

**Elöd KINCSES**

**BLACK SPRING**

Budapest-München 1992

Translated by Károly RAVASZ

Editor of the Englishlanguage edition  
Harry Richards

Copyright:  
Elöd KINCSES

ISBN: 963 8206 004  
Editor: PRESENT LTD  
Printed by MEDIANT  
Bukarest München 1992

## CONTENTS

Foreword, by Otto von Habsburg	1
Editor's Foreword	2
History, and Glossary of Terms	7
Who's Who	14

*Black Spring*  
*Romania's Path from Revolution to Pogrom*  
*December 1989      March 1990*

Revolution	21	
November: "This Troublesome Priest"		22
December: Common Triumph.		28
Politics, PostRevolution	35	
Early January: Afterglow		40
Late January: End of the Idyll	52	
February: Fatal Proposal		60
Early March: The War of the Statues		65
March 15; Into Crisis	70	
March 16: The Pharmacy Incident	74	
March 19: First Blood	82	
The Chronicle of the Pogrom of March 20	94	
After the Pogrom: Evil Compounded		117

## FOREWORD

One big problem facing Europe as it considers an unsettled future is the question of its various national minorities. Nearly every news item we read or hear today seem to confirm this.

In the last century, one could say that social questions occupied the centrestage in the political debate. The 19th Century's social challenge was duly addressed via the deadend of Marxist Communism, but also through the policies pursued more or less successfully down to this day by the Western democracies.

Now, since the death of Communist dictatorship, Europe's artificially dormant nationality problem has been again thrust forward, and it demands our urgent attention.

The Transylvania region in Romania with its Hungarian, German and other minorities is probably the part of Europe where the minorities dilemma is experienced at its worst. Yet is it a region whose dire problems are little understood by West Europeans. And the reports that do reach the Western massmedia are often falsified in the service of partisan interests.

It is quite clear that the Transylvania crisis has to be readdressed if the full extension of freedom into Central and Eastern Europe is to be completed.

Under these conditions, a factual report on the days between the Romanian revolution of December 1989 and the ethnic massacre in Transylvania three months later is welcome. This is especially so if it honestly describes the precedents we need to be aware of if we are to analyse and respond to the unfolding nationalities dilemma besetting this entire region of Europe.

In this sense, the testimony contained in the book *Black Spring*, by Elöd Kincses, will add much to our objective knowledge of the situation in this troubled, area. One hopes this book will be read by many and that it will help to form their opinion on the political destiny awaiting Europe.

*Otto von Habsburg*

## **EDITOR'S FOREWORD**

Ostensibly, this book could not appear in its English edition at a worst time. Today, all eyes are on the tragedy of the former Yugoslavia, where thousands have died. This book meanwhile describes a relatively minor incident that happened in the Romanian Transylvanian town of Tirgu Mures in March 1990, three months after the revolution that overthrew Ceausescu. A riot by local Romanians against members of the large Hungarian community. Five people battered to death on the streets. Why should we be concerned now with this obscure tale from a couple of years ago?

Various reasons. Setting aside the killings in the former republics of the Soviet Union which began before the death of Communism in the East and which will continue indefinitely into the future, the episode described here was the first warning that liberation from Communism does not mean liberation from ancient evil, but on the contrary invites the return of ancient evil. The pogrom of Tirgu Mures represented perhaps the "first blood" of the post-Communist settlement in Eastern Europe. Here, liberation turned to pogrom within three months. Our fortune is that Elöd Kincses, a clearminded lawyer, was present both as a major player in the events and as a witness to chronicle how the residual powers of evil achieved such a transformation.

But this book is far more than a simple morality tale: on the contrary, it is disgusting but also genuinely gripping to read such a dispassionate and "fair" narrative of such vile events.

Further, the poisons it describes in action are still at work in this part of the European body politic. And things tend to get worse. An independent Slovakia will include 600,000 Hungarians a little more than 10 percent of the total Slovak population. All the indications so far are that the Slovaks will not be kind to the minority rights aspirations of the Hungarians. Similarly, the 450,000 Hungarians living in the Vojvodina province of northern Serbia are threatened by the Serb power play that has so ravaged the former republics of Yugoslavia. It is no wild speculation to say that the Hungarian government may well find itself dragged into conflict with the rulers of Slovakia or Serbia to protect the Hungarian minorities there.

And in Romania itself, the situation for Hungarians has continued to worsen following the events described here. But Romania is more than twice the size of Hungary, and it is difficult to imagine what Hungary could do to protect its more than two million kin across the border in Transylvania. While the military option hardly presents a solution, however, it is still true to say that Romania's treatment of its Hungarian minority will remain a

source of continuing tension in an already volatile corner of Europe. A great war was sparked by events in the Balkans, we know. And although

2

it is not likely that this region's problems will ever provoke another great war, it would still be prudent to understand the story behind Europe's one remaining major political faultline.

Most sentient people three years ago would probably have said that they did not anticipate living to witness the demise of the 1945 Yalta postwar settlement. And yet Yalta is now no more. How doubly unlikely it ever seemed that the 1919 Versailles Settlement would be undone. And yet two of its major creations Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia are determined to selfdestruct. Will a third creation of Versailles modern day Rumania find the will to save itself from internal division and at the same time finally earn its place in the European House? Based on the evidence provided by this book, one would have to say that the jury is most definitely still out.

\*\*\*\*\*

I first met Elöd Kincses in February 1990, right in the middle of the period he describes in this book. It was then six weeks after the revolution that overthrew Ceausescu and in which Kincses played no small part and six weeks before the pogrom in Kincses's home town of Tirgu Mures that resulted in his flight into exile. It was a three-month metamorphosis from joy to vileness.

By chance, I interviewed several of the main characters who were later to figure in these pages. These included Kincses, the new administrator sitting in his county government office in Tirgu Mures. My reporter's brief was whither Romanian Transylvania following the fall of Ceausescu. The specific issue that swiftly emerged was why everyone was talking about the potential for violence between Romanians and Hungarians who so recently had been the united victors over Ceausescu?

These were some of the reporter's biographical notes on the players that I made then shorthand and crass:

Kincses. Top Hungarian in new postrevolution county administration. Jovial, amiable chap. Up to his ears in furore with Romanians over the restoration of separate language schooling for Hungarians.

Enache. Local Romanian intellectual who stood up for Hungarian rights to separate education and who gets lots of death threats. Sainly woman, deeply sad and harried. Goodlooking.

Judea. Colonel, top Romanian on the new town council. Supposed to be evenhanded. Slimy, reptilian, sweats a lot. Judea denies he ever said Enache deserves to die for what she said re the Hungarians.

Ceontea. Leader of local new, ultranationalist Romanian movement, *Vatra [Hearth]*. Hates Hungarians. Very scary, very violent. Could give Fascism a bad name.

3

I do not claim any great perspicacity by these remarks. Rather, these various qualities were - are - glaringly obvious to anyone with eyes, ears and a nose.

The shape of these three months under review aspires to high tragedy. Specifically, a Transylvanian Hungarian revolt against the common Ceausescu enemy that leads to the overthrow of that enemy and reconciliation with the Romanian community. The clock of eternal joy and brotherhood finally begins to tick. But then this movement swiftly finds itself confronting a new (or perhaps the original, old) enemy which destroys the hope of the revolution, splits the two communities, and turns on, kills and disperses the very people who initiated the overthrow of Ceausescu in the first place.

As high tragedy, the time-frame is too neat, the bewilderment of the relevant mortals too total, for us to find the plot at all plausible. For plausibility, for some stab at sense and meaning, we must rely on Mr Kincses and what he relates in his book.

Kincses is an unlikely hero within this drama. He was thrust into the storm by two roles which he did not seek: his lawyer's defence of Hungarian Pastor László Tökés in Tökés's stand against Ceausescu (the defiance that initiated the Romanian revolution), and high office in the post-revolutionary local council forced upon him because of the national prominence he gained through his defence of Tökés. The right comes to no man to judge whether the formerly un-controversial country solicitor was up to the task, or suited the part. Kincses played the hand that was hurriedly dealt him as best he could, never knowing at the time just how much the deck was always stacked against him and his people,

Kincses's book is sometimes frustrating. Not because his story is frustrating -the word is hardly adequate - but because of the way he insists on telling it. As he notes himself, he is not a politician or polemicist, but a

lawyer. And the lawyer in Kincses - one obsessed with the credibility of his evidence - emerges not only in what he says but also in what he refuses to say. The initial Hungarian version of this book was written in the late summer of 1990. It was a time when Kincses (and others) were still relatively ignorant of the true logic of events in post-revolutionary Romania. Though tantalizing flashes of initial suspicion are evident throughout the book. Now of course, Kincses (and others) know how unreformed and compromised the postrevolutionary regime of President Ion Iliescu insisted on being. And Kincses would probably have written a different book if he had started it later. But he refused to revise his original testament substantially, because - he argued - this would have involved hindsight. This is not boy scout's honour: in today's Romania (as in the old), credibility is a political weapon - for the lawyer as for anyone else. And Kincses did not want to be charged by his enemies with second-guessing his own or others' actions and motives during that time.

4

Indeed, it was only in the preparation of this English-language edition that Kincses specifically said how one Romanian died in the events of the night of March 20, 1990, in Tirgu Mures. This man's death was used by the Romanian nationalists as propaganda for their cause - still is - though it was clear that he was killed by the reckless driving of the colleague transporting him to the pogrom! But Kincses says that when he wrote the first, Hungarian, draft of this book, the coroner's report on this man's death had not yet been filed. And - despite his own knowledge of the reality - he did not wish to say anything that would have preempted the coroner. (Also read: As a prominent voice of the Hungarians, I did not want to say anything about this man 's death that come the inevitable whitewash of the official report could have been turned around and used as evidence of my lies and as a stick to beat us with.)

It is difficult for a Westerner to comprehend this climate of permanent self-restraint and abnegation under which the Hungarians of Transylvania have to live. It is similarly difficult for a Westerner to grasp the degree of State lawlessness and disregard for due process that has allowed - even encouraged - such a situation to persist. For, as Kincses wrote in 1990, the perpetrators of the crimes recorded here were never punished. Nor - if -s climate endures - will they ever be.

Indeed, it is Kincses who stands accused because of the events recorded here. After he fled Romania at the end of March 1990, Kincses became aware that "legal" measures had been prepared against him. It proved difficult to discover if a formal warrant existed, and if it did, what it

actually might say. But it appeared that more than two years after the violence, Kincses would have been arrested if he had returned to his home town and would have been charged with "incitement to murder" (initially, it was "incitement to genocide").

It is also difficult for a Westerner to believe that the main (ostensible) irritant that led to the pogrom of Tirgu Mures was the Hungarian agitation for the restoration of the mother-tongue schooling they had enjoyed in earlier years. But it is futile for outsiders to try to understand or respect the essential frivolity of the suspicions that certain Romanians harbour towards the aspirations of the Transylvanian Hungarian minority.

If one scratched a Transylvanian Hungarian and asked privately whether he believes his lot would have been easier if the Versailles Settlement had not given Hungarian Transylvania to Romania, he would probably reply that things would have been better for him otherwise. This is fair enough: ask an Irishman about Ulster. If one imagines however that a coherent policy existed among the Hungarians of post-revolutionary Tirgu Mures which anticipated or actively sought the reunification of Hungary with its lost Transylvanian lands, then one would have stumbled into total unreality. Of course not! How, exactly?

## 5

But the Romanians who flocked to join the *Vatra Romaneasca* (*Romanian Heart*) Organization in the months after the revolution did not accept this. They *did* believe in The Plot. They did regard the Hungarian yearning for schools teaching in the mother tongue to be the thin end of the wedge, leading remorselessly towards demands for the separation of Transylvania from the Romanian state. Kincses would not be so impolitic as to say it, but the neurotic cultural, intellectual and ethnic insecurity evidenced by this Romanian reaction to Hungarian aspirations is frightening to observe.

The activities of the *Vatra Romaneasca* organization run as a thread through this entire book. *Vatra* then called itself a cultural organization simply committed to defending Romanian interests in troubled times. With less kindness, one could regard *Vatra* as a poisonous conspiracy feeding from the deepest recesses of Romanian insecurity. The unanswered question then would be: who pulls the strings and what is the full agenda?

Yet *Vatra* thrives. And the conspirators who organized a pogrom remain unchained. And the authorities who gave *carte blanche* to their activities have never been called to account.

But Kincses would not now wish to overemphasize the role of Vatra Romaneasca in all of these events. For the present considers it more than ever to have been a front for other forces. Indeed, Kincses now agrees with those who say that the pogrom of Tirgu Mures was organized by a special unit of the Interior Ministry (Securitate) run by a certain Securitate colonel. He also now agrees that this special unit was responsible for organizing the invasion of Bucharest by a miners' mob in June 1990 that resulted in grave injury to a number of anti-government demonstrators. The Romanian opposition press has said special unit number 02105 of the Romanian Interior Ministry led by one Colonel Cristescu was responsible for the miners' rampage.

In his exile meanwhile, Kincses has a favorite pastime, which is to take down a copy of Ceausescu's old penal code and to write on the back of an envelope a list of just how many crimes he can think of that the organizers of the pogrom of Tirgu Mures should properly be charged with. Clauses and subclauses. Ever the lawyer. But it must pain him to do it, for given his prospects, and Romania's prospects, it is a futile pastime indeed.

*Harry Richards,*  
Editor of the English language edition,  
September 1992

6

## HISTORY, AND A GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Many of the tensions gripping former Soviet Bloc nations today have their roots more in ancient rivalries than in modern politics. In this region, anniversaries can kill, and he who controls history controls the contemporary debate. The following notes might help the Reader not fully familiar with the historical and demographic back ground to the events described in this book.

### *Versailles, before and after*

Until the post-First World War Settlement of Versailles (specifically the Treaty of Trianon) Transylvania was one of the provinces of the Greater Hungary that itself existed within the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The "Dual Monarchy" system which elevated the status of Hungary within the Austrian Habsburg Empire was adopted in 1867 following persistent Hungarian resentment (and uprisings) at the curbs on its full expression of nationhood.

The loss of the First World War destroyed not only the Habsburg Empire, but also the Hungarian nation existing within it. Hungarians were not treated as one of the dozen peoples enduring Austrian imperial rule. Rather, because of its status as a co respondent Hungary was "punished" - way out of proportion - for waging the war, as were Austria and Germany.

The multinational Hungarian Kingdom lost two-thirds of its land and one-third of its ethnic Hungarian population. It lost Transylvania and two million of its own people to an enlarged Romania. It saw one million of its people enter under Slovak control within the new Czechoslovak Federation. And it saw half a million of its people placed within the Vojvodina province of the Serb republic within the new Yugoslav Federation. Land and people were also lost to Austria and Croatia, giving rise to the old Hungarian quip: How many countries border on Hungary? One, Greater Hungary.

While the figures above refer to ethnic Hungarians, not all of the people lost after the First World War were Hungarian of course. Indeed, come Versailles/Trianon, Transylvanian Hungarians were a minority within their own province. This is because since the early 18th Century there had been a great influx of Romanians encouraged by Hungarian landowners looking for cheaper labour than Hungarians provided. In the next century these Romanian arrivals were also taking the places of rural Hungarians emigrating to the United States. Today, the estimated population of Transylvania is two million Hungarians and four million Romanians.

Hungarians arrived in the Carpathian Basin from the east in the mid-9th Century and Transylvania became a principality under the Hungarian crown. In the 11th Century Hungarian kings brought large German communities to settle in the region and granted them special rights, which allowed them to maintain German towns and villages for more than 800 years. After the Turks conquered most of Hungary in the early 16th Century, Transylvania remained an independent principality until Hungary was liberated by Habsburg troops at the end of the 17th Century. Then Transylvania came under the direct authority of Vienna, but as part of the Hungarian Kingdom. The Hungarian and Transylvanian constitutions remained in force (Diploma Leopoldinum). It returned to direct Hungarian jurisdiction with the compromise of 1867 which set up the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy. After the peace treaties of Versailles, St. Germain, Neuilly and Trianon, it fell to Romania. Northern Transylvania was briefly reunited with Hungary under the Vienna settlement of 1940 (see below).

The debate between Hungarians and Romanians over national(ity) rights is often turned into a debate about who has lived longer in Transylvania, who did what to the other party over the years, who's at home there and who is a newcomer/intruder.

The official Romanian "continuity theory" posits that Romanians have an historic right to Transylvania because they are the autochthonous, people, deriving from the Dacians who were conquered and romanized by the Romans in the 1st Century. This theory holds that even after the Empire collapsed and Roman troops retreated south of the Danube at the end of the 3rd Century, people speaking a Roman language lived on up in the Transylvanian mountains, letting history go on in the plains below until the arrival of the Hungarians 600 years later. These are the ancestors of today's Romanians and that's why Transylvania belongs to them.

Another theory (More favoured by the Hungarians and more and more western historians) has it that today's Romanians are descendants of a Romanized people from today's Macedonia (where one can still find a small population of Macedo-Romanians) who in the course of the first millennium migrated north settling eventually in the lowlands east and south of the Carpathian mountains, where they formed their first states in the 12th Century. These lands formed the old, pre-Trianon, Romania, and they didn't include Transylvania.

The fact is that there are many unknowns in the history of Transylvania between the departure of the Romans and the arrival of the Hungarians.

(This was generally a period of great migrations of nations.) Historians and archaeologists have yet to provide satisfactory answers.

Open fighting over the nationality issue first broke out in the 1848 revolution.

Although the Hungarian revolution against the Habsburgs started as a social one, asking for the liberation of serfs, a free press, etc., it soon turned into an independence

war against Habsburg rule. It pursued full national independence for Hungary (also reunification with Transylvania) along the lines of the 19'th Century all-European (French) idea of a nation state, posing as its aim national and linguistic unity. One reason for the failure of the 1848/49 revolution was Hungarian intolerance towards Croats and Romanians, who therefore played a major part in the repression of the revolution on the side of the Austrians. That they were not rewarded by any more rights from Vienna is another story.

The 1867 compromise gave Hungarians equal status with the ruling Austrians. It also brought Transylvania back under direct Hungarian rule. The 1868 nationality law of the Hungarian Parliament was most liberal for its time. Its implementation wasn't. The Hungarian administration attempted to enforce Hungarian-language education on all nationalities at the state school level, thereby diminishing the opportunity of education in the respective mother tongue.

(The CD-ROM editor's note: This is a popular misconception, fostered and spread by Rumanian and Slovak propoganda. Unfortunately under the Communists the Hungarians had to accept at face value, whatever the rulers ordered to be "The truth". What Mr. Kincses states here was true in some of the state-run schools only. Most of the schools were run by the churches. In those the Hungarian language was not even offered as a second or foreign language up to 1879. That's when the Hungarian language was introduced as a foreign language in the Separate schools. For the whole story see: Biro: The Nationalities Problem In Transylvania 1867-1940, also on this Home Page.)

In 1918 in a great popular meeting in the Transylvanian town of Alba Iulia, Romanians voted for unification with the Romanian kingdom.

(The CD-ROM editor's note: The Hungarians accepted the terms of the armistice, on the bases of the "Fourteen Points" of President Woodrow Wilson , naively believing that the future of Hungary will be decided by plebistice under foreign supervision. Naturally the Czechs, Serbs and the Rumanians did not even want to consider it, knowing full well, that the outcome of a plebistice is far from being a forgone conclusion. The meeting at Alba Iulia was hastily assembled with handpicked representatives and was designed to forestal any possibility of a plebistice. So much for the Tenth of the Fourteen Points: "the peoples' right of self-determination". It was only applied to others, never to Hungarians. For more on the subject

see: Cadzow-Éltető-Ludanyi: The Roots of Ethnic Conflict, also on this Home Page.)

The proclamation published on this occasion also contained passages assuring full minority rights to the Hungarians of Transylvania. The reality turned out different: following a land reform carried out along different principles in the old Romanian Kingdom and in Transylvania, Hungarian landowners and Hungarian churches lost most of their wealth. By this they also lost the material base for private schooling. The number of Hungarian-language state schools was drastically reduced, the Hungarian university of Cluj (or Kolozsvár, as it had been) closed.

Until 1918 Transylvanian towns of any size had a big Hungarian or German majority, the Romanians mostly living in rural areas. Hungarians had been the master nation for a thousand years and they suddenly came under the rule of people they did not have much esteem for. There was arrogance and haughtiness on the Hungarian side, plenty of inferiority complexes and revenge feeling on the Romanian side. Since these days, each community has placed great pressure on its independently minded, historically sensitive and realistic members to proceed publicly according to what is perceived to be one's "national" interest.

### **Wartime**

In the Second World War, both Hungary and Romania were erstwhile allies of the Reich. This led in the Vienna Treaty of 1940 to the return to Hungary of northern Transylvania, where there is a majority Hungarian population, and the return of a chunk of the Moldovan territories to Romania that had been seized by Stalin at the start of the war. This arrangement was undone with the defeat of Germany.

The four wartime years were marked by insecurity. No major changes were implemented by Hungarian rulers except for the reinstating of the Hungarian University

of Cluj and the reopening of Hungarian schools. The Romanian language continued to be an obligatory subject in Hungarian schools. A major tragedy was the deportation of several hundred thousand Jews of Northern Transylvania to German extermination camps in the spring of 1944, after Germany occupied Hungary following the attempt of Governor Miklos Horthy to change sides in the war.

### *Under the Communists*

Predictably, Communist pledges and constitutional guarantees on minority rights sounded impressive. But in practice the 40 years of Romanian Communist rule systematically reduced the educational basis of the Hungarians, depriving them of the means to maintain and develop their own culture. The number of Hungarian schools and universities kept falling, industrialization led to the planned settlement of Rumanians in formerly strictly Hungarian regions, and the deteriorating economic and ethnic situation drove tens of thousands of Hungarians into exile, mainly those with higher education. The Germans of Transylvania suffered similarly, and beginning in the 1960s they emigrated in large numbers to West Germany. Of the 500,000 Germans of prewar Transylvania, 100,000 are left today. And most of them want to leave as soon as possible.

