted that the History professor Anton Moisin, a Greek Catholic layman, was interested in obtaining a temporary visa for a trip abroad, “where he intends to publish several history books on the continuity of the Romanian people in the Carpatho-Danubio-Pontic space”⁴⁸. Despite the fact that Moisin was termed “a dangerous element”, kept under surveillance by the *Securitate*, no measures were put forward to prevent him or deny his request to leave Romania temporarily⁴⁹.

In the mid-1980s, some Greek Catholic clergy including Avisalon Costea and Ioan Costan became rather positive characters, even in the official Romanian historiography: they appeared either as victims of the Horthist authorities, or as opponents of the policy of Magyarization of 1940-1944⁵⁰. However, this did not prevent the *Securitate* from harassing and keeping them under surveillance. In a censored but still interesting book, Francisc Păcurariu evoked the figure of Ioan Costan as a “journalist” and militant for the Romanian cause endangered by the Horthist attempt to expropriate the border forests⁵¹. Bishop Iuliu Hossu, a victim of the “national” Communist regime, is painted as a prominent representative of the Romanians in Transylvania under Hungary’s domination, together with the “reactionary” politician Emil Hațieganu.

An even more interesting case is that of priest Avisalon Costea, head of a Greek Catholic Romanian community of the Szeklers’ Land, archpriest of Gheorghieni, who was questioned in 1946, by the order of Officer Iosif Kalousek, in relation to the organizing of some “illegal” meetings or allegedly reactionary activities⁵². Iosif Kalousek, head of the *Siguranța* (Political Police Department) of Brașov, a non-Romanian who belonged to the group of Vasile Luca, was subsequently enrolled in the Regional Direction of Brașov of the Political Police Department. One cannot speak of a preponderance of the minoritarians in the Political Police Department, the SSI (Romanian Intelligence Service) and, later on, in the *Securitate* (not even at leadership level)⁵³, such as today some former officers of the “patriotic” political police or pseudo-historians are trying to suggest. However, one may suppose that in the years of establishment of the totalitarian regime, the conflict between the Communist camp (with the repression apparatus on its side) and the democratic opposition was superposed with an interethnic

⁴⁸ Ibidem, vol. 1, p. 128.

⁴⁹ Anton Moisin published his research results after 1989 – *Continuitatea și romanizarea dacilor din epoca romană: sinteza noilor cercetări*, Bucharest, 1999.

⁵⁰ Mihai Fătu, Mircea Mușat (coord.), *Teroarea horthysto-fascistă în nord-vestul României septembrie 1940 – octombrie 1944*, Bucharest, 1985.

⁵¹ Francisc Păcurariu, *Românii și maghiarii de-a lungul veacurilor. Paralelisme, interferențe, convergențe și contradicții în cursul istoriei*, Bucharest, 1988, pp. 452, 487.

⁵² ACNSAS, fund D, file 56, pp. 138 et sqq.

⁵³ Dennis Deletant, *op. cit.*, p. 117; Florian Banu, *Profilul angajatului Securității în anii '50, în Totalitarism și rezistență, teroare și represiune în România comunistă*, ed. Gheorghe Onișoru, Bucharest, 2001, p. 84.

dispute, the Romanian-Hungarian tension being quite real in the eastern counties of Transylvania after 1944. Even if Avisalon Costea was the victim of double harassment (political and ethnical), he would be “recuperated” in the historical works of the national-communist period; without doubt, the inquests of the Political Police Department after 1945 were kept under silence. Undoubtedly, one should differentiate between honestly written historical books, paying tribute to censorship, and the xenophobe propaganda in historiography, possibly as detrimental as the Rollerism of the 1950s.