### *Romania's December Revolution*

The situation for all Romanian citizens on the eve of the Romanian revolution of December 1988 was dire. Ceausescu's manic desire to repay Romania's relatively modest foreign debt at breakneck speed ruined the country in the years leading up to the revolution. All foods that could be sold for hard currency were exported. Investment in services and utilities was slashed, leaving Romanians to endure their winters hungry, cold and in the dark.

In addition to fantastical building projects which involved the destruction of parts of historic Bucharest, Ceausescu also planned the bulldozing of many rural settlements in the name of economic efficiency. These were to be replaced by a few concrete agroconcentrations. The Hungarians of Transylvania saw this policy as directed particularly at their own rural life and cultural identity.

The other East European Communist regimes tumbled in the months before the Romanian December revolution. Aside from Stalinist Albania, Romania's liberation was the last and the most violent. But even before

this, Ceausescu's Romania had become increasingly isolated internationally, including within the Soviet bloc. Significantly, even Hungary's Communist rulers felt compelled to break ranks with Warsaw Pact solidarity to openly complain about the treatment of the Transylvanian Hungarian minority. Ceausescu's Romania was a signatory to the 1975 Helsinki Accords, and

throughout the Helsinki follow-up conferences of the 1980s, Romania was regularly isolated and pilloried in the debates on human and minority rights,

The December revolution was triggered by the Tôkés' case as described in the first chapter of this book. László Tôkés, a Calvinist parson, had been in conflict with the authorities for several years. At the start of his ministry, he had managed to gather young people around him in Biblical Circles, helping them to learn about their own Hungarian culture and history. (The Hungarians of Transylvania are either Roman Catholic or Calvinist, the Germans Lutheran or Catholic, the Romanians Orthodox or Greek Catholic, i.e. Uniate - like the western Ukrainians). Tôkés had been a critic of the Ceausescu system - both of its minority policies and its nationalistic Communism. He was also an editor of the Hungarian-language samizdat publication, *Ellenpontok*. [Counter Points]. in the early '80s. He had been transferred several times from his earlier parishes, and Timisoara was also a demotion from his former post. His conflict with his bishop, faithful to Ceausescu, was in fact a conflict with the nationalistic-communist regime.

#### Today and Tomorrow

Of all the losses suffered by Hungary in this century, Transylvania represents the greatest trauma - then and now. But the preoccupation of responsible Hungarians both within Hungary and in Transylvania - has not to date been the recovery of lost lands. Rather "it has been the constant inability of the Romanian state to guarantee and honour the minority rights which the Hungarians of Transylvania - indeed all the Romanian minorities - can legitimately claim.

The failure of post-revolutionary Romanian leaders to secure minority rights after three years of waiting has now led some Hungarians to radicalise their demands, however. A New-Right within Hungary itself (of as yet undetermined size) speaks more stridently of the evil of the Trianon (peace treaty). Some Hungarian leaders within Transylvania - while horrified at such provocative musings - do now see autonomous areas as the only way to secure local ethnic rights.

For all Romanians, however, post-revolutionary aspirations have been frustrated. Perhaps because their Communist masters were so vile, or because their revolution was won with blood, Romanians believed they deserved more of a liberation from the past than has been achieved. So has their bitterness been all the greater. The Securitate secret police have continued to operate in new guises, Communist holdovers have continued to rule to a greater degree than in any other East European state. And such is their ability to manipulate the hopes and fears of Romanian peasant voters

that they have not even had to resort to large electoral fraud to retain power.

Of particular concern to the Hungarians has been the activity of Romanian extremist nationalists occupying mayoral offices in Transylvania. They have promulgated more and more discriminatory measures against minorities. Public use of the language - indeed practically any public expression of Hungarian identity - is under frontal attack. There is a growing Romanian hysteria: the potential for violence is no less today than it was in the days after the revolution, when a pogrom was organised in Tirgu Mures, in the centre of Europe.

A word on "pogrom": this edition retains the term in its current East European and Russian meaning, which does not require hundreds or thousands to be slaughtered. "Pogrom"- here means ethnically-inspired violence or assault by one group upon another.

H.R.

In most areas of Transylvania there are hardly any clean ethnic divisions. One will find many villages with a mixed Romanian-Hungarian population, or 'areas where settlements only a few miles apart have populations speaking either Hungarian or Romanian or German.

Many Transylvanian settlements have their own Romanian, Hungarian and German names. This book uses the official Romanian names. Below is a table of placenames mentioned in the text with the Hungarian and German varieties, where they exist.

Romanian	Hungarian	German
Alba Iulia	Gyulafehérvár	Weissenburg
Baclu	Bikó	
Band	Bánd	
Bobilna	Bibolna	
Brassov	Brasso	Kronstadt
Caransebes	Karánsebes	
Karansebesch	Cluj	Kolozsvár
Klausenburg	Covasna	Kovászna
Kovasna		
Deda Bistra	Dédabisztra	
Dej	Dés	Desch
Dumbravioara	Sáromberke	
Scharnberg	Dumbrlvita	Ujszentes

Emei  
Gornesti

Nagyernye  
Gernyeszeg

Kertzing

12

Gurghiu	Görgény	Görgen
Harghita	Hargita	Hargita
Hodac	Hodák	
Iasi	Jászváros	
Ibanesti	Libánfalva	
Iernut	Radnót	Radnuten
Luduq	Ludas	Luciesch
Luna	Lóna	Lone
Niraj	Nyárád	
Ocna de Jos	Alsófalva	
Odorheiul Secuiesc	Székelyudvarhely	Hofmarkt
Oradea	Nagyárad	Groswardein
Razboieni	Székelykocsárd	
Reghin	Szászrégen	Sachsisch
Regen		
Satu Mare	Szatmárnémeti	Sathmar
Sibiu	Nagyszeben	Hermannstadt
Sighisoara	Segesvár	Schisburg
Singeorgiu de Mures	Marosszentgyörgy	
Sovata	Szováta	
Timisoara	Temesvár	Temeschwar
Tirgu Mures	Marosvásárhely	Neumarkt
Tirnaveni	Dicsôszentmáron	
Martinskirch	Turda	Torda
Thorenburg		

13

#### THE MAIN PARTICIPANTS OF THE TRAGEDY

ABRAM, Noémi: (Hungarian = H) doctor, member of the Mures County branch of MADISZ (Union of Hungarian Democratic Youth), member of the Mures County branch of the Provisional Council of National Unity.

BACULEA, Dan-Eugen: (Romanian = R) notary, for a few weeks secretary of the Mures County Council Committee of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity.

BOLBOACA, Marcel: (R) representative of the OTV Voluntary Youth Organisation and member of the Mures County branch of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity.

BOROS, Zoltán: (H) head of the Hungarian programme of Romanian Television.

CEONTEA, Radu: (R) art teacher, founding president of the extreme Romanian nationalist Vatra Romaneasca Organisation, subsequently a senator in the Romanian parliament.

CHITAC, Mihai: (R) general, Interior Minister of the Petre Roman government.

COJOCARU, Constantin: (R) general, commander of Mures County Military

District member of the Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity. He was involved in giving the order to troops to fire on demonstrators on Decembcsr 21, 1989, when six people died.

CORNEA, Doina: (R) fighter for human rights, the best-known dissident of the last years of the Ceausescu regime.

CSIHA, Kálmán: (H) Calvinist dean, member of the Mures County branch of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity, subsequently Calvinist Bishop of Cluj.

DOMOKOS, Géza: (H) President of the RMDSZ - the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania, founded at the end of December 1989 - member of the County Council of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity, subsequently leader of the RMDSZ parliamentary group.

DUMITRU, N.S.: (R) sociologist, for a while the President of the National Salvation Front.

ENACHE, Smaranda: (R) teacher, director of the Tirgu Mures Puppet Theatre, President of the Cultural Committee of the Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity. For her pro-ethnic rights stand she was sacked in early 1991 from her job as theatre director for "incompetence", subsequently a member of the presidency of the Alianta Civica (Civic Alliance) party,

#### 14

FLORIAN, Aurel: (R) President of the Mures County Romanian Social Democratic Party, member of, the Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity.

FORMANEK, Ferenc. (H) engineer, Vice President of the Satu Mare County Council of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity.

FÜLÖP, Dénes: (H) Calvinist parson, member of the Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity.

GALEA, Valer: (R) engineer, Vice-President of the Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity, subsequently a senator in the Romanian parliament for the National Salvation Front.

GAMBREA, Gheorghe: (R) colonel, Chief Commissioner of Mures County Police.

GAMPE, Arpád: (H) economist,

GROZAVU Mihai: (R) historian, member of the Mures County Council of the Provisional Council of National Unity and of the National Liberal Party.

HORN, Gyula: (H) Hungarian Foreign Minister. Subsequently President of the Hungarian Socialist Party and Chairman of the Foreign Policy Committee of the Hungarian Parliament.

HUNYADI, András. (H) theatre director.

IGRET, Viorel: (R) former First Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party in Mures County. In January 1990 he was detained for several weeks for involvement during the revolution in giving the firing order which killed 6 people, was released in unclear circumstances and subsequently worked in Arad.

ILIESCU, Ion: (R) President of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity, old Communist functionary, subsequently President of Romania.

ILLYÉS, Kinga: (H) actress, professor of the Szentgyörgyi István Acting Academy.

JAKABBFY, Attila: (H) engineer., member of the Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity, President of the Nationalities Committee.

JUDEA, Ion: (R) colonel, President of the Tirgu Mures National Salvation Front and Provisional Council of National Unity, subsequently President of Vatra Romaneasca.

JUNCU, Nicolae: (R) lawyer, member of the Mures County Council of the Provisional Council of National Unity.

KIKELI, Pál: (H) doctor, university professor, Vice-President of the Mures County branch of the RMDSZ.

KINCSES, Előd: (H) solicitor, defence counsel for Laszlo Tôkés in his November 1989 appeal against official harassment. Vice-President of Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council for National Unity. Fled to Hungary in late March 1990, subsequently General Secretary of Budapest-

based World Union of Hungarians until August 1992. Practising lawyer in Budapest.

Király, Károly: (H) former senior member of the Romanian Communist Party, who publicly opposed the Ceausescu dictatorship as early as 1974. After December 1989, National Vice-President of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity. After the May 1990 elections senator representing the RMDSZ and the Vice-President of the Senate. Was sacked from the senate for refusing to take part in the vote on the new Romanian constitution because of its lack of minority safeguards,

KÖRMÖCZKY, Emese: (H) pharmacist,

KÖRMÖCZKY, Zoltán: (H) engineer, member of the Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity (husband of above).

LADARIU, Lazar: (R) journalist, editor in chief of the Tirgu Mures Romanian-language newspaper Cuvintul Liber - officially an independent newspaper, but a mouthpiece for Vatra Romaneasca propaganda.

LESTYAN, Ferenc: (H) Catholic dean. member of the Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity.

MAKAI, János: (H) journalist, editor in chief of the Tirgu Mures Hungarian-language newspaper Népujság.

MAN, Nistor: (R) teacher, member of the Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity, president of the Educational Committee,

MARCU, Traian: (R) representative of the ODT Youth Democratic Organisation, member of the Mures County branch of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity.

MARKÓ, Béla. (H) poet, editor in chief of the Hungarian-language literary Magazine Látó, member of the Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity, subsequently a senator in the Romanian parliament.

MIHALY, József. (H) technician, President of the Mures County branch of the Hungarian Smallholders' Party in Romania.

MANZATU, Ion: (R) university professor, National Vice President of the Provisional Council of National Unity,

PALFALVY, Attila: (H) engineer, university professor, briefly Deputy Education Minister of the Roman government. When Romanian extremists started demonstrating against measures to restore Hungarian German, etc., schools, he was sacked. After protests by the RMDSZ, he became deputy minister in an industrial ministry.

PAPP, László: (H) Calvinist Bishop of Oradea, collaborator of the Ceauqescu regime,

who after the fall of the regime fled to France to escape the anger of his flock over his persecuting pastor Tókés László.

POP, Dumitru: (R) accountant, Vice President of Vatra Romaneasca, member of the Mures County Council of the Provisional Council of National Unity, subsequently a deputy.

RADESCU, Vlad: (R) actor, member of the Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity.

ROMAN, Petre: (R) Romanian Prime Minister who fell following the second violent invasion of Bucharest by the miners in 1991, subsequently an

opponent of President Iliescu and leader of National Salvation Front faction campaigning for swifter economic reform.

RUSU, Sabin: (R) veterinarian, President of the Mures County branch of the Union of Former Political Prisoners, member of the Mures County Council of the Provisional Council of National Unity.

SCRIECIU, Ioan: (R) general of the reserve, First Vice-President of the Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional

Council of National Unity.

SIN, Mihai: (R) writer, editor of the Romanian-language literary periodical, Vatra (No connection to Vatra Romaneasca), member of the Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity.

STANCULESCU, Victor: (R) general, Vice Defence Minister of the Ceausescu regime, Defence Minister in the Petre Roman government.

SUTÓ, András. (H) the most popular Hungarian writer in Romania, Herder literature Prize-winner, a leader of the RMDSZ, badly injured in anti-Hungarian violence on March 19,1990,

SZABÓ, György: (H) teacher, Vice President of the Mures County RMDSZ.

THEIL, Peter: (German) teacher, director of the Joseph Haltrich Lyceum in Sighisoara, member of the Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity, fled to Germany in June 1990.

TIRNAVEANU, Emil: (R) engineer, Vice President of the Tirgu Mures branch of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity, subsequently President of the Mures County branch of the Alianta Civica.

TÓKÉS, András: (H) teacher of physics, member of the Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front, deputy county schools inspector.

TÓKÉS, László: (H) former Calvinist parson in Timisoara, who publicly opposed the Ceausescu dictatorship. The actions of local Hungarian, Romanian, German and Serb demonstrators trying to defend him led to the revolution of Timisoara and to the downfall of the Ceausescu dictatorship, subsequently Honorary President of the RMDSZ and Calvinist Bishop of Oradea (brother of above).

TIRA, Vasile: (R) major, former political officer, member of the the Mures County

Council of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity, secretary of Vatra Romaneasca, planned assaults on Hungarian leaders, subsequently promoted to lieutenant-colonel,

VERESTÓY, Attila: (H) member of the Country Council of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity, subsequently an RMDSZ senator.

VOICAN VOICULESCU, Gelu: (R) geologist, National Vice-President of the National Salvation Front, the main organiser of the Ceausescu trial, subsequently a senator for the Front.

WESSELY, Tibor: (H) teacher, Vice-President of Tirgu Mures branch of the National Salvation Front and the Provisional Council of National Unity.

ZOLCSAK, Sándor: (H) painter, RMDSZ President of Tirgu Mures.

## BLACK SPRING

Romania's path from revolution to pogrom

December 1989 - March 1990

by  
Előd Kincses

## REVOLUTION

On the morning of December 22, 1989, walking from my solicitor's office, I turned from Bolyai Street into the main square of Tirgu Mures. There I came across several thousand demonstrators who had again found the courage to rally despite the murderous assaults mounted against them by Ceausescu's security forces the day before.

Romanians and Hungarians together, they chanted in unison (and only in Romanian): "Nu va fie frica - Ceausescu pica!" (Fear not at all, Ceausescu will fall!) They thrilled at the solidarity of the moment existing between Transylvania's Romanians and Hungarians.

They were prepared for anything, including death from the Securitate, and of course they prevailed that day.

Three months later - on March 19, 1990, and also in the main square of Tirgu Mures - Romanians armed with clubs and pitchforks were also ready for anything. At the end of their rampage next day, five people were dead, hundreds were badly injured, and a prominent local Hungarian writer who had been cheered by the crowds three months earlier, lay battered and blinded in one eye.

I must try to evoke how I lived then, how we all lived then, and how this metamorphosis crept up upon us during those three months, I shall begin a little earlier - in the dying weeks of the Ceausescu regime - and in the

company of László Tôkés, the Hungarian parson who initiated the dictator's downfall.

#### NOVEMBER: "THIS TROUBLESOME PARSON"

A few weeks before the revolution, I received a legal brief that was to change my life and the life of my country. András Tôkés, a Tirgu Mures high school teacher and the parson's brother, asked me to personally represent László Tôkés at a court appeal hearing in the west Transylvanian town of Timisoara.

Tôkes's outspoken opposition to the antics of Ceausescu made him in those days one of the few people courageous enough to openly defy the totalitarian machine. But his conflict then was not strictly with the dictator, but with his own Reformed Church (Calvinist) bishop, a Ceausescu stooge charged with stifling this parson's dissident activities. The chosen method for this assault was that Tôkés be removed from his current residence in Timisoara and transferred to a new out-of-the-way parish where he would presumably be able to do less damage. Tôkés was contesting the legality of this unsought-for transfer.

I must confess that I was frightened, but I felt that if László was resisting oppression so heroically, then it was unacceptable for an Hungarian solicitor to refuse to represent him. For if a Romanian solicitor had entered the case, it could have been viewed thus: "See how isolated Tôkés is within his own community, how the Hungarians in Romania have no solidarity with his stand," I am certain this is the way it would have been interpreted by the Securitate secret police and the propaganda machinery.

The initial written defence had been prepared by a solicitor colleague from Tirgu Mures, fellow-Hungarian Zoltan Cziprian, But he was unable to travel to Timisoara for the hearing.

When I advised my Romanian solicitor colleague, Liviu Hurga, the chairman of my local College of Solicitors of Mures county (of which Tirgu Mures is the centre), that I would write the appeal in the Tôkés case, he asked me why, since Cziprian was Tôkes's solicitor. My answer was that Zoli Cziprián was ill. But why exactly you? Well, because I am not ill...

At the same time, a certain employee of the Interior Ministry asked me whether I wanted to become a martyr of the Hungarians. No, I answered with a heavy heart. I only want to live up to the responsibility of being a solicitor.

He wanted to dissuade me, at any cost, from travelling to Timisoara. For with a solicitor present in court to represent the client, it would become an open hearing, and many people - possibly also foreign journalists - would hear what legal and human injustice was being prepared against László Tôkés.

22

Finally, however, Maria Bobu, Ceausescu's Minister of Justice, declared that if the defence solicitor in the case thought it necessary, he was entitled to travel to Timisoara for the hearing,

These tensions reduced me to such a nervous state that, come the first hearing on November 20, I forgot to take along the case file and my solicitor's retainer! I travelled to Timisoara in my own car under the protection of my Romanian mechanic neighbour, Titus Giga.

In Timisoara, after a journey of 400 kilometres, I noticed my omission. Luckily, my wife had noticed much earlier and had followed me by train. Thus we were together in Timisoara, watching the November 19 broadcast of the Hungarian Television Panorama programme. Viewing the images from Bulgaria of the fall of the long time dictator there. Todor Zhivkov, she bet me a bottle of champagne that Ceausescu would be overthrown by Christmas. Is the woman always right?

At the November 20 hearing to my surprise the Romanian solicitor of Timisoara retained by the local Reformed Hungarian bishop - the Ceausescu stooge - requested that the hearing be adjourned. He said he had not had sufficient time to prepare for it.

I believe there was an ulterior motive. Hungary's own Communist leaders were showing an increasing interest in the tribulations inflicted on the Hungarian minority in Transylvania. And, even at the cost of breaking Warsaw Pact solidarity, they were speaking out ever more sharply. I believe the Romanian Communists were afraid that the absence of the Hungarian Communists as guests at the upcoming Romanian Party Congress would be linked by public opinion to Hungarian displeasure over the anti-Tôkés hearing. And they did not want to spoil the festive spirit of the reelection of Ceausescu.

We obtained an unusually short postponement, and a week later I again had to travel to Timisoara. On the train I was accompanied by my Hungarian childhood friend János Hegedûs ("Cimbi") who said that if I had accepted the case, he must accompany me for my safety.

### Meeting Tôkés

On this second visit, I desired very much to meet the man I was now representing, László Tôkes. After the first hearing I had not dared go to his

home. In Romania the solicitor receives his client in his office and is not supposed to go to his home. And in such a case as this, it was especially wise to be careful. I had to behave in such a way so as not to give the Securitate any ground for a move against me. Nor did I want to appear in their eyes to be to "some kind of hero", who as an international unknown was ripe for killing now rather than later.

23

The November 28 hearing took place in a civilized tone. The strange thing, though, was that such a "simple" matter as the eviction of a parson from his residence and his relocation to a new place was being heard by the Romanian president of the county court, Elena Topala, and that the attorney-general of the county was also present,

The attorney-general was present as the representative of the Public Guardianship Authority. But instead of protecting the interests of the minor child of the Tôkes couple, he requested that the appeal be rejected, viz. that the entire family be evicted, including the minor child and its pregnant mother.

After I left the court, many Hungarians surrounded me and asked. "Solicitor, why can't our parson be the one whom we love?" (i.e. Tôkés) I almost answered. "That is exactly the point." But thinking of the "ears on duty", I said only: "Let us wait for the decision, maybe justice will be done."

What did I trust in? Perhaps I thought that my appeal may have been shown to the "competent comrade", who may have been aware just how popular Tôkés was, and also to what extent the international press had followed the court case. I thought he might see that the authorities had made a wrong move, and that he might suggest the appeal against the parson's transfer be upheld. The international standing of Romania would have improved at once. But the powers-that-be were no longer in a fit condition to reason so logically.

Four of us went to the Tôkés flat: his wife Edit, his father István, a young Hungarian from Dumbravita (Ferenc Holló), who on both my visits to Timisoara stayed with me to provide protection, and myself. I was watching carefully to see if we were being followed, but noticed nothing suspicious. And at the church one part of which served as the minister's living quarters I saw to my surprise that there seemed to be no guards. After a complicated doorbell ringing sequence, I heard the grinding of the iron bars protecting the door from the inside. László Tôkés appeared. He had a hunted look, in sharp contrast to what I now know to be his normal appearance of radiated calm. His eyes made me suddenly realise how unbelievably difficult it is to take a stand against the paranoid, totalitarian machine.

Having finally met the man, I formulated very carefully what I had to say to Tôkés. (Just how justified my caution had been was revealed in the

subsequent trials of the Securitate officers in Timisoara after the revolution prevailed. For we learned then that every word of ours had been listened to by the "ears on duty") I stressed to him that if he was arrested, he was entitled to ask immediately for a solicitor. I said he should refuse to make any statements until his solicitor

arrived (at this moment I pointed to myself). I anxiously stressed that if the appeal was lost and the eviction order was implemented, he should not offer any resistance. The obstruction of the execution of the eviction order would be a criminal action, and if he committed it, he would be arrested. And in jail, anything can happen.

24

It is Romania's fortune, and Europe's fortune, that Tôkés did not abide by this solicitor's advice of mine.

During my delivery of this lecture, Tôkes was called from the room to be told that the man HoIIó - who had just previously helped him to unload a car - had been taken away by the police. When my own party left the Tôkés home, a not overly confidence-inspiring policeman stared at us, though said nothing. Next, a police officer at the end of the street saluted me! To this extent, at least, they were able to distinguish that this was the solicitor, against whom more subtle methods would have to be applied than against poor Holló.

Back at the courthouse, following my interview with Tôkés, and while translating some written evidence into Romanian for the use of the court, I established a rapport with the Romanian court secretary, Elena Bungardean. This was in late November. In the coming days she was able to advise me privately, and with no names mentioned over the telephone about every step in the Tôkés case: what was happening at any one time to Tôkés and his family, for what hour the eviction order had been set, etc,, etc.

During the fearful days of Timisoara that were about to begin - the anti-Ceausescu uprising when the guns were finally turned on the people - how could I have hoped that less than a month later I would be able to report as follows about this "simple little eviction case" in the newly-liberated Hungarian-language TIRGU MURES NÉPUJSAG [People's Newspaper, previously VÖRÖS ZÁSZLÓ: Red Banner], or in the Romanian-language Bucharest ADEVARUL [Truth, previously SCINTEIA: Spark].

But in that brief respite immediately after the December revolution, there were a few hours when the truth could finally speak and be heard, and when the proper process of the law seemed to have dignity. And so I wrote:

"One Sentence About the Truth..."

To borrow famous words, they lied in the morning, they lied in the evening, they lied all the time,

So why should they have told the truth about the particular judgement of eviction from his residence passed against László Tôkés? Let us quote from the worthy successor to Nero., Caligula, Hitler and Stalin: N. Ceausescu:

"On December 16 and 17, under the pretext of preventing the implementation of a lawful court judgement, some groups of hooligan elements (in Timisoara) organised numerous protests and incidents..." (Vörös Zászlo'. Thursday, December 21, 1989)

I shall try to describe here what the soon-to-be overthrown leaders of the Country and their intimidated or corrupted agents of justice meant when they talked of a lawful court judgement,

25

The showdown with László Tôkés, the Reformed Church parson of Timisoara, was billed as an eviction lawsuit by the Bishop of Oradea the traitor László Papp, who served the regime to the last, and who fell with it.

On September 21, 1989 the bishopric of Oradea, as a legal entity, and over the signature of Bishop László Papp, requested from the municipal court of Timisoara that the parson László Tôkés be evicted from his service flat (the parsonage) at Timotei Cipariu Street 1/1, Timisoara.

Point 126/II/a of the statute of the Reformed Church states about the rights and competence of the bishop that: "The bishop, as the clerical chairman of the bishopric, represents the bishopric together with the general superintendent versus the state government, the courts and authorities, as well as third persons".

I believe that everybody noticed and I underlined it that the bishop alone signed the petition for eviction, and thus, according to the above clause, his action was legally invalid.

The court of Timisoara, of course, rejected this procedural exception,, which the solicitor of László Tôkés presented in defence of his client. (And this exception argument had first been prepared by my Tirgu Mures colleague, Zoltán Cziprián.)

At the hearing of the appeal, where I undertook to represent László Tôkés in person,, the representative of the bishopric deposited a documentum signed on November 14, according to which Edit Bányai, the diocese substitute [provisional] general superintendent, agreed with and supported the motion for eviction.

About this document, I said at the hearing that it proved that the bishopric itself recognised that the bishop alone, without the general superintendent, could not represent the bishopric before the court. Since the judgement of first instance [initial ruling] was passed on October 20, 1989, the posterior (November 14) supplement to the signature was invalid. Consequently I requested that the dispositions of section 133 of the Civil Procedure be applied.

This would have stipulated that the missing signature could have been supplied only before the issuing of the initial ruling, never after. And

therefore, because it was supplied too late, the whole petition was null and void.

The County Court, of course, rejected this procedural exception too.

I also pointed out that the registered owner of the Tókés parsonage was the Reformed Parish of Timisoara, and consequently only the parish as a legal entity would have been entitled to demand eviction from the service flat.

(Let me note that not only did the parish not request the eviction of László Tókés, but entered into the case in the defence of its parson and demanded the rejection of the bishop's request)

The immediately superior organ of the parish, the Deanery of Arad, did not figure in the court case, but legally it would not have been incorrect if the superior organ had represented the parish instead of the central organ.

## 26

For instance, the People's Council of Sovata can be represented before the courts by the People's Council of the county as a superior organ, but not by the Council of Ministers. Of course, this argument was also rejected by the County Court. But for me, by the law, the conclusion of all this was clear: that the bishop has no right to terminate the employment of a parson.

One of the curious points in this whole affair is that the disciplinary regulations of the Reformed Church of the Romanian Socialist Republic, which states that only disciplinary committees of the church can make such a decision, was signed in November 1980, inter alia, by László Papp, President of the Bishops' Synod.

I believe László Papp avoided turning to the disciplinary committees, because in addition to well known and respected clergymen, lay personalities held in high esteem are also members of these committees. I believe he assumed that he would be unable to carry through his unlawful intention of having the employment contract terminated.

It was despite the above that the judgement of eviction, claimed to be lawful by N. Ceausescu, was passed.

Although the judgement of eviction did not include László Tókés's pregnant wife, Edit the men of the Securitate (who legally had nothing to do with the execution of a judgement, since this was the task of the court bailiff) carried her off and away from the parsonage.

Fortunately, all this was in vain. The heroic stand of the besieged László Tókés bore fruit - as the world now knows, his and his parishioners' resistance was the spark which set the fire for the victorious revolution. At the time, this knowledge filled with great joy. Perhaps for the first time in history, Hungarians, Romanians, Germans and the sons and daughters of other peoples living in our country fought together in full agreement and identity of interests, if not values.

Indeed, I believe that only during the murderous volleys of the security forces directed against the demonstrators was it possible to identify for certain the ethnic identity of those dying sons and daughters. For perhaps in one's moment of death, one may scream out the exclamation that comes most naturally, and be excused for speaking in one's mother tongue in a public place.

We must save the lesson of this wonderful concord for the future: and the condition on which this concord depends is full and genuine equality, the free use of our nation's various languages in the schools, at the universities, in offices. Every where, at all times. So be it.

In all that happened between the Timisoara court hearings and the appearance of the above article after the downfall of Ceausescu, a big role was played by my client, László Tôkés. He subsequently became Bishop of Oradea, the Honorary President of the Democratic Association of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ), and indeed an interationally recognised personality.

27

#### DECEMBER: COMMON TRIUMPH

A few notes on the remaining days of the dictator:

They tried to isolate Tôkés from his family too, and increasingly worrying news reached us from Timisoara.

At 15:00 on December 16, brother András Tôkes called on me and informed me with great joy that he had heard from Timisoara that László had won. He could stay in his residence, and could receive anybody. But our elation lasted only a few hours. It turned out that this was only a misleading manoeuvre.

For the authorities had finally ordered that the demonstrators who had been trying to defend the Tôkés home should be shot at, and we learned that László and Edit had been carried off to an unknown place. The killing that swiftly led to the dictator's downfall had begun, in Timisoara.

We listened to the radio all the time, and passed on to each other the telephone messages we received from Timisoara.

On December 19, I travelled to Bucharest, where I had a hearing at the Supreme Court on the 20th.

I was startled to see how unaware the people in Bucharest were of the horrors of Timisoara, and also how strong the general collective fear in the capital still was. I told a colleague simply that I also was very afraid, because I was László Tôkés's solicitor. She at once excused herself, she urgently had to go to a hearing...

My intellectual friends in Bucharest were sincerely fearful for my fate, our fate, and admonished me to be careful with every step and word. At the flat of a Romanian friend from student days, Sile Dan, we listened to Ceausescu's December 20 broadcast speech. Ceausescu was no longer able to ignore the as yet localised unrest. We at once said how good it was that he had called a mass meeting for the 21st, since something may happen there. Indeed, defiance arrived in Bucharest with Ceausescu's appearance at this mass meeting. To his horror, he found he was being heckled. The shooting in the capital started there; the next day the Ceausescus fled.

Before this, however, I went on foot down Magheru Avenue to the Piata Romana - every 20 metres stood a uniformed young Securitate man, in plain clothes

I put it in that paradoxical way because they wore completely identical civilian clothes. Bucharest people said about these young Securitate men that they came from orphanages and were brought up to love, Ceausescu as their father. It is believed that they became the "terrorists " who did the shooting and murdering during the few days of the revolution. But they were never put before a court. They simply disappeared.

## 28

I arrived back in Tirgu Mures on the morning of December 21, before the unrest broke out in Bucharest. Going home at noon I saw that armoured cars were guarding the building of the old townhall, where the County Committee of the Romanian Communist Party and the People's Council were headquartered. But in the afternoon the demonstrators assembled, and I too went there.

The security forces were in fearful readiness. Members of the antiterrorist brigade also appeared, wearing masks so that they would not be recognised.

We watched the events from the footpath in the spirit of sympathisers, since in my already exposed position I thought that this was not the best time to fall into the hands of the authorities.

The crowd chanted the slogans with extraordinary discipline and only in Romanian. This was necessary to show that we Hungarians in the crowd were not irredentists or revisionists and did not seek the separation of Transylvania from Romania, but only wanted to rid ourselves - and Romanians - of the dictatorship. I loved it most when they chanted/we chanted: "Doina Cornea/László Tótkés [Cornea a prominent Romanian dissident-opponent of the regime.]

We went home at 21:00. There, I was warned by telephone to spend the night away from home, and thus in a state of shock I heard the shootings while standing in a neighbour's courtyard.

In Tirgu Mures during the revolution, we had six dead heroes: Sándor Bodoni (H, aged 33). Lajos Hegyi (H, 25), Adrian Hidos (R, 21), Ilie Muntean (R, 30), Károly Pajkó (H, 33) and Ernô Tamás (H, 38) victims drawn from both communities.

### We take control

Next day I went to my office. But by 11:00 I was again in the main square because I had learned that a new demonstration was beginning. This demonstration was initiated by the workers of the tannery, who summoned the then manager of the local canning plant to join them. He was the internationally known Hungarian adversary of the regime, Károly Király, who had been degraded to his factory position from his former Party rank because of his opposition to Ceausescu's policies on minorities. Király put himself at the head of the crowd. They went to the town centre, to the square in front of the town hall. Here, with Ceausescu still in power in Bucharest. Király addressed the crowd, But careful eyes noticed that the guns of an armoured car were being turned towards him. He was pulled down from the chair atop the vehicle from which he had been speaking.

For reasons of safety, the crowd went over to the other side of the main square, thus moving away from the united forces of the Securitate, police and military. It was this crowd that I joined when I arrived in the main square. Károly Király announced that we were taking control of our fate and placing it in our own hands, that we had

29

had enough of the dictatorship, and that the joint Hungarian-Romanian Faternity Democratic Forum fighting for a democratic Romania and equality for all had been formed.

(I suddenly remembered that as early as the previous March, Király had called me and said: "Elôd, everything is going to pieces here, Ceausescu cannot maintain himself in power for long. Let us think about and put together the programme of the Democratic Forum." I answered that we should think about it, but nothing should be written down, that we should not produce any written documents for the Securitate. We left the matter there.)

Aurel Florian, a Romanian, announced at the rally that he was the chairman of the Social Democratic Party and fully supported the programme of the overthrow of the dictatorship and the creation of a democratic Romania which provided equal rights for all citizens.

I ran home to call my wife that she should not miss this. At 13:00 we listened to the news at my mother's flat opposite the town hall. And it was

then that we heard the best news of our lives over Budapest's Kossuth Radio: the Ceausescus had fled the capital.

We quickly ran down to the main square. The military was in retreat, and the crowd invaded the town hall. They scattered papers and carried them out and made stacks of them in front of the building. They burned them, together with Ceausescu's pictures and works. I told the people to leave the documents alone, that we would need them. Those who heard me accepted my argument, but there were so many people inside that it was not possible to tell everybody.

I went to the front of the building where Romanians and Hungarians embraced each other in tears. We were unbelievably happy and sincerely loved each other.

I stood at the entrance to the Palace of Culture when Károly Király appeared out of the town hall. He was immediately accepted by everybody as the true, rightful leader of the county. Király noticed me, took my arm and said. "Come Előd, we need you." We went up to the Hall of Mirrors inside the Palace of Culture, and Király told the people to let him confer with me. He said that we must urgently make contact with the National Salvation Front that had just declared itself to be in control in Bucharest. We had to assure them of our support, and should therefore travel to Bucharest.

After this, Károly Király addressed the people, and he was welcomed rapturously. Romanian and Hungarian speakers alternated, and suddenly a large group of youths brought the Hungarian writer András Sütô to the scene. He spoke about how, for the first time in history, Hungarians and Romanians were fighting together in full agreement and identity of interests. He warned that this unity must be guarded, and that this was the only possible way to secure a happy future, Long live fraternity! Long live free democratic Romania which provides equal rights for all its citizenst! András Sütô

30

ended his very effective address. To the speech, given in two languages, the crowd answered in Romanian: Niciodata Sovinism [Never again any chauvinism!] It was Sütô who three months later was to be singled out for such brutal treatment by the Romanian mob.

In the meantime a Romanian teacher called Nistor Man appeared and said that he had been a political prisoner. He began to behave as the spokesman of the Romanians. A new county leadership was discussed; the names of candidates and self-nominated candidates were flying around. I never liked such scenes, having no lust for power. I told Király that I was going home to write my article about the Tökés lawsuit, and if I was needed they should phone me.

## Mission to Bucharest

I learned from the Hungarian journalist Gyöngyi Bodolai that the local Hungarian Vörös Zászló newspaper had become the Népujság. Since the last, December 22, issue of the Vörös Zászló had published an article by the Bishop of Oradea, László Papp, basely slandering László Tôkés, I thought how beautiful it would be if the first number of the reformed Népujság could publish the truth about the Tôkés affair.

I went home and started to write the article. but I got a phone call that I should travel to Bucharest as the designated leader of the six-member (three Romanians, three Hungarians) deputation from the county.

I therefore decided to write my article in Romanian so that the Scinteia [the former Romanian Party daily] should also be able to publish it. Let the Romanian population of the whole country also learn the truth about the Tôkés affair, I thought. To write my article I needed my file, and therefore I went to my office. The building was closed, but the light was on in the office of Justin Ene, the Romanian chairman of the court. I threw a pebble at the window. He greeted me with great joy and invited me to his office. We emptied our glasses to victory: Justin Ene, Romanian vice-chairman Emil Nutiu, Dorin Stefanelli, the Romanian chair-man of the municipal court, and I.

It was during the small talk that Ene informed me how he had worried about me, because I had been on the Sec-uritate's death list.

I took this opportunity to arrange with the relevant authorities that the Hungarian workers Mihály Szenczi and Márton Tordai should be set free next day. The two friends were sentenced to six months' imprisonment during the recent Party Congress because they had painted anti-Ceausescu caricatures and slogans on the pavement. The Hungarian Television made a report about the terrible tortures that Szenczi and Tordai had gone through. This report was finished as early as February, but unfortunately was not broadcast at the time.

At 10:00 on December 23 the six of us set out in two jeeps which we had filled

with fine foods from the Party stores so that the television people and their defenders should not suffer any shortage (they had told us by phone that they did not have sufficient food).

The six-member delegation was made up of Attila Jakabffy (H), Elôd Kincses (H), Dana Olaru (R), Alexandru Pal (R), Vasile Pol (R), and Ferenc Salati (H). All of us had the Romanian tricolour on our arm, and our jeeps carried the Romanian flag with the hole ripped in the middle (where the

Communist crest had been), Károly Király gave us written credentials as the delegates of the Mures County Fraternity Democratic Forum.

On the way to Bucharest we saw only happy people. Everybody greeted us with the victory "V" sign, and nowhere did we see any of the formerly omnipresent roadside billboards with Ceausescu quotations, portraits, etc. The dictator had vanished as if he had never existed. At least, so we thought then.

In Brasov we drove down a 300-metre stretch of road while a machine gun rattled constantly nearby. We were often stopped by civilians, soldiers, policemen, and asked to identify ourselves. But the credentials issued by Károly Király helped everywhere.

We arrived in Bucharest as it was getting dark. We had difficulty getting in through gate No. 2 of the television centre. We had to dim our headlights, as we were in the middle of fighting.

They did not want to admit us to the main building, saying that it was dangerous and that too many delegations had already appeared on the screen anyway, etc. Finally, Attila Jakabffy and Vasile Pol somehow got in, and shortly afterwards they appeared on the television. Jakabffy spoke in Hungarian. Both stressed the great understanding between Romanians and Hungarians in our county. Equality was emphasized.

I can only give such a brief account of their message because while we listened to them, the shooting resumed. This somewhat diverted my attention.

#### First doubts

In an outbuilding of the television centre I sat down to finish my article about the Tôkés affair. But I started to talk to a handsome gentleman of about 35 years, wearing a trenchcoat. It turned out that he was Colonel Oan'a, the conunander of the defenders of the television centre. These defenders lay in combat readiness at the foot of the perimeter fence. When we looked on them, we thought of how the jubilant atmosphere in Tirgu Mures was already so different.

Colonel Oanwa told me that I should hurry up with my writing, because the circus would soon begin. When I asked what sort of circus he meant, he said that the "terrorists" would soon come, as they started usually at 20:00. His forecast was correct, and the shooting began in earnest.

I withdrew to a small room of the outbuilding. Soon the gunfire became very heavy: Jakabffy and Pol were stuck in the main building.

Thinking about it today, I find the exchange of fire very strange: first we heard a muffled shot, to which the military responded for at least 15 minutes with Kalashnikov volleys. The firing ended, and a loudspeaker announced that an ambulance should come to the site of the loudspeaker: a wounded man had to be taken away. The voice added: "Do not be afraid, they will not shoot!" How did the announcer know this? It also happened during the shooting that the soldiers were 'Warned over the loudspeaker to be careful not to shoot at each other. "This is a tragedy," the announcer added. In short, I suspect now that it was indeed more of a "circus" than I had the time to realise then.

When I asked Colonel Oana why the tank guns did not shoot at the houses from which the terrorists were firing, he said that tenants may have been left in the houses. He said that Ceausescu had had the television centre designed in such a way that if it should happen that somebody got hold of it by a trick, the invaders would not be able to defend it. The defence should have been provided from these houses on the opposite side of the street. And these houses, which had been occupied by the Economic Office of the Party, all had underground exits and caches. I asked him whether there had been any resistance to the revolutionary takeover of the television centre from its Ceausescu guards. Not at all, he answered, the whole thing was a simple flick of a switch ("schimbare de buton").

But Oana said the position of the defenders was very difficult, and they would need military reinforcement. (When I got home I told this to the county military command. They answered that I should rest assured, there would not be any problem...)

The next morning at the television centre, I addressed a pretty young woman wearing a snow-white coat and a Red Cross armband. I asked her where the blood on her coat came from, and had there been many victims? The lady answered that she had no knowledge of any serious case, and that the blood was the blood of Nicu Ceausescu's son. How come?

She said that a Securitate man had stabbed Nicu in his stomach when he was brought to the television, and she as a doctor had bandaged him. She added: "Imagine, Nicu was so stupid that he thought he had come to Bucharest to take power. He stopped in front of television cameras to address the nation, which loved him very much. Only when he was called 'little prince' did he realise that he had been tricked."

In order to leave the television centre that morning we approached our vehicles with our hands up. There was not a scratch on the jeeps, although the soldiers had been shot at from the upper floor of the nearby house and had returned fire. Through a passage of 70-80 metres, we drove to the main street, where the traffic was moving undisturbed!

We went to the main Bucharest publishing buildings, and I took my article to the editorial offices of the former Party paper, Scinteia. It had not yet been typed and I began dictating it to a typist. When I was half-way through, Jakabffy came and said that we must leave at once, because the terrorists were approaching. So I left the manuscript there. and the former Party paper, Adevarul, published it on December 25 and 26.

I also wrote a short article about the Fraternity Democratic Forum having been formed in Tirgu Mures under the leadership of Károly Király, and its announcement that it had joined the newly-declared and self-appointed National Salvation Front in Bucharest. For this material there was no room in the paper.

In that connection, Jakabffy said he had talked to Ion Iliescu, the leader of the National Salvation Front, Iliescu said he was very happy about the news from Tirgu Mures and wanted to draw Károly Király into the national leadership.

At our lunch stop on the drive home, Jakabffy and Pal were recognised by local people. They congratulated them and said that finally the Hungarians would be left alone, and that we shall get along well together in the new democracy. We were so privileged that for our sake they broke the prohibition of the moment, and served alcoholic drinks (to us only!). On this occasion too we experienced the affection with which the Romanians treated us Hungarians. It was also mentioned that it was again possible to speak Hungarian on Romanian Television. I stress I am quoting the words of unknown Romanian persons.

#### POLITICS, POST-REVOLUTION

On December 26 Károly Király was called to Bucharest to be appointed National Vice-President of the National Salvation Front. He had discussed with András Sütö which Hungarian should deputise for him as the leading Hungarian office-holder at the county level. Unfortunately, they thought of me. They called me to Király's office and told me of the role which they intended for me.

I replied that I did not want to cease my solicitor's work. To this Sütö and Király answered that at such times I had no right to stand aside, the less so since undertaking the defence of László Tôkés had made me an authoritative person in the eyes of both the Hungarians and Romanians,

Király was in a great hurry and entrusted me to Sütö, who invited me to his home and convinced me to accept this extremely important office. I said I accepted the task until national elections could be held [they were set for May] and after that I would return to my solicitor's office.

The Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front should have been elected on the Previous day, December 25. But on this occasion Nistor Man tried to have elected a council which did not reflect the real composition of the -nationalities and which would have included some servants of the old regime. Károly Király responded with a masterly stroke: he left the meeting and had a communiqué, published which said that objections had been raised in connection with certain members of the county, municipal, town and district councils, and consequently their positions would be discussed in those working communities to which they belonged.

If they were voted down at their place of work, they could not become members of the council, which it was now planned should be elected at a meeting on January 2.

At this meeting, after a rather harsh political struggle, the Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front was elected. The council elected the executive committee. This was:

Károly Király, (H) president,  
Ion Scrieciu, (R) reserve army general, first vice president,  
Valer Galea, (R) engineer, vice-president,  
Előd Kincses, (14) solicitor, vice-president,  
Dan-Eugen Baculea, (R) public notary, secretary.

Prior to the above County elections, and while Király was in Bucharest (December 27), the Tirgu Mures Town Council of the National Salvation Front was elected.

35

The Romanian army engineer, Colonel Ioan Judea became chairman, and the Romanian judge Ioan Sabau became secretary. Judea swiftly went on to become the vicepresident of the Party of Romanian National Unity, the political wing of the Vatra Romaneasca. Sabau became the vice-president of Vatra.

Vatra Romaneasca

Vatra Romaneasca means "Romanian Hearth" a term designed to emphasise the alleged longevity and continuity of Romania's historical claims

and rights to Transylvania. Vatra called itself a "cultural" organisation however.

We now know that it was also on December 27 that this cultural brigade, Vatra Romaneasca, was founded in Tirgu Mures. Until February 1, however, it functioned underground, and did not come out into the open. But the consequences of its activities became increasingly public and obvious.

Despite the incubus of Vatra secretly planted on December 27, these post-revolutionary days continued to be euphoric for most of us. Even if we saw that not, everybody was happy with the new course, for the time being the will of the people swept away the partisans of regression. They did not try to oppose openly the forces demanding democratisation.

For in Tirgu Mures at this time, not only was the (as-yet unheard-of) Vatra

Romaneasca founded. Also founded was the Friendship Platform of the Romanian and Hungarian Democratic Intelligentsia. This followed an initiative of local literary periodicals representing both Romanians and Hungarians. Our Friendship Platform assembled on December 26. We spoke quite openly about the points between us which hurt us, and we decided to do everything possible to relax the old restrictions, and to establish a new Hungarian-Romanian relationship.

It is not possible to forget the words of the Hungarian Reformed pastor, Dénes Fülöp. He began by saying that historical incidents remembered as evil must not be made the object of idolatry in themselves. If we sincerely want peace between our two peoples, he said, we must refrain from ecclesiastical politicking which exacerbates the negative nationalistic sentiments of simple (and not-so simple) people.

In 1985, for instance, a mural was painted in the Romanian Orthodox church in Tirgu Mures. It depicts Hungarians in national costume beating a Romanian saint while the Romanian people of the village cry in the background.

Coming from the locality depicted in this mural (Ocna de Jos), Fülöp knows through what tragedies the people there really lived as the Austro-Hungarian Empire began to come apart - in 1916, for instance, when Romanian troops arrived and carried off 70 local Hungarian youths and old men along with plundered grain, cattle and wagons. None of those prisoners ever returned. The memorial in the centre of the village lists the names of the victims.

But it is not such events that must be recited now. These memories which cause hatred must be removed from our souls!

We all shared Dénes Fülöp's responsible anxieties. And I felt that I too had to speak. I gathered all my courage and said that the theory of the Daco-Romanian continuity is nothing other than the ideological foundation of contemporary Romanian supremacy and privilege. This popular theory so important to Romanians posits a direct line of ethnic descent between the ancient Romans who colonized Dacia (including Transylvania) and the modern Romanians who now live there. I announced that I did not contest this Dacian continuity theory, and that in my opinion there were not more than 100 experts in Romania and Hungary qualified to argue it. I said that they should be entrusted with the debate. I only asked that the Romanian press and politicians should stop repeatedly quoting the theory, and that then it might be easier to arrive at truly equal rights and a democratic, pluralistic Society.

I added that nobody can contest that those values which we can agree do exist in today's Transylvania had been created mostly in the last 700 years, and it is entirely certain that in those years Romanians, Hungarians, Germans and the other national groups of Transylvania lived together and got along well in the common homeland.

No Romanian present attacked me for my words. On the contrary, they proposed that I should be one of the formulators of the text of our movement's platform. The text is the work of the editors of the local Romanian and Hungarian literary periodicals and myself. The platform was subsequently published in the local press of both nationalities.

Unfortunately, the Central press and television did not provide adequate publicity, and thus, instead of breaking through the wall of mistrust and silence, our initiative was lost.

I believe it is worthwhile to quote the text of our platform, however:

#### The Platform of Friendship in Tirgu Mures

On December 26, we intellectuals of Tirgu Mures sat down to speak frankly and responsibly about the Romanian-Hungarian, Hungarian-Romanian relationship in the new, free and democratic Romania. We are aware of the responsibility this occasion places upon us in the reconstruction of relations between the two peoples. And we are concerned not to miss the historic chance which has been created by the collapse of the dictatorship. We Romanian and Hungarian intellectuals consider it our duty to make public those ideas which have been voiced at our roundtable.

We have joined the Democratic Programme declaration of the National Salvation Front. We who live here together in Transylvania have in our hearts (a concern for) the full and genuine equal rights of each son of our home. In this we see one of

the pledges and bases for the creation of a genuinely democratic Romania belonging to Europe. We consider it extremely important and urgent that every single intellectual should stand up against any kind of chauvinistic, nationalistic or xenophobic manifestation in order to prevent the outbreak of violence, hatred and entirely unacceptable personal and collective vengeance. We therefore consider it

In order to achieve our noble goals we are not satisfied with simple declarations of intent alone. We shall speak out in the broadcast and printed media, mutually supporting each other in our everyday activities. We call on the clergymen of the Transylvanian Churches to support and spread these uplifting ideas. In building up the new institutionalised political, administrative, social and cultural system, let us restore genuine values to their rightful place. Let us find the competence and moral stamina to block the return of swindles and lies. Those who wish to express their agreement with our platform should indicate this in the editorial offices of our literary periodicals, "Látó" [H - "Seer"] and "Vatra" [R - "Hearth"].

(Let it be stressed that the Romanian literary journal was unfortunate enough to share its name with the Vatra Romaneasca movement. Though that was their only point of contact.)

András Béres, Ferenc Boér, Ioa Boitan, István Borbély, Zoltán Brassai, Ioan Calion, Radu Ceontea, Alexandru Cistelean, Constantin Copotoiu, Anton Cosma, József Eltető, Dénes Fülöp, György Gálfalvi, György Jánosházy, István Káli Király, Előd Kincses, Lazar Ladariu, Béla Markó, Éva Máthé, Ion Ilie Milesan, Augustin Morar, Cornel Moraru, Pál Nagy, László Nemess, Ioan Pascu, Grigore Ploesteanu, Mihai Sin, András Sütő, Gheorghe, Sincan, András Tökés

Looking through this list of signatories now, we find among them Radu Ceontea and Grigore Ploesteanu. This is interesting inasmuch as they and some of their companions met next day and founded the Vatra Romanesca. Oh well.

Not only were we in such a euphoric state in those days because of our own efforts, but also because of the consignments of aid that appeared immediately from Hungary, and later from other countries too. I recall one incident at this time: I addressed - in Romanian - a young man wearing an armband in the Romanian colours and who had just delivered aid. He answered self-consciously that he was from Hungary, and did not speak Romanian, but was proud to be able to wear the red-yellow-blue armband,

Also I recall the Hungarian doctors Marika and Peter Koválszky who had settled in the United States, and who rang on New Year's Eve, and said: "Only you who stayed at home were truly able to live through these days. And nobody will ever be able to take them away from you."

38

I told them that in the regional Medical and Pharmaceutical Institute, where - as I then believed - there would again be an Hungarian section. they would be needed. Even after the pogrom of March 20 they still said they would help, at least as guest lecturers helping to put the Hungarian section on its feet. But in the present Vatra climate, the country cannot count on the work of such experts,

39

### **EARLY JANUARY 1990: AFTERGLOW**

On January 1, as though to illustrate how much the world had changed, three journalists announced their visit to us. They were from Die Welt, Liberation and Quotidien de Paris. Only ten days earlier, we would have rather hidden 'in a mouse-hole than openly receive western journalists in our homes. But they were at my home from morning to evening and did a lot of interviews, not only with me, but with Károly Király, with the poet Béla Marko, who later became a senator representing our newlyfounded movement, the Democratic Association of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ), the physician Dr. Pál Kikeli, who became a Vice-President of the Mures County branch of the RMDSZ, and others.

It was fortunate that the stuffed cabbage had survived New Year's Eve, so that the Paris and Bonn journalists and TV people could successfully gobble it up, frequently praising Transylvanian food and hospitality.

I remember how surprised was Boris Kalnoky, the reporter of Die Welt, when in answer to his question I said I had confidence in Ion Iliescu, and considered him an intelligent man who favoured democracy, and that I thought he would keep the promises he had made to the minorities about protecting their rights immediately after coming to power, My illusions concerning Ion Iliescu were led also by Károly Király and by Dr. Kikeli, who at the end of the Sixties, as the president of the Students' Association of Tirgu Mures, was a close collaborator of Iliescu, the then First Secretary of the Young Communists' Association and Minister for Youth.

### **Alone, with my second doubts**

Károly Király, as National Salvation Front Vice-President, was now mainly occupied in Bucharest. But then on January 9 - on account of his grave facial neuralgia complaint - he was removed even further from us, to Budapest, where he was operated on and nursed until January 25.

This was how I suddenly found myself in deep water. I shall try to indicate the torments involved in the gradual disappearance of the illusions I still entertained at that time.

In the aforementioned euphoria of those days, I found it a bit strange that not more publicity was given to the large amount of humanitarian aid with which Hungary moving as one man - assisted Romania. As an example I quote the December 26 issue of *Adevarul*, which published my article about Tökés. Presenting the "humanism without frontiers" it popularised the aid transports of six countries (Austria, Soviet

40

Union, France, etc.), but did not mention Hungarian transports at all. Of course, the saying "a leopard never changes his spots" generally fits the set of journalists who had so faithfully served Ceausescu. All honour, therefore, to the exceptions.

Today I no longer find all this strange, but have come to the conclusion that it was an intrinsic part of a well thought-out strategy.

The trap into which the Hungarian Foreign Ministry fell at this time fitted into the same strategy. In the first days of January, Budapest's Kossuth Radio read Foreign Minister Gyula Horn's statement in which he called on those Hungarians travelling to Romania to refrain from interfering in its domestic affairs.

The implication. Hungarians do not so much bring aid, but interfere in internal affairs. From here the repetition of the accusation of separatism was but one further step to Romanian ears this meant that the Hungarians wanted to

But before this very charge was first heard from the mouth of President Ion Iliescu himself on January 25, various things had happened.

On January 12 the whole country remembered the victims of the December revolution,

In Tirgu Mures, an ecumenical service was celebrated from the steps of the Greek Catholic church. On behalf of the county leadership I spoke, in Hungarian.

I said that the memory of the six victims would stay with us forever, because their spirit which had achieved the beautiful and longed-for liberty through the common sacrifice of blood lived on among us.

This spirit teaches us as follows: that a singular historical opportunity is being offered here and now to everybody.

I said that this is the command of increased responsibility: the empty words which had been mouthed over so many decades and words silenced by violence, the effaced words: testvér - frate - Bruder [brother in Hungarian, Romanian and German] can be restored to their rights, each to the cathedral of their mother tongues.

After the observance I hurried to the Mures Inn, where we had to prepare with Géza Domokos and his colleagues the second national meeting of the Hungarian Democratic Association, the RMDSZ.

At 20:30 (while the television broadcast an anti-government demonstration in Bucharest) I was called from the Inn with the message that a large crowd was demonstrating at the town hall. Their grievance was that democratisation had been stopped and that the Securitate men were not being called to account. General Scrieciu asked me to speak to the demonstrators in Hungarian.

The text of my rather hectic speech was:

I have never addressed a popular meeting in my life and I don't want to speak now either unless you want to hear what I have to say.

I understand the difficult situation we are in. We must not forget that in this country there were 3,800,000 Party members and 70,000 Securitate men. In this country

41

for the first time in history, the phenomenon occurred that the driver had already died but the machinery continued to kill!

Exactly in order to avoid superfluous victims, the supreme leadership was forced to make the decision that the Securitate should be placed under the control of the military. Nobody told me this, this is my private opinion. I am not the hireling of anybody, I am the prisoner of my own conscience. I accepted the defence of László Tótkés. While I nearly dirtied my pants - I was so afraid - I would have been ashamed not to accept it,

The crowd: Thank you, thank you!

Unfortunately it must be understood that the Securitate men have not been touched - I am still afraid of them!

The crowd: Hear! Hear!

I was happy to hear that those among these outstanding warriors who had passed the age of 50 would be pensioned off. Though in my opinion a limit should be put on their pensions, otherwise we will be paying to give them the good life for all their remaining years, and against this we protest.

The crowd: To the mines with Them!

In vain would we send them to the mines, because they would be so clumsy that on their account a number of honest miners could die. In the mines honest workers are needed, not Securitate men. They are no good for that either.

The crowd: Hang them!

[Comment: after the Bucharest days of June 1990 - when Iliescu called the miners to the capital to violently suppress pro-democracy agitation - all this sounds a bit bizarre. EK.]

I have always said, and dare to say it now, that there is no more contemptible idea than collective guilt. This was invented by the dear old Iosif Visarionovich Dzhugashvili, whom history nicknamed Stalin. It has been applied since then too. You know how much the Kulak [rich Russian peasant class] children had to suffer, indeed all those whose family tree was not entirely healthy. What I mean is that somebody can be called to account only for what he is personally responsible

The murdering Securitate men, the policemen who maltreated the people and beat the freedom fighters, have no place in the police forces! This is as clear as two-and-two.

The crowd: Hear! Hear!

Feeling this support of the masses, I shall propose at tomorrow's leadership meeting that the list of those police and Securitate men who beat the freedomfighters on December 21-22 should be published.

The crowd: So be it!

I consider it revolting that this has not yet happened! Unfortunately this did not depend on me

42

The crowd: On whom?

Life is not unequivocal. There are people who want change, and there are those who are capable of anything so that there should be no change. In any case, those people who killed or beat the freedom fighters have no place in the police forces, but should be in prison!

We wish to build up the rule of law. In a democratic state where there is the rule of law there is no room for collective guilt nor for individual vengeance.

The crowd: There is no room for the Communists either!

My opinion is that the true Communists were those who let themselves be beaten half to death at that time for a dream.

The crowd: Like Károly Király!

That is like the old Károly Király. Because the Károly Király of today no longer believes in Communism, because he has discovered that this was a grave error of history.

He is an honest man who knows what Fascism meant - that old repression, which we have already forgotten about. When an English lord boasted to Prince Eszterházy in London that he had 40.000 sheep, Eszterházy answered that he had 40.000 shepherds. So there were times like that too. Do not let us forget that either. Those honest men [old

Communists] risked their lives for a creed about which it turned out 20 or 30 years later that it was a dead end, one of the grave errors of the 20th Century. I still respect these people. I dare to say that I respect the old honest Communists.

The crowd: You are right (with interjections in Romanian - I promised to sum up my remarks at the end in Romanian).

It is not with the Communists that we should lose our time. There aren't any Communists any more in this country - the poor wretches only sit at home by the stove and warm their sciatica.

Those who served the regime ...

The crowd in Romanian: Death for death!

...The vendetta, revenge, the death sentence is no solution... I do not even know them personally, but only from the television. It seems to me that they are intelligent European people, whom we should allow to get on with their work. Perhaps they can do something good, and if we see that they can do no good, then they must be removed. But we certainly must not make the mistake of kicking them in the pants before they have even started to work.

It is not the death sentence that we should discuss; how beautiful it would be if in this country, after the beastly dictator, it would no longer be necessary to shoot anybody. How much more the criminals suffer in jail anyway, in the cold, on prison food than if they escape it all through a quick death.

Interjection in Romanian:- Hear! Hear!

43

I do not interfere with this. This is the task of the legislators and of the judiciary. We do not decide this here at a popular meeting in Tirgu Mures. Let us not mix up what has to be done and when.

My address in Romanian:

Now I begin to speak in Romanian. What I do want to say, very briefly, is:

You are right if you believe that the changes are too slow and that the National Salvation Front has been changed into a national front for people to save their positions.

The crowd in Romanian: Down with them!

I am a solicitor and have stood until now on the other side of the fence and have tried to fight the powers-that-be. I accepted this new office with a heavy heart. I only accepted it in these troubled times so that I could try to help the country find the right road.

We can find this right road only with your help.

If you are able to formulate your demands as a platform which can be presented to the supreme leaders of the country, I shall be pleased to take it to Bucharest Monday night and show it to the supreme leadership.

I have understood that everybody agrees that radical measures should be taken, that we should no longer be afraid of the Securitate men, or of the policemen who maltreated the freedomfighters; these militia men... (the crowd: the police...) No, no, I do not want to abuse the word 'police', every society needs them. [Comment: the militia were renamed police after the revolution.]

...Well then, those militia men who knew what had happened in Timisoara and in Bucharest in the morning and who were nevertheless able later to maltreat the freedom fighters of Tirgu Mures, they should be removed not only from the police forces but should also be put before a tribunal, arrested, and their hair should be shorn off.

The crowd: Condemn them!

Everybody who knows and can prove who the Securitate and militia men are who maltreated the freedom fighters, who murdered them, should make a complaint at the military attorney's office. It is the legal duty of this office to find out the truth. If they do not find out the truth, then these attorneys must be removed from the military attorney's office.

The crowd in Romanian: How can you trust them?

This cannot be known, but if they do not find out the truth, like in the Aurel Dan affair, they must be removed.

[Aurel Dan was a senior administrator who stole from the aid transports, and was caught]

The crowd in Romanian: Down with them!

We demand that the attorney who tried to cover up that pilfering matter be kicked out, [since then he has been promoted!]

44

The question of the murdering volley [of shots against local protesters] is a very complex legal question. It must be established who issued the command, and afterwards who did the shooting. Those who were shooting will certainly say at whose command they did it.

I promise that if the investigation is not correct, I shall let you know in every possible way - through the radio, through television.

The crowd in Romanian: And here!

Yes, here too.

The crowd in Romanian: Thank you! The truth, the truth!

Köszönöm! Multumesc! Dankeschön! [Thank you in Hungarian, Romanian and German].

After I had delivered this, my first public speech, on January 12, the attacks started against me in the undeclared Vatra Romaneasca mouthpiece,

Cuvintul Liber [Free Word]. Attila Jakabffy also received an ample share of attacks - although he had done no more than fulfill his duty as the chairman of the Nationality Committee of the National Salvation Front.

It should also be added at this point that - as I indicated when I told the crowd of my suspicions - the new Romanian leadership did indeed place the Securitate from the beginning under the protection of the army.

And further, that in Tirgu Mures, where on the night of December 21-22 the Securitate and police beat or shot more than 50 people, nobody was arrested for the six dead and 50 gravely injured. Those victims still living were set free by the revolutionary crowd on the afternoon of the 22nd.

In the first days after the revolution the Securitate men trembled., but then they again found the courage to walk the streets. The old Party leaders too found that they were not going to be called to account for their activities.

These facts carried within themselves the seeds of the regression that was soon to follow.

### **The Hungarians enter politics**

On January 13, the second national meeting of the Democratic Association of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) was held in the "István Szentgyörgyi" theatre studio. I consider it to be symbolic that the Mures County branch of the RMDSZ was formed at Christmas 1989 in the office of Gyôzô Hajdu, the former editor-in-chief of the local Hungarian literary monthly, and a Ceausescu stooge. Hajdu figured in two places in the telephone directory, both as Gyôzô and as Victor [the Romanian version of Gyôzô. After December 22 he fled from Tirgu Mures, being afraid that the anger of the people would not spare him. He has since returned to write for Vatra-type publications.

45

The engineering professor and Deputy Minister of Education. Dr. Attila Pálfalvi, said at this second RMDSZ meeting that the new government, true to the declared programme of the National Salvation Front, urged the restoration of an independent nationality-based education system. He said further that it would approve every initiative and solution coming from below. And he mentioned as an example the decision on the restoration of Hungarian secondary schools in the Transylvanian town of Cluj.

Indeed, a week before our meeting. the National Salvation Front still claimed (quoting from its Nationality Programme),

...that it condemns resolutely the policy conducted by the previous dictatorial system against the national minorities and declares solemnly: it realises and guarantees individual and collective nationality rights.

In consequence, the National Salvation Front considers necessary:

1) The new Constitution of the country should recognise and guarantee the individual and collective rights and civil rights of the national minorities.

2) The National Minorities Bill, detailing the provisions of the Constitution in a concrete form, must be elaborated and enacted. This Act should be adopted by Parliament within six months from the entry into force of the new Constitution.

3) In accordance with legal provisions, the establishment of the institutional system necessary for the practice of the fundamental rights of the minorities must be ensured, and thereby the free use of the mother tongue, the care for the national culture, and the safeguarding of national identity. For this purpose a Ministry of Nationality Affairs must also be established... etc.

I have recorded the Nationality Programme of the National Salvation Front in such detail above in order to explain the reasons for Hungarian impatience and distrust at what proceeded to happen in educational matters.

Unfortunately, the mushrooming Romanian parties, the so-called historic parties, the National Peasant Party and the National Liberal Party - and the 50 or 60 other little parties, did not formulate a nationality programme at all. Or if they did, their programme contained much less than that of the National Salvation Front.

In this way, the Romanian parties calling themselves "democratic" committed a huge blunder: without wishing to do so, they made the national minorities believe that only the Front could ensure their rights. and that if the Front lost at the forthcoming May elections (in January it was still considered a very real possibility by many). there would be no Hungarian schools and no equal rights. This implied a deadline.