The organs of the *Securitate*, abusively and often without any ground, identified the prelates of Latin Rite in Transylvania with the nationalist-irredentist milieus aiming to dismember Romania. Especially in the ninth decade, the *Securitate* officers became very concerned about “the risk” that many Greek-Catholics, owing to the precariousness of their living, should fall prey to Hungarian influence and the irredentist circles in Hungary and in the West. A report of December 1989, signed by Colonel Gheorghe Rațiu, Head of the First Direction, noted that the Hungarian Roman Catholic hierarchy had intensified its activity of attracting the Greek Catholic prelates and believers living in Transylvania, by offering financial, moral, and canonic assistance, as well as by facilitating contacts with the Vatican⁵⁴. The informative reports of the *Securitate*, suggested that the Roman Catholic Church of Romania was (or should have been) divided by ethnical criteria: a *Romanian* Roman-Catholic Church (in fact the dioceses of Bucharest and Jassy) and a *Hungarian* one (the Bishopric of Alba Iulia), overlooking the fact that in Transylvania and the Banat there were also Romanian Roman Catholics, and in Moldavia, some of the *Csangos*, no doubt a minority, considered themselves Hungarians or Szeklers⁵⁵. At the same time, the *Securitate* organs were suggesting a solution liable to prevent the “enslavement” of the Greek Catholics into the irredentist cause. Therefore, the same report of December 1989, while pointing out to the financial assistance from Moldavia to the Greek Catholics, noted that: “by this system of financial assistance, the Romanian Roman Catholic Church wins over the non-converted priests, and extends its influence in Transylvania, to the detriment of the Hungarian Roman Catholicism. In the clash between the two Roman Catholic Churches (Romanian and Hungarian), on the backdrop of an intensification of the anti-Romanian actions in Hungary, the contribution of the Greek Catholics can become very important, given their profound anti-Hungarian feelings. We believe that in the present stage, supporting the Romanian Roman Catholic Church would lead to a decrease in the Hungarian influence among believers in Transylvania. The question of the aids is under control, and it is believed that, in points of tactics, to stop any financial assistance would make the

⁵⁴ ACNSAS, fund D, file 69, vol. 1, p. 5.

⁵⁵ According to the census of January 7, 1992, 669,420 Hungarians declared themselves Roman Catholics. The number of the Roman Catholic Romanians was of 361,324 individuals; *apud* Nicolae Edroiu, Vasile Pușcaș, *Maghiarii din România*, Cluj-Napoca, 1995, p. 36.

Greek Catholics without means give in to the urges of the Vatican and of the reactionary emigration, or side up with the Hungarian irredentists”⁵⁶.

In the late 1940s, the Communist leadership seemed to encourage the theory of Hungarian identity of the Roman Catholic population in Western Moldavia, by supporting the propaganda of the HPA, and the introduction of the Hungarian language in the local churches. However, in the 1980s, the situation had changed: the authorities in Bucharest tolerated the publishing of several studies and scientific works demonstrating the Romanian origin of the *Csangos*. These books, quite honorable in themselves, also lay on the desks of the *Securitate* offices (I have identified in the files, beside the informative notes, reports, analyses, etc., the photocopies of various works pleading for the Romanian identity of the Roman Catholics in Moldavia). The explanation of this change in attitude is quite simple: in the 1940s–1950s, the hypocritical discourse in favor of national minorities and the creation of autonomous regions after the Soviet model were predominant; towards the end of the regime, the struggle against “irredentism” and “chauvinism” had become a priority. It is quite sad that a scientific issue – the polemics between the Romanian and Hungarian historians around the origin of a population – was tributary to the influence of the political-ideological factor, both at the beginning of the Communist regime and in the 1980s. Without any doubt, this influence does not lessen the value of many books, written in good faith.

During the 1980s, the *Securitate* sought some “large-scale solutions” in order to fight irredentism «under its religious mask». While remembers this moment, general Nicolae Pleșiță declared in an interview after 1990: “I had asked Ștefan Andrei, the Foreign Minister, to try to persuade Ceaușescu that it would be a good idea to counteract the Hungarians by means of a Romanian Roman Catholic Church. This would also solve the question of the Greek Catholics (...). The Pope insisted on a legal statute to be restored to the Greek Catholic Church. We were buying time, in order to be able to offer him a Catholic Church of the Romanians”⁵⁷. The Communists seemed to believe that the question of the Greek Catholics could be solved by their integration in the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church, together with the Romanian *Csangos*.