Consequently, desiring that the 450-year-old Hungarian Reformed College. the present Farkas Bolyai Lyceum, should once again become an Hungarian school (it

was made a joint Hungarian-Romanian institution in 1961, to the gradual detriment of Hungarians thereafter), the Hungarians of Tirgu Mures desired to achieve this change by the beginning of the second school term - i.e. immediately. For the elections which our supposed Front protectors looked very capable of losing were set for too soon after that date for the Hungarians to risk waiting.

Indeed, the official decision that the Bolyai Lyceum become once again Hungarian was made on January 18. The adoption of this resolution was linked to the names of Valer Galea, the Romanian County Vice-President of the National Salvation Front, the Hungarian teacher Tibor Wessely, Vice-Chairman of the Tirgu Mures Municipal Committee of the National Salvation Front, and the Romanian teacher Nistor Man, the Chairman of the Education Committee of the National Salvation Front.

This decision caused great consternation in the Romanian section of the Bolyai Lyceum and also at the corresponding Romanian (though also now mixed) Papiu Ilarian Lyceum. There was consternation too among the political - excuse me, cultural! - Romanian organisations associated with these institutions, i.e. Vatra.

The Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front discussed the matter at an extraordinary session.

The full minutes of this January 19 session should be published because they are exciting and instructive: they show what the boundaries of the navigable road are in the intelligent resolution of Romanian-Hungarian conflicts.

Those talented - usually young - Romanian politicians who had been brought to the surface by the revolution understood after our open - but not hateful - clash of arguments that the Hungarians were entitled to their own schools, and especially to the ancient Bolyai. (It is this class of Romanians which the hyenas of the Vatra Romaneasca have now for the time being removed from public life.)

The Romanian members of the National Salvation Front County Council agreed on January 19 to the restoration of the Bolyai Lyceum as a school teaching 'in the Hungarian language. But the Hungarian members for their part accepted that this could only be implemented at the beginning of the new school year (i.e. on September 15)

The healthy compromise was: the Bolyai should de jure be declared at once an Hungarian lyceum, but its Romanian students should be able to continue to attend it until the end of the school year, and not be torn from their classes in mid-course.

It was at this meeting that [local Romanian theatre director] Smaranda Enache for the first time spoke up for the restoration of independent education in the mother tongue. The effect of her intervention was overwhelming. Though she promptly began to receive mailed death threats and obscenities.

At this same time, I received a shocking memorandum. The authors put their names into a separate enclosed envelope. This fact showed how fear lived on in people, how they were afraid of the members of the old security forces who were still circulating freely.

I felt that I absolutely had to do something, and on the evening of the day of the meeting described above, I telephoned the President of the country and asked him for an audience. He was very forthcoming and readily received me the next day.

In the eyes of President Iliescu it was an extremely good recommendation that I had looked after the legal defence of László Tőkés. (It is possible that not everybody will find it appealing, but when speaking for the first time to anybody in the Bucharest leadership, I mentioned that I had represented László Tőkés. This sentence always had the effect of "Open Sesame".)

I was received by Ion Iliescu at 13:00 the next day. Iliescu was extremely kind and thoughtful. He greeted me at the door, asked my forgiveness for having made me wait, and did not sit down at his desk but at a table with me.

I handed him the Romanian-language text of the memorandum that had so shocked me the day before. It was written by certain members of the Hungarian community that inhabit the Szekler region of Transylvania. Photographs were enclosed.

In brief, what was involved was that in the summer of 1989 the police of a town of the Szekler region moved to new headquarters, Subsequently, in the courtyard of the old headquarters two human skulls and other bones were found in the dog kennel. In August 1989 these people were afraid to report it, but they kept the finds. Since the old policemen are around, they still wanted to maintain their incognito. I asked Iliescu to give the material only to reliable detectives. He said that he would hand it over to the attorney-general of the country. Since then I heard nothing about this matter.

In any case, the President was rather surprised to learn that this is what I had come to Bucharest to ask from him. So I made use of the opportunity of being able to speak in private to the first man in the country, and told him the following:

"Mr. Iliescu, we have confidence in you, but if you will not be more radical, if you do not take a stand against the guilty Securitate men, against the Party nomenclatura, we shall lose."

I emphasised that there could be no talk of collective guilt, but that those who had blood on their hands or who had gravely mistreated people must be punished. I declared that it was not sufficient to carry out actions against members of the old Political Executive Committee of the centre. Measures had to be taken also against the county leaders and key people of the Central Committee.

Iliescu stared in front of himself, and said only "Da. da, securitatea" (yes, yes, the Securitate).

48

I also mentioned that Romanian public opinion had to be prepared for the acceptance of equal rights for the national minorities. I gave the example that if - although absolutely correctly - an Hungarian headmaster is elected in the Bolyai Lyceum of Tirgu Mures, then this is seen from the Romanian point of view that there is now one Romanian headmaster less. And how decent the poor chap was, people will add.

He asked why we wanted separate Hungarian medical and pharmaceutical training anyway within the framework of the Bolyai University of neighbouring Cluj.

I told him the essence was not simply organisational, but that medical and pharmaceutical training in the Hungarian language should be restored. Unfortunately, the Romanian professors of that institution applied the "numerus clausus" game so enthusiastically that in the current first year intake there are only 14 Hungarians, while the number six years ago was more than 80! And this was not because fewer Hungarians were now applying. The total number of students had stayed the same, only the ratios had changed.

I said it is obvious to us that only our own institutions can ensure the assertion of nationality rights, and the secure education of our own intelligentsia.

President Iliescu commented that there had been an Hungarian Chancellor at the University of Tirgu Mures once before, and let there again be an Hungarian.

I said that this was much more difficult to implement than the general goal of restoring Hungarian education to its rights. For in addition, it would be wrong to put an Hungarian chancellor at the heart of an institution where there was a Romanian majority. The solution is two institutions and two chancellors.

Switching topics, and aware of the fact that the originally-picked Romanian ambassador to Budapest had recently refused to accept the posting, I proposed that if they wanted to establish really new relations, then such a personality should be appointed to Budapest who was truly suitable and who would be able to conquer all of Hungarian public opinion.

I considered Smaranda Enache, who until then was entirely unknown in Bucharest, to be the best candidate.

President Iliescu answered that if she was such an outstanding personality we should make use of her in Tirgu Mures.

Staying on foreign policy., I told him that I found it strange that the same Constantin Oancea was Deputy Foreign Minister who for more than 16 years

had directed the anti-Hungarian foreign policy of Ceausescu. I told him that I was in Timisoara for the hearing of the Tökés case, and thus saw on Hungarian Television less than two months ago - the despicable way in which Oancea tried to glorify Ceausescu at the press conference following the last Romanian Party Congress. In my opinion, he had lost face before the entire world, and this was not so long ago and had not been forgotten.

(An hour earlier, I had also complained to the Secretary of State in the Foreign

49

Ministry, Romulus Neagu, about the adoption of Oancea. He answered that it was Oancea who had arrested the heads of the Foreign Ministry during the revolution. This was how the bandit turned policeman. It was child's play!)

But returning to Iliescu, I also told him that many of my former university colleagues had been at the Foreign Ministry, and that I was therefore in a position to know that only those who also worked for the Interior Ministry (Securitate) remained shining stars in the Foreign Ministry.

I proposed that those who had been removed for refusing to work for the Securitate should be called back, and the Securitate informers should be directed to other areas. I added that if the President did not follow this course, there would hardly be any new Romanian foreign policy.

He listened attentively, made notes, and said only "bine" [all right].

After the conversation lasting 30-35 minutes I left with favorable impressions and I trusted that Ion Iliescu would sincerely support our endeavours for equal rights. He appeared to be an open-minded, pleasantly smiling person. This smile is nowadays no longer so natural, it has almost frozen onto the President's face.

The greater was my shock therefore when a few days later, on the evening of January 25, Ion Iliescu spoke up on television against Hungarian "separatist" ambitions.

I rang him next morning and protested, saying that he could hardly have chosen a more unfortunate expression. (I shall not list my arguments here, as I am repeating them in a newspaper article included in this book.)

Iliescu answered that he spoke against extremist phenomena on both sides, and asked what expression he should have used.

A bit taken aback, I said that finally the country had leaders who spoke Romanian excellently, and that in his milieu there were others who spoke the language much better than I did, since it was their mother tongue,- and who could offer better advice than I.

I said: "I believe, Mr. President, that you should have urged the strengthening and restoration of unity."

I discussed "separatism" with President Iliescu on one other occasion -, approximately one week after the phone conversation mentioned above. In the restaurant of the Hotel Continental in Tirgu Mures, I was giving an interview to A. Pinteau, editor of the Bucharest Adevarul, about what we would like to achieve in the new, democratic Romania for the sake of equal rights. (Needless to say, this interview was never published.)

At a certain moment, a hotel employee arrived in great haste with the message that the President was asking me to come to the phone at the reception. He had been seeking me at home and had learned from my wife where I could be found.

Iliescu told me that two Romanian students of the Tirgu Mures Medical and

50

Pharmaceutical Institute had visited him and complained that the Hungarian students demanded a separate canteen too. Well, was this not separatism? In view of the gasping listeners around me. I said only that the matter was not as he had been told. Iliescu asked me to receive the two Romanian students in my office the next day. Of course. I immediately agreed. The two young men never called on me. They would have been ashamed to present such a canteen story to me. They kept it for misleading the Romanian public.

5 1

### **LATE JANUARY: END OF-THE IDYLL**

As I have indicated. the January 19 compromise resolution of the National Salvation Front County Council concerning separate schooling did not meet with undivided praise. Tensions increased.

A joint conference of the teachers of the Ilarian Papiu Lyceum and the Farkas Bolyai Lyceum was arranged by the Tirgu Mures National Salvation Front, (Let it be noted that Vatra Romaneasca was founded officially in the hall of the Ilarian Papiu Lyceum).

At this conference four of us represented the Front. Smaranda Enache, Chairwoman of the Cultural Committee; Attila Jakabffy, Chairman of the National Minorities Committee; Andras Tökés, County Deputy Chief School Inspector (also as a teacher in the Papiu Lyceum); and myself as County Vice-President.

The meeting began with a statement by the teacher Vasile Matei, the Romanian Deputy Headmaster of the Bolyai Lyceum, who said that the

teachers of Romanian nationality of the school opposed the immediate restoration of an autonomous Hungarian school.

The Papiu teachers speaking after him also attacked very sharply the County Council's compromise resolution of January 19, which called for the restoration of separate schooling in September, not January. As County Vice-President, I was asked to speak in order to defend the corporate resolution, but I was prevented from speaking. There were such interjections as: "We don't need a solicitor".

Later they tried to explain that they did not let me speak because they did not know me (yet they knew that I was a solicitor). Let me note that the Romanian mob that nearly murdered the Hungarian leader Sütö in the March pogrom also testified later that they had taken part in the manhandling of unknown persons. Do the tales come from the same root to such an extent?

But returning to the schools meeting, all the Bolyai teachers left the room in protest at these scenes and our attempt at dialogue turned into a militant monologue from those remaining, opposing the restoration of the autonomous Hungarian schools, etc.

Smaranda Enache tried to influence the remaining speakers, but they became more and more vulgar and they were not willing to listen to her either. At the time, we were still unaware that displayed before us for our admiration were members of the still-secret Vatra " cultural associations.

The Romanian engineer Emil Tirnaveanu, as Vice-President of the Tirgu Mures Town Council of the National Salvation Front, argued for the restoration of the

autonomous Hungarian-language Bolyai Lyceum, but he was shouted down. And yet this young Romanian intellectual was not a nobody. He was the only one in Tirgu Mures who dared - as early as September 1989 - to vote against the re-election of Ceausescu at the nominating meeting for the Party Congress. Of course, in the eyes of those who are for regression, such personalities are undesirables and must be removed. After elections later that year, Emil Tirnaveanu was shunted to the sidelines.

When a lady teacher, whose nervous system seemed none too stable, began to speak about the Hungarians in a derogatory tone, Tôkés, Jakabffy and I left the room in protest.

Enache was forced to deliver her message after the meeting and into a video camera. We immediately sent the tape to Bucharest, believing that these deep, European thoughts that she had expressed had to be passed on to the public opinion of the country.

Romanian Television broadcast the declaration by Smaranda Enache after my repeated urgings over the phone (I spoke even to President Iliescu). It was at a difficult moment for the country, there had been more antigovernment demonstrations. But the effect of the broadcast of the tape was stunning: passions were let loose.

The extremists not only condemned and threatened Smaranda Enache, but also her parents. At the same time, a great deal of encouraging feedback came in from all over the country, and in Timisoara demonstrations were even held in support of Smaranda Enache.

### **Consensus destroyed**

In the meantime the Hungarian Bolyai Lyceum students began a sit-in strike: they wanted to force the immediate restoration of education in the mother tongue.

On January 30 I went to my old school (my father, brother and sister had also obtained their graduation certificates there), and in the headmaster's office, in the company of teacher László Lőrincz, the Vice-Chairman of the Nationality Committee of the National Salvation Front, I tried to convince the students' committee and the parents' committee that they should accept the January 19 resolution of the County Council of the National Salvation Front. This being, that they shouldn't restore the Hungarian lyceum until the autumn.

I stressed that it was not possible to achieve Hungarian equality if in the meantime we disregarded Romanian sensitivities. I said it could not be claimed that Hungarian rights were being infringed just because the Romanian students and their teachers did change school in midyear. I added that the fact that this very thing had been done to the Hungarians in the 1961 school merger should not be a reason for a similar step now. I said the time had come to put an end to the exchange of blows..

Nationality education must be ensured by the Education Act, and this should not be made the object of local bargaining.

My words were supported by László Lőrincz who also warned that ultimatums only added grist to the Romanian nationalists' mill.

One parent there said to my face that I was a traitor to the Hungarians, and that I was unwilling to assert just Hungarian demands in order to further my political career. He asked who had authorised me to behave in such an opportunistic way. His words were acclaimed by some present.

Teacher Matei, the Romanian deputy headmaster of the Bolyai Lyceum could hardly believe his ears (he speaks Hungarian well). But it is

characteristic that he never said subsequently in any Romanian forum: "Stop, exactly the opposite of what the Vatra alleges about Kincses is true: Kincses resolutely opposed the immediate removal of the Romanian students from the Bolyai." I am curious whether he will ever be willing to tell all this...

Incidentally, a video film was made of this encounter, and thus it can be confirmed at any time that I am writing the truth. I represented the same view in my interview to Budapest Television on February 4.

Now, some time later, I can only say that the Hungarians were not wrong when they thought that if the Bolyai was not to become an Hungarian school at once, it would not become one after the elections either! The logic being that the government elected then would not fulfil the promises of the National Salvation Front.

### **The school affair snowballed.**

The Hungarian Deputy Minister for Education, engineering Professor Attila Pálfalvi, was relieved from his post in order to give the impression that he had initiated this divisive separation of the schools, although it had been the government's stated programme. When the RMDSZ protested, Pálfalvi was appointed deputy minister in an industrial ministry,

### **One Colonel Ioan Judea**

But it was not only the schools affair that aggravated the public mood in Tirgu Mures during this time. The re-election of officials of the municipal mayoral office also played its part.

Colonel Ioan Judea (we called him Judas, because he had betrayed the revolution), supported by General Ioan Scriciu, First Vice-President of the County Council, ignored the principle contained in the resolution of the County Council concerning representation. This said that the county mayor should be a Romanian and the county deputy mayor an Hungarian, and that the mayor of the town be an Hungarian (since

54

there is an Hungarian majority in Tirgu Mures), and that the town deputy mayor be Romanian. Elections were arranged where - in toto - five Romanians and two Hungarians were elected, with an old Ceausescu Romanian cadre thrown in.

Following our protest, the elections were re-held.

At the meeting of an exclusive circle where this was discussed, András Sütő said that the men led by Colonel Judea had put together the leadership of the mayoral office of the town in a way which was characteristic of Ceausescu's activists, and that they did not provide for proportional

Hungarian representation. Judea interjected, Sütö too was in favour of Ceausescu, why does he say such things?" To which Sütö replied: "The situation of a person who served Ceausescu to the last moment, as you did, and who never said or did anything against Ceausescu, is entirely different from the situation of a person who was banned from intellectual life for more than ten years (because of his anti-regime activities)."

I believe that Colonel Judea considered this exchange to be an insult, and that he marked it down at András Sütö's expense. And that this is why he protected Sütö so "successfully" on March 19 against those who nearly murdered him.

I took part in the re-election meeting and argued for the 50-50 percent town leadership, the Hungarian mayor/Romanian deputy mayor variant. And with the help of the votes of young Romanians we implemented this. Considerable changes occurred in the personnel make-up of both the Council of the Salvation Front and the mayoral office.

It was at this meeting too that the senior Vatra man, Radu Ceontea, piped up - Ceontea, whose earlier statements had established to my satisfaction that this mind did not work as that of a democratic intellectual avowing acceptable principles. I told him that if he was not clear about a question, why did he have to talk about it, why did he not keep silent? He then stopped and sat down. Well, at the time he wasn't yet a Romanian senator...

### **Vendetta**

At this time, the handbills started appearing. And also an anonymous new "Constitutional Draft". And from the General Post Office, what became known as the notorious inflammatory telegram was also sent. (I shall report on these materials shortly via the reproduction of a newspaper article).

Károly Király had just arrived back from surgery in Budapest, and we agreed that we would petition the attorney's office to investigate who had sent the post office telegram, who had written the handbills, etc., and that the culprits should be indicted.

In local newspapers, both Romanian and Hungarian post office clerks demanded that it should be discovered which colleagues sent the telegram inciting anti-Hungarian feeling and calling for violent action. This demand was in vain.

I thought it would do no harm to encourage the attorney's office to discover the culprits. Towards the end of January, I rang Gheorghe Andreicut, the Romanian county attorney-general. He answered that it was impossible to discover who had sent the telegram (let me note that postal

clerks swear to the opposite) and further, that the anonymous "Constitutional Draft" was simply that - a draft of a Bill - and that its investigation was not the task of the attorney's office.

I felt that the situation was giving rise to so much anxiety that I had to turn to public opinion through the press, and I wrote my article entitled "Through Incitement Against Equal Rights", Unfortunately, this article was not published by the Magyar Szó [Hungarian Word - the Hungarian-language daily] of Romania, (though the last paragraph was published weeks later), nor by the Neuer Weg [New Road - the German-language daily of Bucharest]. But then it wasn't published by Budapest's Magyar Nemzet [Hungarian Nation] either.

I ask you to read what I tried to draw to the attention of public opinion at the end of January:

### **Through Incitement Against Equal Rights**

On the evening of Thursday, January 25, listening to Ion Iliescu, many people's hands jerked up when he even began to mention "separatism".

This expression reminds the Romanians of Transylvania of the nightmare of "Return Transylvania to Hungary". Of course, it is clear to everybody that this is not even open for discussion, but Ceausescu too made clever use of this old Romanian fear in order to obtain mass support for his dictatorship.

As a consequence, the use of this expression is expressly unfortunate in the Romanian context.

It is also unfortunate from the point of view of the Hungarians and Germans of Transylvania - of Romania generally - because it is used as a strong weapon by Romania's conservative, chauvinistic, Ceausescuite forces in their fight against the equality of the nationalities.

If the Hungarians and Germans happen to ask for their own kindergarten, school, or university, the answer is immediately there: "This is separatism, while we [Romanians] wish to continue to work within the spirit of the brotherly understanding that has been achieved to date".

But this so-called "brotherly understanding" has led to the almost complete rundown of nationality education. Such famous old schools as the [German] Joseph Haltrich of Sighisoara or the [Hungarian] Farkas Bolyai of Tirgu Mures are dominated by Rumanians.

But the Romanian extremists are not satisfied with such refined methods of incitement as the mention of "separatism". They have started open Incitement. Also on

January 25 (until now it has not been possible to find out who is responsible) the following inflammatory telegram was sent out from the post office of Tirgu Mures to the larger Romanian-inhabited towns:

"Romanian brethren and colleagues working at post offices and in telecommunications! The victorious revolution, instead of bringing us liberty, is headed towards bringing us moral suffering. We do not wish that the hateful Dictat of Vienna [the 1940 treaty describing the temporary return of parts of Transylvania to Hungary, or the establishment of a Horthy-type government should be repeated. [Horthy was the Regent of Hungary 1920-1944.] In our units - and in others too - in Tirgu Mures, and at all other levels, leading personnel are arbitrarily and regularly being replaced by Hungarians. Romanian students and teachers have been expelled from the schools, manhandled and spat at.

We ask you to support us that in the institutions and in the courts, Hungarian should not be introduced as an official language, as is currently being planned.

We are opposed to local autonomies, including local autonomy for Transylvania. We wish to remain united with the country.

We ask you to give expression to your public protest and to support our stand in your towns, in the local and central press. We do not want to create discord and hatred between nationalities, but rather peaceful and fraternal work between Romanians and Hungarians. Just as the Romanians and Hungarians have lived together for several hundred years in this Romanian land,

Long live the great and free Romania!

Signed: The Romanian initiative committee operating in the Mures county postal and telecommunication directorate.

We ask you to distribute this to all fellow branches."

\*\*\*

In addition, they also began to distribute the following "Draft Constitution which went beyond even Ceauyescu's erosion of nationality rights, and which threatened those living in Transylvania with the prospect of an exchange of populations. This anonymous draft said, inter alia:

" ... We propose that Romania's new constitution should contain the following:

1. In the entire territory of Romania, Romanian should be the official language between legal entities, between legal entities and natural persons,

as well as in any kind of contacts among natural persons of Romanian citizenship.

3. The expressions "national minority" and "coexisting nationality" should be abolished", and in their place the expression "Romanian citizens of a different nationality" should be used.

4. In all schools, at all stages, and in tertiary education, Romanian should be the language of tuition.

57

In those regions where Romanian citizens of a different nationality also live, it is possible to introduce and also teach the language and literature of the nationalities concerned...

7. Romanian citizens of a different nationality can of their own free will request, and if they fulfil conditions to be prescribed by law, can receive Romanian nationality...

We consider that the above points can be applied to a united nation state, as we hope Romania will be.

In the opposite case, i.e. in the case that all the above enumerated ideas are not adopted, the majority of Romanian citizens of Romanian nationality will be obliged to fight for their rights in their own county, i.e. we consider it correct that the constitution or a separate law should provide:

A. The citizen of Romanian nationality who lives in a region inhabited by other nationalities is entitled to ask for his resettlement to any other locality in the country..."

\*\*\*\*\*

This formulation suggests that the situation of the Romanians is so untenable in Tirgu Mures that they are forced to relocate, and consequently that they need protection.

I believe that these texts require no comment. But I would like to note that the true nature of the authors of the "Draft Constitution" is betrayed by the passage according to which natural persons (i.e. the people) should be entitled to use only the Romanian language in their contacts of any nature. The "any nature" means here that people of non-Romanian nationality should not be able to use their mother tongue in any circumstances, in no contacts. Thus the mother would behave unconstitutionally and unlawfully who addressed her child in her own mother tongue, i.e. not in Romanian. Not even the executed dictator dared to pass measures of this nature!

Only the attention and constant protest of Europe and of all signatories of the Helsinki Final Act, and the effective support of Romanian democrats can avoid a terrible, European Nagorno-Karabakh.

We must not lose faith. There are many decent Romanians on our side, such as those in Braila, who were so shocked by the incitement of the Vatra postal clerks of Tirgu Mures in sending the telegram that they warned that

we should find out who wanted to harm those forces striving for the creation of a new, democratic Romania.

In accordance with the promise I had made in my remarks to the demonstrators of Tirgu Mures on January 12, the County Council of the National Salvation Front urged in a resolution that those responsible for the killings of December 21 be brought to account, and that the police and Securitate men who manhandled the freedom fighters be also charged. It was of course an open secret that I was the author of the resolution.

## 58

I even proposed that streets should be named in our town after the six freedom fighters who had been killed.

The implementation of the resolution has been in progress since the end of January 1989.

Of course, nobody attacked me openly for these proposals. They thought it preferable to begin to spread lies about me instead.

The Vatra mouthpiece, the local newspaper Cuvintul Liber was included in this campaign.

My name became such an everyday word that János Makai, editor-in-chief of Népujság, even wrote: "There is no Christmas without Corvin (advertising slogan of a Budapest department store), and there is no Cuvintul without Kincses."

I do not want to bore the reader with these texts, but I shall mention one case.

I wrote a reply in Hungarian to a teacher of Hungarian nationality advising her to turn with a particular request to the school inspector. This letter - in a land of the privacy of the mails - got into the editorial offices of Cuvintul Liber, and the newspaper attacked me for violating the official language.

I explained in my answer that the rightful use of the mother tongue was concerned here, since the letter was written by and to a private person, and this right was even ensured by Section 22 of Ceausescu's Constitution, etc,

I added in a postscript that the honour to appear daily in your newspaper was enjoyed in an earlier time by the illustrious Nicolae Ceausescu, back when you still had the beautiful name of Red Star. I said it is undeniable that the copy you wrote about him then differed greatly from the copy you write about me now. I said that for the time being I am grateful to you for this, but only for this...

It seems this sarcasm was not the worst weapon to use. For a while after that, the poisoning of souls was continued in other ways without the need to mention my name.

The Cuvintul Liber and also Bucharest Television became noticeably more and more aggressive.

Now I clearly understood why in mid-January the old editor-in-chief of Cuvintul, Pop Ioan had refused to reprint the interview with the RMDSZ leader, Géza Domokos, that had appeared that month in the Adevarul of Bucharest.

It is obvious that certain circles did everything in their power to prevent the Romanian public from learning about the true endeavours of the Hungarians of Romania. In the beginning I thought that this was a characteristic of Tirgu Mures only, but I shortly experienced that neither the Adevarul nor Romanian Television were willing to publish or broadcast our answers to attacks or points taken up by us.

Despite the fact that I had "honoured" the Adevarul with my article about the Tôkés affair, the paper did not publish three further articles of mine. It did not even react to the manuscripts I sent.

## **FEBRUARY: FATAL PROPOSAL**

Szabolcs Horvath, the Hungarian headmaster of the Bolyai Lyceum, was with me on February 2 when Valer Galea, the County Mayor, brought to my office a deputation of Romanian teachers from the Bolyai. It was led by the Romanian deputy headmaster, Vasile Matei.

The deputation explained that they were coming from the County School Inspector, the Romanian Mr. Ciurca, who had sanctioned their message. They advised that the troubles that had blown up around the Bolyai Lyceum in the last two weeks had affected their nerves to such an extent that they would like to suggest an acceptable solution.

Their plan was that in future they would function as a separate Romanian lyceum in the building of the technical school. They would like to secure this building because technical school courses were conducted during the evening, leaving 13 classrooms vacant for their purposes during the daytime.

They asked me to pass on their proposal to the Education Minister, Mihail Sora, who should advise the school inspector by telex of his agreement.

I solely passed on this proposal from the Romanian teachers' deputation and I also relayed subsequent questions from the Minister. I therefore consider that I had essentially a messenger's role in the whole affair. (Though I am not claiming that I was not happy to pass on these messages, trusting that in this way the Bolyai issue would somehow be settled, and the situation would not become poisoned further.)

Before leaving, the Romanian teacher delegation asked that we should not publish the fact of their visit, and we promised this.

My role in this matter ignited a series of huge Romanian protests.

A Romanian demonstration of February 9 was broadcast in full by the Transylvania Television of Tirgu Mures, and part of it was even broadcast by the Panorama programme of Budapest Television. Thus many people could see the scene where the Romanian students and parents demanded that I should name the four teachers who had paid this alleged visit and made this alleged proposal. I refused to do so, at which point the microphone was wrenched from me.

It can also be seen clearly on the video pictures how Radu Ceontea and Dumitru Pop, Vatra Romanesca luminaries and good "Bolyai men resolutely scuffle with three visiting vice-mimsters for education.

After these "discussions" of February 9 the decision was re-affirmed that the Bolyai would become an Hungarian school from September. 0 tempora! Incidentally,

after the Education Vice-Minister Hans Otto Stamp read out this decision, Colonel Judea assured the crowd that they should have no fears, that the Bolyai would not be an Hungarian school from the autumn! He turned out to be right,, not the three vice-ministers for education.

I presently told Budapest journalist István Feketehegyi in an interview that we had become the victims of a base provocation, and that the purpose of this provocation was clear: this was how they tried to rid themselves of democratic intellectuals who were in favour of the complete winding down of the old structure, and who demanded that the murderers, the criminals, the Ceausescu hirelings should be put before a court.

The video pictures confirm the correctness of the appreciation which I then gave on the spur of the moment.

First, the demonstrating Romanian students (who allegedly had not been informed by anybody of the arrival of the vice-ministers for education, but who nevertheless went into the streets exactly on that day) shouted: "Jos cu Kincses! [Down with Kincses! ].

Second, Major Ioan Frandes (a well-known Vatra leader) blurted out that he had rung Education Minister Sora, who had been unable to give the names of persons who had phoned from Tirgu Mures about the telexed proposal to change the status of the Bolyai.

From whom then did the demonstrating Romanian students and the deliberately misled, Romanian public opinion learn of my name, and in such a mendacious context?

Education Minister Sora had been a well-known opposition intellectual, and thus the extreme conservatives could have killed two birds with one stone. (What they did not succeed in doing on February 9, they did later: Sora soon ceased to be a member of the Romanian government.)

The scenes of the demonstration broadcast by the Panorama programme were nothing in comparison to what I had to live through on that evening of February 9.

I learned that Tirgu Mures Television (which was started shortly after the victory of the revolution and was headed by the young Romanian democrat, engineer Augustin Morar) would broadcast after the end of transmissions from Bucharest a report on the demonstration of that day. It was there that I would figure as an extremist Hungarian, who as a "separatist" wanted to chase the Romanians out of the Bolyai. I felt that my life would immediately be in danger if I did not make public the names of the four Romanian teachers whose proposal had prompted the decision of the Minister in the first place.

Due to the lynching mood around the town hall, I asked the four teachers in vain for them to present themselves. They were understandably afraid.

I asked Augustin Morar whether he guaranteed my life and limb if I went to his

61

television studio. He said that of course he did. When I entered the large room of the studio, the civilian and uniformed Vatra men, at least 30 of them, were watching on two television sets the tapes made of the morning's events. They returned my greetings, but at once turned the sets off. (The enemy had arrived)

I gave Augustin Morar a video-interview, in which I told him how the telexed proposal had come about, and gave him the names of the teachers.

I told him: "Gusti, if you do not announce the names of the teachers, I will not recognise you again in life! You must understand that my life is at stake." He promised that he would at least announce the names; it was not certain that he could broadcast the actual interview (freedom of the press!).

After I got home (it is a fact that I dared to travel only by car, and in company) Augustin Morar called me and said in despair that army Major Solovastru would not permit the announcement of the names of the teachers.

I ran to my office and through a government telephone rang General Constantin Cojocaru, the military commander of the county. I demanded that he should annul Solovastru's illegal intervention, and should let the names of the teachers be announced.

General Cojocaru first of all threatened that he would have me put before a military tribunal because I had "destabilised" the town (see, after "separatism" this other old-guard notion also made its reappearance). I answered that he had no right to do so. He could at most write to the military attorney's office and ask that proceedings be instituted against me. But I warned that I am competent at defending myself before lawyers. Then, however, we were still unaware to what extent the Romanian lawyers of Tirgu Mures had been penetrated by the Vatra.

Cojocaru answered that he knew what he was saying because he had discussed the matter with Prime Minister Petre Roman...

After my persistent demands, he agreed that the four Romanian teachers' names should be announced. This measure -saved my skin - at least temporarily. (But since to this day the Romanian public of Tirgu Mures still believes that I had wanted to immediately chase Romanians out of the Bolyai, I assume that the four teachers simply denied that they ever paid me this visit).

### **Distorted mirrors**

February 10 was the day of a wonderfully peaceful Hungarian demonstration, where people carrying candles and books stood in silent witness to the Hungarian community's grievances.

The resolution concerning the Organisation of such a rally had been passed at

a committee meeting of the RMDSZ in Bucharest on February 6.

The RMDSZ received permission for the rally the next day, February 7. Conse-

62

quently the Romanian charge that the Hungarian rally of the 10th was in response to the Romanian schools protest rally of the 9th, described above. is untrue.

Further, the Romanian demonstration of February 9 was supposed to be "spontaneous". and had not been advertised or authorised.

According to estimates, more than 100,000 people took part in the Hungarian demonstration, where, with dignity, they silently advocated defence of "our sweet mother tongue" and our schools. András Sütö spoke four times to the multitude in front of the sport palace. For it was organised so that four large groups listened in turn to his words before dispersing to be replaced by the next. They also prayed under the leadership of the Catholic priest, Gábor Köllö.

I quote a line from Sütö's address at the demonstration: "Brothers, countrymen! A hundred thousand of us have assembled silently, but this silence has been audible further away than anything.else!"

The mood of the demonstration was so exceptional and peaceful that the police, and even Colonel Judea, called it exemplary, and thanked us for it in the local press.

But after its own correct and professional reporting of our silent demonstration of candles and books, the local Transylvania channel of Tirgu Mures Television was banned. Unequivocally, I believe this was because of its honest and unbiassed reports, which were considered to be an impediment to the effective dissemination of the inciting propaganda of other local and central media. In vain did we subsequently ask for this channel's restoration.

It caused us great distress that Bucharest Television falsified the pictures of the two demonstrations I mention here. Perhaps one should regard this as a rehearsal for coverage of the March 20 pogrom.

First of all, it was made to appear as if both demonstrations had been peaceful and of the same size. In truth, the Romanian demonstrators manhandled 17 Hungarians and nearly gouged out the eyes of Hungarian TV cameraman István Farkas (the piercing tool hurt the skin under one eye). István Farkas was beaten up at a later Vatra meeting. And following the March pogrom (where he also filmed) he received such threats that he fled to Sweden with his family.

(At the beginning of February he also filmed a Vatra meeting in the sports palace from a secret hide-out, after which he came to me and said: "Elôd, I want to find the grave of the Ceausescus and put two flowers on it, because in them we have lost two great friends of the Hungarians".)

Further, concerning televised distortions, I was shown on Romanian Television as an enthusiastically acclaimed speaker at the February 9 demonstration of Romanians, even while the microphone was being wrenched from me, Neither Romanian Television nor the Adevarul was willing to broadcast or publish our protests about that incident.

63

In mid-February the National Salvation Front was extended to become the Provisional Council of National Unity. Two or three representatives nominated by other parties and organisations were also included in the leadership.

At this meeting I explained that the National Salvation Front had "forgotten" about the proportional representation of the nationalities. I said that since the law says nothing about the way in which the mayoral office should be reorganised, we are entitled to correct this omission of the legislature and can ourselves maintain in the mayoral office the 50-50 percent representational proportion that would reflect the nationality composition of the town.

I also reminded colleagues that in a democratic state the military must be free of politics, I therefore proposed that in place of Colonel Judea, a civilian (Emil Tirnaveanu) should be elected to head the town Provisional Council of National Unity. I added that the first vice-president of the county, Scriciu, is also a military officer.

Judea answered by threatening that he would have me put before a military court.

The atmosphere of the meeting was typical. One month had seen a tremendous change in the attitude of the Romanian representatives. When in mid-January the Bolyai was discussed, they accepted the compromise solution which envisaged the school becoming Hungarian in September. Now the Romanians unanimously rejected it, and the Hungarians unanimously supported it. I thought that throwing fuel on the fire made no sense, and I preferred to withdraw my proposal concerning the future of our military friends.

To these discouraging signals was added the warning from Károly Király, who in the courtyard of his home asked me in mid-February whether I had my passport. I said I had, Király said that we might need them. He said Sütö and I should be very careful; we should not walk around alone, we should think about our own protection and should bear in mind that we may have to flee. He added that - unfortunately - some leading circles did not want to

overcome the extreme hate-mongering going on, and even try to encourage it.

After their peaceful demonstration, the Hungarians saw that the matter of the Bolyai Lyceum was at an impasse and decided to wait and see. But the local and central media were now fully engaged in the incitement campaign and needed ever newer ammunition. They no longer considered the rehashing of old established "sins" to be sufficient.

64

### **EARLY MARCH: THE WAR OF THE STATUES**

In early March, the words "LE VED" were daubed on the equestrian statue of Avram Iancu in the centre of Tirgu Mures. If - as we must assume - the culprit was trying to say "Take it down" in Hungarian, he would have written "VEDD LE", [Or in English, as best as it can be compared, instead of "Take it down", the culprit wrote "DOUN IT". Iancu, by the way, was a Romanian Transylvanian peasant leader remembered for massacres of Hungarians in the 1848-49 revolution and one celebrated by Romanians as a fighter for their freedom from Hungarian oppression.]

Cuvintul Liber devoted a vehement and provocative article to the issue. And I knew that this incident should not be left to pass without comment.

I had to go to Bucharest to attend a conference of the 13 minority nationality organisations of Romania who were to meet in the hall under the dome of the Romanian Parliament. But before I left, in a TV interview, I explained that the person who daubed the statue with "LE VED" [instead of "VEDD LE"] was ignorant of the niceties of Hungarian grammar. I also proposed that the paint should be analysed to see where it came from, since a lot of red inscriptions had appeared in town and it might be possible to find out who did it.

I further mentioned in an aside that it would be good if in the forthcoming elections, borrowing from the example of the Romanians of Caransebes who at the time of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy elected the Hungarian Lajos Mocsáry to be their representative, we should do the same now in our town with Smaranda Enache. Although the arguments in my interview complete with Romanian dubbing were impossible to contest, the Adevarul, as if nothing had happened, published G. Giurgiu's article, He asserted that the Hungarians had soiled the statue of the "king of the snowy mountains".

Needless to say, my reply was not published by the Adevarul.

At the minorities' forum in Bucharest I was startled to hear from the other minority leaders how much they had also suffered from the oppression of nationalities - what losses of blood they had endured in the course of time, and that they did not have any schools either! My consternation also sprang from the realisation of how ignorant we each were of the fate of the

other, so effectively had the dictatorship been able to insulate people and ethnic groups from each

other.

The programme of the German Democratic Forum in Romania was described at the conference. We noted and supported it. This programme discussed the immediate need to establish factories employing mainly Germans, plus German-owned institu-

65

tions and schools. The implementation of such a programme should have been able to prevent the mass exodus of Romania's centuries-old German community that began following the revolution. But the government did not even find these demands worthy of reply, and the flight of the Germans has since accelerated.

It is possible that in that spring - through adequate political steps the Germans might have been persuaded of the desirability of their staying in their established homeland. But the political will was missing for these steps to be taken and it appears that after 750 years the role of the Saxons and Swabians in Transylvania and in the Banat region has come to a tragic end. In my opinion, there are only losers here: the Germans have lost their adored Siebenbürgen and Banat, and Romania has lost the German expertise, energy and capital. I am convinced that if the approximately half-million Germans had stayed, they would have exercised a tremendous attraction within the new Europe for German capital investments. But then chauvinism has never been a good economic or political advisor.

Returning home from this minorities conference, I read in the *Cuvintul Liber* of March 10 that two electronic word processors had been received from Hungary as gifts. One was received by the Romanian *Vatra* literary periodical (repeat no relation to *Vatra Romaneasca*) and the other by the Hungarian *Erdélyi Figyelő* [Transylvanian Observer] literary periodical.

Then I read in another article on the same page that the Hungarians were being blamed for knocking down the statue of Nicolae Balcescu in Sovata, a spa town in Mures County.

It should be known that the statue of Nicolae Balcescu (another Romanian freedom fighter from 1848-49) has been standing for years in the gardens of the Sovata baths. Thousands of visitors come to Sovata for recreation, and they usually come from Romanian-inhabited regions.

In the dark nobody can see whom a statuete presents (the destruction occurred at night). Why should such an event, where the perpetrator is unknown, be dished up as an Hungarian provocation? In addition, from an Hungarian point of view, Nicolae Balcescu is perhaps the most positive figure of Romanian history. It was he who concluded the 1849 *Projet de Pacification* with the Hungarian leader Lajos Kossuth, and he did everything for the two peoples to make friends. Would the Hungarians desecrate his memory?

The perpetrator is still unknown, the Sovata people at once protested, and stressed that they had nothing to do with the knocking down of the statue. They ordered a new Balcescu statue (the old one suffered such damage that it could not be restored). But the extremist press continued to repeat ever after that the Hungarians had desecrated Avram Iancu's statue and had knocked down Nicolae Balcescu's.

So much for that.

Károly Király continuously reacted to these manifestations with actions of his

66

own at the governmental level. He bombarded Bucharest officials with weekly petitions, beginning January 25 with a description of the events surrounding an attack on the RMDSZ headquarters in the Transylvanian town of Reghin. In an ominous preview of events to come, this was carried out by Romanian peasants of the Gurghiu valley who had been made drunk and who were then transported to Reghin.

On this occasion, Király demanded that the culprits named by him should be called to account, and that the military officers who had incited such an action be sent to other garrisons.

As ethnic relations worsened, he also demanded that a Nationalities Ministry be established, and that a decree be swiftly passed with which it would be possible to fight nationalistic-chauvinistic incitements in the press. Király repeatedly tried to achieve the transfer of the two most dangerous local Vatra officers, but Major Vasile Tira - who during Ceausescu's rule had been a political officer - and Colonel Ioan Judea remained in place.

After Judea publicly recounted an alleged Hungarian plan to get hold of Transylvania in three steps, Király - feigning stupidity - asked the Defence Minister, General Stanculescu: "Have you heard what military secret Judea has blurted out?" "What was that?" "Well, that the Hungarians want to sieze Transylvania, and that he has got hold of the military plans." Stanculescu's brief answer: "Prostul" [the idiot].

But - Stanculescu's mockery aside - Király's memoranda and warnings were addressed to deaf ears; the agreed scenario could not be interrupted.

Indeed, Károly Király himself began to suffer more and more attacks in the media. Just as at a Vatra Romaneasca meeting on February 1, the signal for the campaign against Laszlo Tôkés had also been given. At their meeting in Alba Iulia, the Vatra men had decided they wanted to see him hanging too.

### **The attentions of the army**

Officers of the army started to take a stand against me in the press. Vatra Major Vasile Tira called on me to withdraw from politics temporarily, that I may return at a suitable subsequent moment.

Major Olimpiu Solovastru ended his own attacks by inviting me to go and meet the officers' corps.

I accepted the invitation over the phone, but they kept postponing the meeting, while giving the impression that it was I who had something to hide. Finally I set the date for March 7, but my communique was not published by the Romanian-language newspapers, thereby making it look as though I corresponded in Hungarian even with the Romanian army.

The meeting did not take place, because General Cojocaru intervened to advise that the army did not intend to meet the representatives of any political party

67

On another occasion during this time, the military men among the Vatra leaders became incensed after I managed to torpedo through legal argument the exchange of leadership which they had carried through at Band. At Band, a large village 30 kilometres from Tirgu Mures, the Hungarians and some of the Romanians insisted that the National Salvation Front presidency and mayoralty should be given to one Romanian, Victor Onea. The opposing camp wanted to remove him at all costs. The army assisted in this: Major Tira and his friends went to Band and had elected a Temporary Council of National Unity from which Onea was omitted, and which saw the restoration of the old guard.

The Band people invited me to the protest meeting which they held next day. Many people warned me, while "full of good intentions", to go there only under the protection of the army.

I felt that if the Band people invited me, I could not go with the army, and so went in my service car, availing myself of the company of my friend Cimbi who had also accompanied me to Timisoara for the Tôkés's hearing.

Onea had spoken up for making peace between Romanians and Hungarians, and for equal rights. At the meeting he was cheered.

When I asked to speak, old Hungarian women claimed in a loud voice that I had been paid off, etc. Ignoring this distraction, I said that the election of the previous day which had been carried out with the "cooperation" of the military was invalid. This was because parliament was due to enact in only two days' time a new law on the establishment of the Provisional Council of National Unity.