Attila Varga believes that in 1985-1986, with tacit support from the State, action was taken in order to introduce the service in Romanian language in churches belonging to the Latin dioceses of Transylvania, with as an argument the increasing number of Romanian speaking Roman Catholics⁵⁸. Shortly before the collapse of the Communist regime, the plans of the *Securitate* also included the employment of the clandestine Greek Catholic believers, who attended service in churches of Latin Rite, so as to double or even limit the use of Hungarian language in these churches. This was a radical change set against the banishment of

⁵⁶ ACNSAS, fund D, file 69, vol. 1, p. 6.

⁵⁷ *Ochii și urechile poporului*, pp. 147-148.

⁵⁸ Attila Varga, *Reglementarea constituțională a Bisericilor din România începând cu 1918*, in “Altera”, II, 1996, no. 4, p. 122.

Romanian language in the 1950s–1970s. In 1989, at the instigation of informers in the Greek Catholic milieu, and in good agreement with the Department of Cults, the Romanian language was imposed, in addition to Hungarian, in the Catholic churches of Oradea, Cluj, Alba Iulia, Braşov, Arad, and Gheorghieni, where clandestine Greek Catholics were also attending service⁵⁹. According to a report by the First Direction of the *Securitate*, dated November 10, 1989, “similar actions are under way in the counties of Maramureş, Satu-Mare, Târgu–Mureş, and Bistriţa Năsăud, where the Greek Catholics request the service to be performed in Romanian language”. Undoubtedly, the project did not intend to oblige the Greek Catholics, still considered to be “the enemies of the people”, but rather to deal a blow at the Hungarian Catholics, and restrain the use of Hungarian language. Another target was the further tensioning of relations between the two communities in the Catholic Church, of Latin and Byzantine Rites.

One may conclude that to the *Securitate* the term of “irredentism” went well beyond the meaning established by the Dictionary of the Contemporary Romanian Language⁶⁰, approved by the censorship. The simple act of being in disagreement with the policy of the regime in the fields of minorities, religion, or education was in fact tantamount to “treason against the regime”, even if not followed by any open acts against territorial integrity. It is also true that, in the Communist and post-communist period, the Transylvanian Hungarians continued to live with certain obsessions: the impossibility to accept separation from the fatherland, and the revisionist corollary as an expression of this inability⁶¹.

Nicolae Ceauşescu’s desperate efforts to hold on to power by manipulating ethnic passions and frustrations were based on the activity of the *Securitate* organs, which had the task to struggle against Hungarian irredentism, be it real or imaginary. The Hungarians living in Romania were “scapegoats” to Nicolae Ceauşescu and, as a consequence, the annihilation project devised by the *Securitate* became diversified. The Greek Catholics did not fall into the traps set up by the *Securitate*⁶², and in December 1989, the solidarity shown by the Romanians to the resistance of a Hungarian Protestant priest sparked up the revolution⁶³. However, after December 22, 1989 the old disputes resurfaced: neither the Romanians nor the Hungarians were able to fully understand each other’s aspirations. The apex of the clash was reached in March 1990, in Mureş County, where the conflict took on a religious dimension, too. Could this have been a victory of the *Securitate* ?

⁵⁹ ACNSAS, fund D, file 69, vol. 1, p. 9 v.

⁶⁰ Vasile Breban, *Dicţionar al limbii române contemporane de uz curent*, Bucharest, 1980, p. 281.

⁶¹ Doina Cornea, *op. cit.*, p. 230. Mrs Doina Cornea believes that these obsessions are innocent dreams pertaining to a certain psychological attitude rather than to political extremism.

⁶² After 1989, the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic prelates were reunited in the Catholic Episcopate Conference, but the two communities and the politicians who advocated the idea of retrocession of the seized-up ecclesiastic property rather acted independently in the issued of a legal settlement of Church property.

⁶³ Unfortunately, after 1989, László Tökés assumed a radical standpoint, fairly close to political extremism.