I said that State power organs which were not regulated by law could simply not be established. I ended my legal argument by asserting that this meant that the old leadership, i.e. Onea's, remained the valid one.

Also in early March, Mihai Suciu, one of the editors of Vatra's Cuvintul Liber, rang me to ask for an interview. Of course I agreed, for it was consistently my view that we had to do everything in our power to make Romanian public opinion aware of our genuine views and demands.

My condition was that the full text should be published and that before it was printed, I should be able to check the interview. He agreed.

To my surprise, an entire team came for the interview, not only Mihai Suciu. He was accompanied by the editor-in-chief, Lazár Ladariu, the journalist V.- Barbulescu, and Major Vasile Tira!

I first thought that we could do without the representative of the army, but then I told myself "If I do not consider this debasing, then it does not trouble me."

The interview was published in three parts beginning March 15, under an imposing headline. "We Do Not Need Leaders Who Are Blemished..." But they departed from our agreement in four essential matters:

68

1) They did not print the Romanian translation for the term "LE VED"; thus for a person who does not speak Hungarian it was not clear how grammatically incorrect the text painted on Avram Iancu's statue was.

2) I stressed that my opinion about Smaranda Enache differed from theirs. They published that I did not express an opinion.

3) They omitted their questions and my answers concerning the Securitate, according to which I said that an honest Romanian patriot could not have undertaken Securitate work in recent years since he had to see that the power which he thus served had ruined his country. I added that the terror of the Securitate had extended Ceausescu's rule by at least five years.

4) About the army, I said that I disapproved of its accepting a political role: this passage was "forgotten".

As we reached the critical days of mid-March, I began to be threatened over the phone more and more frequently. I always picked up the receiver at night not knowing if it was my friends from abroad who were inquiring after me or not. This was the sweepstakes of those days: the caller either feared for my life, or threatened my life,

69

## **MARCH 15: INTO CRISIS**

March 15 is Hungary's national holiday, marking the beginning of the 1848 Independence revolution against Habsburg domination. We now know from a document that Hungarians got hold of during the riots on the night of March 20 that Vatra had been thinking a lot about March 15. Already at the end of February, they were discussing how the anniversary celebration should be made the pretext for a fuss, that Romanians must be left feeling insulted by it all. This they had decided already at the end of February!

On the eve of the Hungarian national holiday, there was a memorial meeting in Tirgu Mures accompanied by an artistic evening at the Palace of Culture. The Romanian leadership of the county was invited, but did not turn up. Romanian artists did take part, and the entire performance passed undisturbed.

On March 15 we laid a wreath at the statue of Nicolae Balcescu - here Aurel Florian, the county chairman of the Social Democratic Party, spoke in Romanian. We also laid a wreath at the statue of the Szekler martyrs [the martyrs being executed victims of a 19th Century anti-Habsburg uprising, the Szekler being the name given to the hardy, indigenous Hungarians of eastern Tra-nsylvania]. We also unveiled a plaque at what is now the office of the Reformed parish. the Teleki house [the Telekis being an old Transylvanian Hungarian aristocratic, politically active and philanthropic family] commemorating the last night spent in Tirgu Mures by the Polish General József Bem, who fought in 1848/49 with the Hungarians against the Habsburgs.

On national holidays, of course, the buntings come out. And in normal times and normal places, nobody would be vexed by the hoisting of a flag. But in the Tirgu Mures of the Vatra - and despite allegations to the contrary - nobody risked it. I must emphasise that in Tirgu Mures I did not see any Hungarian flag hoisted either before or after the December 1989 revolution. We did everything to avoid an incident, but it was not up to us.

### **The danger of enlightenment**

In connection with these events, Smaranda Enache recounted that she had learned a few days earlier in Bucharest that an anti-Hungarian demonstration was being prepared to be held at Satu Mare on March 15. She and the Romanian journalist Gelu Netea, the then director of Viitorul [The Future], the paper of the National Liberal Party, wanted to enlighten the Romanian public in order to prevent any possible ethnic clashes. They wanted to publicise the argument that on the day of the outbreak of

the 1848 Hungarian revolution in Pest-Buda there were no anti-Romanian overtones, and that the revolutionary crowd, in addition to freeing from prison the Hungarian writer Mihaly Táncsics, also freed the Romanian writer Eftimie Murgu.

They asked Professor Zoe Petra, who was then Dean of the History Faculty of Bucharest, to put it to Rzván Theodorescu, the director of Romanian Television. that by broadcasting adequate materials before March 15 they would enlighten the Romanian public. Professor Petra promised to intervene, but her efforts were unsuccessful.

Vlad Radescu, of the National Theatre of Tirgu Mures, and member of the Mures County Council of the Temporary Council of National Unity, had even played the 1848 Romanian revolutionary Avram Iancu in a film. He was also asked to publish a suitable article about March 15 in the Cuvintul Liber of Tirgu Mures. They wanted to get the writer Cornel Moraru, the editor-in-chief of the literary periodical Vatra (repeat:no relation to Vatra Romaneasca), to intervene with Lazar Ladariu, the editor-in- chief of Cuvintul Liber, to publish Vlad Radescu's article if he could be persuaded to write it.

Both attempts were unsuccessful.

At this time, the Romanian public - certainly the Romanian peasants of Mures County - were unaware of any foreign propaganda material attacking the "national" integrity of Romania. We Hungarians didn't know about any such materials either. In order to infect the domestic political climate with the old fear that "the Hungarians want Transylvania", foreign propaganda material had to be translated into Romanian and had to be published in Romania. This task was undertaken by the Vatra Romaneasca, and by the Romanian newspaper of Tirgu Mures mouthing its propaganda, the Cuvintul Liber, as well as by Bucharest Television.

The anti-Hungarian propaganda campaign was topped by the reproduction of a certain handbill protesting against "anti-Hungarian cultural genocide". One problem for the perpetrators of this particular propaganda coup however was that the offending handbill had been taken off the wall of a Reformed Church in Los Angeles as long ago as January 15, 1988.

This handbill was dished up in a fulminating article in the March 14 Cuvintul Liber as if it had been printed just then, and not in the Ceausescu era.

It could be seen from the article that its author knew of a hand-written Romanian note attached to the 1988 handbill, and referring to the Reformed Church of Los Angeles. It was clear that he therefore consciously lied when he gave the impression that fresh material of 1990 was concerned here. In the printed handbill, there is no reference to Los Angeles or to the Reformed Church. This was written onto the attached paper by the same hand which wrote the original 1988 date.

In a clumsy way, they then tried to change 1988 to look like 1990. As this did not succeed, they simply left the date off the photocopy, and copied only the printed

71

leaflet. Thus the Romanian reader and television viewer could have no idea that he had fallen victim to a forgery.

A report about this article was broadcast the next day, on March 15 at peak viewing time by Bucharest Television. At the urging of my friends with whom I had viewed the transmission, I immediately rang the editor of the item, the historian Victor Ionescu, in Bucharest.

I asked him whom, in his opinion, it would benefit if a Romanian-Hungarian conflict - a bloody incident occurred. He agreed that this would only harm both the Romanians and the Hungarians. I stressed that we had written evidence that the hand-bill originated in 1988 and had protested against Ceausescu's cultural genocide. I told him that we could also prove that the perpetrators of the deception had tried to change the original date.

Victor Ionescu promised that the next day, in the same transmission, he would give us three minutes to present the denial. This denial was signed by András Sütö on behalf of the Mures County Presidium of the RMDSZ, and I read it to the camera in the company of Attila Jakabffy.

The driver of my service vehicle (a Vatra man inherited from the Romanian Communist Party) refused to take me to Bucharest. But fortunately we got air tickets, and arrived at the studio ten minutes before the transmission.

I at once asked the editor of the news broadcast of that evening, G. Marinescu, to read our protest to the camera. He was unwilling to do so, although according to the rules of press ethics, the same person should read the denial who had read the original denied text. Thus our denial lacked the authority of the television station. Finally, I read it to the camera myself. The entire thing looked like a private action from Tirgu Mures, and its psychological effect was minimal. The following is a translation of the Romanian original of the protest:

The Mures County branch of the Democratic Association of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) resolutely protests against the broadcasting on national television, in peak hours, of the article received without any checking from the county newspaper "Cuvintul Liber" of Tirgu Mures.

The broadcast of this article on March 15, 1990 (the anniversary of the Hungarian revolution of 1848) lacked all political and diplomatic tact, and misled the Romanian audience by suggesting that the Hungarians living in Romania had anything to do with the documents presented.

For the sake of truth it is necessary that we declare that this call was issued by a Californian committee fighting for the human rights of Hungarian and other minorities on January 15, 1988. It was one of numerous appeals published abroad which condemned Ceauqescu's genocidal policies - crimes for which Ceausescu was subsequently condemned to death.

72

It is beyond comprehension that those who commented on this appeal of two years ago presented the text as if it had been written in our days, after the revolution.

We resolutely protest against the intellectual forgery committed by the editors, and against the way in which this material directed against Ceausescu has been presented.

Our statement refers to the text of the appeal, and not at all to the map attached to it. (The map showed Transylvania as part of pre-World War One Hungary.) We dissociate ourselves from any such attempts aimed at causing conflict between Romanians and Hungarians. (Here, of course, we were referring to the map.)

The forces of evil, in order to maintain tensions between ethnic groups, do not hold back from forgeries and the use of other methods of base provocation. They aim thereby to prevent the extension of the rights which are due to national minorities and to obstruct the process of democratisation in our country.

We call on all mass media of Romania not to condemn the Hungarians living in Romania for opinions and newspaper articles which they have nothing to do with. Our convictions are reflected only in the organs published by the RMDSZ in the Hungarian and Romanian languages.

The Democratic Association of Hungarians in Romania condemns every extremist, nationalistic or chauvinistic manifestation, irrespective of its origin.

Signed: András Sütö, Chairman of the Mures County branch of the RMDSZ

Despite its weakened impact, this denial very much angered the leaders of the Vatra Romaneasca. On the morning of March 17 (the day following the TV denial), Dumitru Pop told me at the headquarters of the Provisional Council of National Unity: "You will see what you get for this."

## **MARCH 16: THE PHARMACY INCIDENT**

A rehearsal for the events ahead was held on March 16 at the No. 28 Pharmacy of Tirgu Mures.

What really happened that day? The inclusion here of a detailed contemporary description of the day's events is justified by the fact that this incident has subsequently been reheated in distorted form by the Romanian press and the Romanian government. The description in itself also conveys the grotesque climate of mid-March most tellingly.

When this incident occurred, I was on the way to Bucharest to protest the Los Angeles handbill slander. So I leave it to the Hungarian journalist Attila Bögözi to describe what happened. His account appeared in an article in the Romániai Magyar Szó [Hungarian Word of Romania] under the title:

### **The Anatomy of a News Item,**

**or**

### **Before a Pogrom in Tirgu Mures**

The passage of time opens up perspectives, and such perspectives help in the calm surveying of certain events, and in arriving at the understanding of the interconnections behind them.

What then did happen in Tirgu Mures on March 16?

According to many people, one of the blasts that set off the avalanche was the incident at Pharmacy No, 28 in the Tudor housing project. In this connection, the "Adevarul" published in its March 17 issue an eight-line Rompress [Romanian news agency] news item under a headline almost as big as the entire text.:

#### What Did the Lady Pharmacist Permit Herself?

"The following thing happened Friday night in the municipality of Tirgu Mures: Mrs. Körmöczi, manager of Pharmacy No. 28, changed the name-plate of the pharmacy, writing it out in Hungarian, and announcing that from that moment the pharmacy was not open to Romanians but would serve only Hungarians."

[Unfortunately, this stupidity was even reported by Kossuth Radio of Budapest!.]

This news would certainly deserve to get into the Guinness Book of Records, although

its author would most of all deserve the "reward" of the Supreme Court as a sufficiently hard punishment for crimes included in the penal code under the headings: incitement, falsification of facts, slanders, misleading of public opinion. So let us have a look at this example of misinformation:

1. The events around Pharmacy No. 28 - as will be seen later in detail - did not occur Friday evening, but between the morning and early afternoon. At 15.30 the unit closed, so no further incidents could have happened there.

2. There is no pharmacist called Mrs. Körmöczi (H) in the unit and there never has been.

3. The manager of the pharmacy has been for years László Györffi [ H].

4. A pharmacist whose name resembles that figuring in the text exists, and she is called Emese Körmöczky (HI). But - as we already indicated - she, is not the manager and could not have arbitrarily changed the inscription of the pharmacy as suggested in the Rompress news item.

5. Emese Körmöczky has made a personal statement concerning the impossible activities attributed to her.

But now let us see what really happened:

Dr. Levente Nagy [H], Manager of the County Pharmaceutical Company, reports the following:

"The Executive Bureau of the Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front issued a communiqué from its January 14 meeting, which contains verbatim the following:"The Executive Bureau instructed the territorial state administrative organs that they should see to it that where it is justified, the names of villages, outlets, institutions, etc., should be written in the Languages of the coexisting nationalities. "

"Incidentally, the display of bilingual or multilingual signs - irrespective of their importance in symbolising democracy and fraternal coexistence - is not prohibited by the laws in force but is recommended by them. (It is another matter that in recent years the opposite had become universal practice.)

"By virtue of the resolution, we started in January to restore bilingual inscriptions at our units in the same forms as they had existed a decade before. To have the work done, we placed an order with the County Production and Service Enterprise on January 24 (Order No. 20). This order was later taken over by the Metalul Cooperative as a general contractor, which, from the end of January to March 16, in the territory of the entire town, painted beside - and not instead of. - the Romanian word 'Farmacie' also the Hungarian word 'Gyógyszertár' in ten pharmacies. Unit No. 28,

would have been the last. This was why on Friday, March 16, at around 11:00, a worker of the Metalul Cooperative arrived at pharmacy No. 28 in the Tudor housing project.

75

On February 28, Manager Levente Nagy was telephoned by Colonel Ioan Judea, who was then still the Chairman of the Town Council of the Provisional Council of National Unity. Let Levente Nagy again have a word:

"Mr. Judea asked nothing more or less than to stop immediately the 'repainting' of the inscriptions, because - according to him - we were doing this all over the town without approval. I informed him that I was unwilling to carry out any instruction on the basis of a telephone call, and he should send his message in an official document."

As we have already mentioned, Mr. Judea was then the town chairman of the

National Unity Council, while the Pharmaceutical Company is an entity of a national organisation. Thus Mr. Judea had no right to intervene in the internal affairs of the company for his stated reason, and even less could he give instructions to its manager.

A few days later however an official request was received by the company, in which the Temporary Council of National Unity of Tirgu Mures - over the signature of Chairman Ioan Judea and Secretary Iosif Ovidiu - instructed the County Pharmaceutical Company not to put out any bilingual signs, because their shape and content had not yet been approved by the committee harmonising commercial advertisements and signs.

The management of the company replied to the request in an official letter registered as No. 1035, on March 5. The detailed letter justified the restoration of the bilingual inscriptions as entirely legal. It referred to section 22 of the Ceausescu constitution and to the January 14 resolution of the Provisional Council of National Unity.

The company sent both Judea's letter and the above reply to the members of the town and the county councils of the Provisional Council of National Unity with the request that the matter should be discussed at the sessions of the executive bureaux of those bodies. No official answer was received to this request.

After these beginnings came March 16. László Györfii, manager of Pharmacy No. 28:

"Around 11:00, having finished his work at the pharmacy in the November 7 district, the worker of the Metalul Cooperative arrived. After he placed the patterns for the new sign on the unit window, he asked to curtain off the working surface from the outside by some large piece of material so that he should not be disturbed by passers-by during his work.

"Around 11:30 the candy-vendor from the corner stand unexpectedly ran in front of the pharmacy and arbitrarily tore down the covering material, and ran away with it. I caught up with him at his candy stand, and wanted to pull from him the material

76

which he had taken away. At this, he made such a vigorous swing with his arm that if he had hit me, I would not be here now. I returned to the pharmacy, but in the meantime noticed that the candy-vendor had gone to the other side of the street, towards the Favorit Inn, and that there he gave the material used as a curtain to a policeman, who went with it into the inn. I went after him to ask for the return of the material, but since he was not willing to return it either, I asked him to come over to us at the pharmacy and see what it was all about. He appeared within five or ten minutes, bringing the material, asked the worker of the cooperative to prove his identity, and called on him to explain on what basis the inscription was being

rearranged. Both I and the employee of the cooperative said that it was being done officially, on the basis of an order. The policeman asked for the order number, but the worker did not carry this information with him. After this, the police left the premises. At the same moment a police jeep appeared. (We had not called it!). It stopped not exactly in front of the pharmacy entrance, but nearby.

"At 11.45 a crowd began to gather around the jeep and to walk towards the pharmacy. All of a sudden this crowd rushed into the pharmacy, breaking down the door. They were followed by the policeman who had taken the temporary curtain from the candy vendor. Five or six people crowded into my office, which is immediately to the left of the entrance. They were accompanied by the policeman. They tried to out-shout each other, repeating the question about why the sign was being repainted. They demanded that the work be stopped, and that the Hungarian inscription be removed,

"With such an aggressive crowd inside the pharmacy, I telephoned the management of the company to report what was going on. The chief pharmacist, Lelia Munteanu, (R) swiftly appeared on the scene, together with section head, Arpád Hajdu [H] and chief accountant Csaba Gáspár (H). In the meantime the mob rampaged: it tore up the patterns of the worker of the cooperative, painted over the half-finished Hungarian inscription and threatened the life of the unit's personnel. Since the husband of the pharmacist Emese Körmöczky was a member of the County Council of the Provisional Council of National Unity, we asked her to inform the county leadership, through her husband, of the gravity of what was happening and to urge that a member of the council should come to the scene to survey the situation which had developed."

Lelia Munteanu, chief pharmacist, deputy manager of the company:

"Soon after 11:30, Mr. László Györffi rang me and informed me of the events occurring at Pharmacy No. 28. With two members of the management, we immediately went to the scene. When we arrived, there was a crowd of approximately 200 in front of the unit. In the pharmacy, in the office of the unit's manager, there was a huge disorder. The letters of the sign-maker's pattern were torn, the windows painted over, the paint running on the floor, the handles of the sliding door were broken off. The

77

staff was in an extremely tense mood, I went with Mr. Hajdu to the crowd demonstrating in front of the entrance and asked them something like 'What do you want with the pharrnacy? Since the psychological condition of the crowd was rather turbulent, I proposed that four or five of them should

kindly come to the office so that we should be able to understand each other."

"My first question to them was whether the bilingual inscription was such a bad thing. They formulated but one argument: that the inscriptions should be of equal size and should be put beside and not one under the other. Having promised this, I again approached the demonstrators asked them to go home."

Pharmacy 28 Manager Györffi:

"The discussions with the crowd were still going on when, considering the danger from the increasing tension on the street, and in agreement with the company managers at the scene, we asked the police and the army for help. Between 12:30 and 13,-00 the military sent six young soldiers and an officer. From the police we got the answer that owing to staff shortages they were unable to help. In the meantime the officer sent to protect us rang Colonel Judea and informed him of the situation which had arisen, and that the windows of the pharmacy were not broken.

"However, by then the mood of the mob had become so excited that it unequivocally demanded the complete deletion of the Hungarian inscription which had been painted over. This Mr. Hajdu did to the general satisfaction of those assembled."

"During these events, and in spite of them, customers were being served continuously until 14:00-14:30, when the crowd had grown to such an extent that looking after the patients had become impossible. The life and limb of the staff could no longer be assured either. Between 14:00 and 15:00 the soldiers again succeeded in driving the mob out of the pharmacy. But around 15:15--15.30, under the pressure of events., the pharmacy had to be closed."

So this is what lay behind that eight-line Rompress news,, item. And since the honour of an innocent person was reviled before an entire country, let us finally read her statement.

Pharmacist Emese Körmöczky:

"I graduated in Tirgu Mures in 1974. Until now I have worked in -15 places. I started at Bacau in the Pharmaceutical Control Laboratory. I was transferred back to Tirgu Mures in 1982. I have worked in Pharmacy No. 28 since it was opened.

"I have never had any problems with anybody. For years I have been in the laboratory in the rear, making up prescriptions, so I have had no direct contact with the customers anyway. There has never been any complaint about my work. This is also proven by my annual reports.

On March 16 I was in the rear laboratory and learned about the events unfolding only when the crowd invaded the pharmacy . Hearing the commotion, I came forward to the office where I met the excited crowd. It threatened me too without my having given any reason for it. A tall man lifted a ceramic vase and shouted into my face in Romanian.

'Te omor! Te fac praf!' [I ll kill you! I will grind you to dust!].

When I said 'Hai, omoara-ma' [come and kill me], he put down the vase. Another man wanted to strangle me with his bare hands, but I did not suffer any injury. I only broke down crying and went back to the store room. I did not think of anything but only cried bitterly.

I learned of the accusations against me on Saturday, from the Hungarian-language press review of Bucharest Radio. I heard the news at home, while I was house cleaning. I just stood there stunned, and did not know what to do. My world had collapsed around me. Why exactly me? I got very frightened.

I have not been living at home since then. I am afraid. If it is possible to lie so shamelessly, to revile the honour of people, what else can follow after this?"

What did Emese Körmöczky do to deserve that Rompress should popularize her as the world star of nationalism and chauvinism?

The explanation lies in the personality of Colonel Ioan Judea. About ten days before the pharmacy incident, Emese's husband, engineer Zoltan Körmöczky, demanded at a meeting of the Provisional Council of National Unity in Tirgu Mures that Judea be removed. His reason was that at a previous meeting Judea had spread the invented story of the three-step Hungarian plan for the separation of Transylvania. Körmöczky declared, making no bones about it, that in a democratic Romania there was no room for such instigators of hate. Unfortunately, despite the repeated requests of Károly Király, Colonel Judea was not removed from office in Tirgu Mures -- even though the Minister for Defense also learned of the blurting out of the "military secret" .

It was for this that Judea involved the wife of Körmöczky in the matter. This is how he wanted to put the entire family into an impossible situation. As I have said, he was angry at András Sütö too, and settled accounts with him along similar lines.

### **Preamble to the pogrom**

On the day of the pharmacy battle, many Hungarians were beaten up in other parts of town, including the editors of the Nepujsag of Tirgu Mures, three staff members of Hungarian Television, Panorama programme, etc.

The next open rehearsal for the imminent pogrom was organised by the Romanian Students League.

The demonstrators set out from their student lodgings and marched to the sports

79

palace on the other side of town. On passing the Reformed Castle Church, they broke into the parochial offices, manhandled officials there, and tore down the wreath decorated with a ribbon in the Hungarian red, white and green which had been placed by Hungarian diplomats at the unveiling of the plaque commemorating the sojourn of General Jozsef Bem in Tirgu Mures in 1848. Other Hungarians too were manhandled during this demonstration.

The demonstrators also surrounded the statue of Avram Iancu, put a Romanian flag into its hand, and called out that those who were Romanians should kneel and that the bozgor [vagrants/foreign scum - insulting nickname for Hungarians] should remain standing. Of course, everybody kneeled.

Major Vasile Tira declared to the crowd: The military is with you and will finish with the irredentist, revisionist Horthyites!

This was the same major who, two days earlier, had directed a demonstration in Satu Mare which led to the arrest and resignation of the Hungarian leaders of the Temporary Council of National Unity, Ferenc Formanek and Ferenc Pécsi. So, anyway, says Formanek. The Vatra men of Tirgu Mures did not throw their weight around at that time solely in Satu Mare, but appeared in numerous cities over the country (Iasi, Bucharest, Brasov, Sibiu, etc.) And organized inflammatory, anti-Hungarian demonstrations. Even the slogans were fully identical and inspired by one secret programme. Obviously, only central support could have made such widespread activity possible.

Károly Király returned unexpected on March 16. The possibility shouldn't be excluded that his presence and his resolute intervention postponed the tragic events briefly.

The Mures County presidium of the RMDSZ, noting on the afternoon of March 18 how the situation was deteriorating, asked the population through Tirgu Mures Radio (in Hungarian and Romanian) to refrain from violent actions. It especially warned Hungarians not to respond to aggressive Romanian manifestations. At the same time it petitioned the central and local leadership of the Provisional Council of National Unity, warning that the situation was extremely tense, and that anti-Hungarian atrocities were to be feared.

In the morning of March 18 I went to the House of Youth, where the national conference of the Hungarian Democratic Youth Association was in

progress. Two or three Romanians were waiting for me outside the building and asked whether I was Előd Kincses. To my affirmative answer, they added that they were curious to see what I looked like...

There was a sharp argumentative mood at the Hungarian youth conference, and as a lawyer I tried to help to formulate the correct resolutions about the situation.

On the afternoon of the 18th I was called to the headquarters of the RMDSZ. We

80

all felt that the tragedy could occur at any moment. It was for this reason that the already mentioned bilingual call through Tirgu Mures Radio had been issued. We especially wanted to prevent the Hungarians from falling into a trap and marching into the streets. We were able to assert our influence to such an extent -that the Hungarians of Tirgu Mures did not march into the streets - not even on the afternoon of March 19. Though ironically, if they had done so, they may have been there to save András Sütő from the grave wounds he was so shortly to receive.

81

## **MARCH 19.: FIRST BLOOD**

On the morning of March 19 a two-member government commission arrived in Tirgu Mures - N.S. Dumitru, the former president of the National Salvation Front, and Attila Verestóy, who later became an RMDSZ senator and a secretary of the senate. They were mandated to discuss our town's problems with the Hungarian and Romanian students and teachers of the Medical and Pharmaceutical Institute. They came to my office and I told them that Attila Jakabffy, the Chairman of the Mures County Nationality Committee of the Temporary Council of National Unity, would accompany them. This he did until noon. They at once went to the Medical and Pharmaceutical Institute, where the Hungarian students suspended their sit-in strike, wishing to contribute in this way to bringing about a suitable atmosphere for negotiations. (I am not reporting here in any detail on the problems of the Medical and Pharmaceutical Institute, as it would be worthwhile to publish a longer work on that topic.)

At 8:00 the Mures county leadership of the Temporary Council of National Unity met and addressed the issue of the competency of First Vice-President General Ioan Scriciu and the Vice-Presidents, engineer Valer Galea, Dr. Octavian Plesa, and myself,

The full session of the Council for National Unity was called for 9:00,

By nine we had finished our own discussions and set out for the full meeting at the Town Hall. I was then told that I should be careful because a "deputation" of Romanian demonstrators was already in the meeting hall, This "spontaneously constituted" deputation was immediately received by General Scriciu.

The deputation, as well as the 3,000. Romanian demonstrators surrounding the building, demanded the resignation of county chairman Károly Király (National Vice - President of the Temporary Council for National Unity), Attila Jakabffy (Chairman of the Nationality Committee), teacher András Tôkés (the Deputy County School Inspector) and myself. Among the persons thus attacked, I alone was present in the building.

Characteristically, Ioan Judea also showed up in the meeting hall. Since he was not a member of the County Council, he being the president of the Temporary Council of National Unity of the town of Tirgu Mures, he had never before taken part in such a meeting.

I immediately gathered from his presence that this was an action organized by him on behalf of the Vatra Romaneasca (to remove Király and Kincses). I believe that the way Judea had put it to the Vatra leadership was that he would deal with the task of

removing Király and Kincses, but that it was not certain he would succeed in the case of Király because he was being protected by Bucharest. Unfortunately, Király had returned to Bucharest at 5:00 that morning, Attila Jakabffy was accompanying the visiting government education commission, and András Tóké was not present either. So as I have said, I alone was left as the target within reach.

More and more Romanian demonstrators invaded the building. Nobody tried to prevent this, although First Vice-President General Ioan Scrieciuciu was present, as well as the military commander, - General Constantin Cojocaru, and the commander of the police, Colonel Gheorghe Gămbrea.

An Hungarian member of the Council asked me whether Hungarian workers should not be called from the factories for my protection. Aware of the stand taken by the RMDSZ, and also on principle, I definitely opposed this, saying that this was exactly what the Vatra people were counting on. I felt that they would thereby be able to confirm their mendacious claim that the Hungarians were separatists and wanted to detach Transylvania. I declared that there should be no fight between Romanians and Hungarians in Tirgu Mures on my account.

From my office I kept calling Bucharest, but in vain, Király had not yet arrived. Seeing that the building had been surrounded, and more and more, people were arriving, I abandoned my office. The office was soon invaded by approximately 200 of the demonstrators who had entered the headquarters building. They found only my secretary, Judit Váradi (H), whom they hit twice in the back saying, "If Kincses is not here, you will do."

In the meantime General Scrieciuciu promoted himself to Mures County President of the Provisional Council of National Unity. (He had attempted this earlier, but then I had rung President Iliescu, who had said that Király was the President and Scrieciuciu the First Vice-President.) Scrieciuciu continued his coup by announcing that the leadership of the country - that is, Bucharest had taken affirmative notice of the demands of the demonstrators, i.e. our resignation.

From my hideout I began to negotiate with the demonstrators through the good offices of Zoltán Kömőczky (the husband of the victim of the pharmacy battle). They promised that if I resigned they would not hurt me. After this I was led to the balcony, of the headquarters in order to speak to the crowd which was abusing me and fulminating against me. Before I could utter a word, I heard that many demanded that I should be thrown down among them. But it is a fact, which I have always stressed, that they did not go so far as to manhandle me.

I started by saying that in early January the demonstrators had received me in a completely different way. (Some shouted up that those were not Romanians.)

I continued that I had not wanted then to be elected vice-president (I was hooted



down in response), and that I did not want to remain a vice-president. If the

competent organ, the Temporary Council of National Unity, removed me, I would accept it. I added that democracy meant that the laws were observed, and consequently the Provisional Council of National Unity had to call on me to resign.

The crowd, angry about what I said, was calmed down by First Vice-President (or self-appointed President?) General Ioan Scrieciu. He announced that he would immediately call together the bureau of the Council for Unity, and my resignation would be solved within 20 minutes. At the meeting of the bureau only Körmöczky and I were present out of the Hungarian members.

I asked to speak and said that I truly did not insist on the title of vice-president, but I refused to resign because I had not committed any political mistake that would warrant it. My resignation would mean the acknowledgement of a non-existing mistake, and therefore I asked that it should be on their initiative that I was removed.

### **Noon: my transgressions**

Among the Romanian bureau members present, Dumitru Pop, the Vatra representative (who went on to lead the Vatra parliamentary faction) alone attacked me. He ran through the already well-known mendacious accusations. He claimed that I had organised the "separatist" manifestations of the students of the Bolyai Lyceum and the Medical and Pharmaceutical Institute (i.e. demanding education in the mother tongue), I immediately declared that all this was a patent lie. I said it was precisely me who had openly opposed the radical Hungarian demands and through the January 19 resolution of the Mures County Council of the National Salvation Front, had urged that the separation of the schools only be carried out at the beginning of the new academic year, on September 15.

He asked why I had claimed in the Hungarian broadcast of Bucharest Television that Romanians had painted the slogan over the statue of Avram Iancu in Tirgu Mures. I said that I had never asserted that the perpetrator was a Romanian, but only that whoever wrote the slogan did not know Hungarian grammar. I declared that I was a lawyer and did not, on principle, make any statement about the identity or nationality of an unknown perpetrator, contrary to irresponsible journalists.

Pop said that I had made very annoying appearances on Bucharest Television. He mentioned the interview of March 16, claiming that in that interview we did not condemn the map showing pre-World War I Hungarian

borders, and that this meant we were revisionists. I said that my interview had contained something entirely different, and made the true text known.

I added that events such as the ones of today do not strengthen democracy, but that we Hungarians do not want to answer by similar demonstrations. To which Pop said: So I am making a threat! Exactly the opposite, I replied,

84

Nistor Man, the representative of the National Peasant Party, accused me of unspecified "transgressions". The other Romanian speakers, the actor Vlad Radescu, the historian Mihai Grozavu (National Liberal Party), and engineer Valer Galea (National Salvation Front) declared that I had done nothing for which they should remove me. They asked me not to put them in the unpleasant situation where they would have to vote against me and against their convictions, and while under the influence of mass terror. They asked me rather to resign.

I accepted their arguments and agreed on the condition that the organisers of this demonstration of March 19 would also be told to resign. All this was solemnly agreed. (I knew that if the occasion came, I would be able to prove the role of Judea and his accomplices in organising the demonstration.)

During the meeting the door of the hall was opened from time to time, and we were told that I should hurry up with my resignation because the crowd was impatient and would take revenge for the delay. (The discussion took approximately 80 instead of 20 minutes). After the meeting of the bureau, I asked Dr. Sabin Rusu, the Romanian representative of the Union of Former Political Prisoners, whether future political prisoners would be eligible to become members of his Organisation, but he obviously did not know what the right answer should be.

At approximately 12.30 I again stood before the crowd. I spoke but little. I first said that the demonstrators did not know my true activities, because they had been misinformed. I added it was clear that here, in Tirgu Mures, we had to live in unity,

"Seeing that such demonstrations did not contribute to stability in the town... (loud hooting, shouting that I was a chauvinists and traitor); and when I was able to continue, "...Since my person is so contested by you, for the sake of unity, I tender my resignation." (Applause)

After me, Major Vasile Tira told the demonstrators simply; "We are the masters in our own country" and again assured the crowd that the army was with them.

After my resignation I reported to President Ion Iliescu on the government telephone line about, what had happened. He expressed his

regret (vai ce rau imi pare ca ati fost demis" [how much I regret that you have been removed]). I answered that I did not care, because I would not have been able anyway to carry out the useful activities which I would have wished. Hearing the regrets of President Iliescu, it would have been nice to know upon what, two hours earlier, General Scrieciu had based his announcement to the mob that the leadership of the country had already endorsed the demand that I quit.

I remembered that a few days before, Mr. Iliescu had taken exception to the claim by some leaders of the RMDSZ that the entire Vatra was a Fascist-chauvinist organisation. The head of state corrected them, saying that no such summary judgement

85

should be passed based on the unfortunate declarations of some Vatra leaders. At the time, I mentioned to President Iliescu that Romanian Television and most of the press had played a nefarious role in bringing about the critical situation in our town. He answered that television and the press were against the Front, and were under the influence of the National Peasant Party.

The visiting government commission was also immediately informed of what had happened, and its two members - Dumitru and Verestóy - disliked what they heard. They promised to report everything exactly to the Bucharest leadership. The government deputation stayed in the town until 23:00, but did not intervene that evening to try to defend the RMDSZ headquarters or András Sütö.

When my working hours were over - at 15:00 - I left the building of the Council for Unity by taxi. I left Attila Jakabffy in my office, asking him to stay next to the government telephone line until the evening because the atmosphere seemed to be explosive. Attila, who had gotten away without a resignation of his own in the morning, risked his safety by remaining at the headquarters. He maintained constant telephone contact with the leaders of the county and of the country - and of course with me too.

### **Late afternoon: invasion**

The Romanian demonstrators did not disperse, although it seemed that they had achieved their goal: I had resigned. Their staying together was no accident, for armed and drunk peasants from the Reghin district soon arrived. The crowd received them with the slogan "Hodac e cu noi" [the village of Hodac is with us]. The photograph has been seen around the world in which a noncommissioned police officer enthusiastically greets the driver of a bus transporting the terrorists.

These peasants armed with "traditional working tools" (quoting later Vatra claims) originally wanted to beat the striking Hungarian students of the Medical and Pharmaceutical Institute. But since the students had suspended their strike that morning, they found nothing to do in the building of the university.

First of all therefore, they arranged "house cleaning" in the main square and

central streets of the town, knocking down all street signs with Hungarian names,

tearing down all Hungarian inscriptions and posters. Even Tolstoy Street fell victim to their anger (written in the Romanian way, Tolstoy ends with an "i " and they therefore thought that he was Hungarian too). At the National Theatre, a Romanian actor tried to stop the destruction of Hungarian posters, but he was beaten up.

It was after all this that this sorry company was led to the headquarters of the RMDSZ; until then they had not known where it was. In a characteristic way, they had shouted that Siito, Kincses, Király and Bolyai should be hanged. (The RMDSZ headquarters is in Bolyai street.)

## 86

What I am writing from now on is based on what the writer, András Sütö, told me.

A few minutes before the arrival of the Romanian demonstrators, Sütö also went to the headquarters of the RMDSZ. He urged the dispersal of the group of 150-200 Hungarians who had spontaneously gathered there to press for my restoration to office and to protest in general against the depredations committed by Vatra that day. Over a loudspeaker, Sütö declared that we did not recognise the forced resignation of Előd Kincses, and that we shall demand his restoration to office. But he said this question must not be discussed now in the street. He said we would advise Hungarians on the morning of the 20th how the county branch of the RMDSZ intended to fight for the correction of the injustice which had been committed that day.

Mi

Part of the crowd wanted an immediate answer and gave vent to their dissatisfaction. Finally however it was possible to persuade most of the people to disperse. A group of 50-60 may have been left in front of the headquarters when the armed group of several hundred Romanians arrived. These later grew to approximately 1,500 through the planned transportation of demonstrators to the scene.

The Hungarians fled into the building and barred the entrance. The breaking down of the strong door of the main entrance required approximately one hour, but finally it yielded to their axes. This time was used by the 77 Hungarians on the first floor of the building (including Sütö, the engineer István Káli Király, County Vice-Chairman of the RMDSZ, and the economist László Borbély, County Secretary of the RMDSZ) to alert the County Council for National Unity, the police headquarters and the military command.

They asked for assistance, but entirely in vain. They talked to the colonels Garmbrea and Judea, who promised help. but did nothing.

In the crowd surrounding the RMDSZ headquarters there was a good number of uniformed military officers, enlisted soldiers, and policemen. The true status of some of the civilians there has not been clarified by detectives they never tried to find out

During the time of the flight into the building and the breaking down of the main door, András Sütö, Sándor Zolcsák, chairman of the Tirgu Mures branch of the RMDSZ, and a few older people, including two women, ventured into the back yard and up to the perimeter fence. A policeman standing there encouraged them to climb over the fence and escape. The two women and the older man would not have been able to climb the fence, Sütö who would have been able to do so - therefore did not leave either. He said later: "How would it have looked if I had run away and left the other Hungarians to their fate." He paid with the sight of his left eye for this act of solidarity.

After having broken down the main door, the enraged and drunken mob ran to the first floor. But they were unable to break through the entrance door to the RMDSZ office

87

which was blocked with wardrobes. They therefore broke into the office of the National Liberal Party which is on the same floor. Passing through, they ravaged those premises, and pushed into the meeting room used both by the RMDSZ and the National Liberal Party. From this direction, they invaded the offices of the RMDSZ.

The Hungarians fled to the attic. To their luck, they found a big cast iron tub, with which they blocked the way behind them. Only enough room was left beside the tub for one person to squeeze through at a time, and of course that single person was easy to drive back.

Below, the mob completely destroyed the installations, furniture, typewriters, xerox machines, and documents in the RMDSZ offices. Seeing that they could not get to the attic, they set fire to the wooden stairs leading up there and tried to smoke out the Hungarians in that way. Twice, it was possible to put out the fire with sand poured from above.

The people driven to the attic tried to keep the arsonists away by throwing broken tiles. This fact was later distorted by parts of the Romanian press, which claimed that during the disturbances Hungarians had bombarded Romanians with roof tiles while they peacefully walked in the streets.

The trapped Hungarians only threw tiles at those invaders on the first floor of the building. They didn't take the roof apart to throw tiles into the street, Obviously, no one inside wanted to further enrage the armed mob outside. Seeing the grave danger to their lives, the Hungarians also drew up

a list of the names of the company present so that it would be possible subsequently to ascertain swiftly who had been killed.

When the mob failed to set fire to the attic, it thought of using the power cables of the building to introduce electric current into the iron tub, to shock the Hungarians crowded behind it and finish them off that way!

In the meantime the Hungarian programme on Tirgu Mures Radio broadcast repeated appeals (in Romanian) to the police and army that they intervene to save Sütö and the others.

Attila Jakabffy, who had stayed at the telephone in the County National Unity Council headquarters, constantly called the Romanian leadership at the national and county level. He called Iliescu, Interior Minister Chitac, county police commander Gambrea, and county military commander Cojocaru, pleading that they take steps to save the people trapped in the RMDSZ headquarters. He stressed each time that the prisoners included the Herder Literature Prize laureate author, András Sütö.

These people did nothing to save the 77 souls in the attic.

The Hungarians of Tirgu Mures, trusting that the lawful authorities would intervene, and heeding the earlier call of the RMDSZ not to assemble, did not go out onto the streets.

## 88

### Evening: "Start the treatment"

The siege began at 16:00. New transports of armed Romanians continued to arrive and by the end there were perhaps 1,500-1,600 of them. After dark, at around 20:00, a civilian with the appearance and accent of an intellectual, though claiming to be from the rural Hodac community, came to the fore and called on Sütö in person to leave the attic. He promised him immunity. But this man was told that - if he were so able - he should send a message to Colonel Judea and General Scrieciu, asking them to come to the building. Soon after, Judea arrived, Judea also called on Sütö to leave his attic refuge. Sütö said he still also wanted Scrieciu (the County First-Vice President of the Provisional Council of National Unity) to come to the scene. Scrieciu soon arrived, Sütö asked both men for a military truck - and one with a hard roof, not a tarpaulin-covered vehicle. In the time before the arrival of the truck, Judea popped up in several places, calling on the Hungarians to leave (!), warning that the mob was becoming more and more angry, and saying that he would not take responsibility for the life of those trapped in the attic.

General Scrieciu returned and told Sütö (the spokesman of the trapped

Hungarians) that the requested truck had arrived and that a cordon of his men

would ensure that everyone could leave the building safely.

Despite these assurances of a Romanian General, some of those trapped in the attic opted to stay, saying they did not trust Scrieciu (or Judea). In order that these doubters could be persuaded to leave the attic, Sütö told Scrieciu that the mob was obviously capable of mass murder and that it should first be dispersed by the police and the military. (The mob was shouting: "Bring them out that we may hang them.") Sütö also asked for a fire-engine to be brought because of the mob's attempts at arson.

News had by then reached the attic that the would-be arsonists had procured petrol from the drivers who had brought the armed peasants to the scene. Scrieciu did not reject these new requests, but didn't give a definite promise either. Then the Hodac person of the intellectual bent, mentioned above, reappeared and again appealed to Sütö to leave, stressing that he had only good intentions. These efforts at persuasion were continued by Judea, who stressed that if the Hungarians did not quit the building, there was no guarantee the mob could be stopped from setting it on fire.

First, Sütö descended followed by eight or ten others including the woman, Ilona Juhász. She was also to be assaulted.

Judea waited at the foot of the attic stairs. He then set out at the front of this column, followed by Sütö and then the other Hungarians. In this way, the column crossed the wrecked offices on the first floor. A line of soldiers formed a narrow protected path. Behind the soldiers was the part of the mob that had invaded the building. In the gaps between the soldiers, the mob kicked and struck out at the Hungarians. Seeing this, Judea called out several times: "Well, well, my sons, what are you doing..?"

89

At the ground floor entrance, Sütö and his party had to wait for approximately 30 minutes in the company of Scrieciu, Judea and police chief Gambrea. The Hungarians were told that, allegedly, the path to the truck could not be cleared of demonstrators and they could not therefore proceed.

It was a distance of four to five metres. Seeing how few soldiers and police were concentrated there, Sütö asked Scrieciu to call at least a further 100 soldiers. This he said he could not do. Scrieciu recommended to Sütö that he should agree that the mob be told that the Hungarians were under police arrest and were being taken away as arrested persons. Sütö rejected this as a humiliation.

Finally, Judea said that they could proceed. The party set out from the building. Judea walked beside Sütö. But after a few steps, Judea disappeared. Major Vasile Tira was heard to call out: "Start the treatment."

One man standing at the side of the entrance struck Sütö on the ear - probably with a metal object. Sütö was floored with such violence that he slid approximately one to two metres along the ground.

The crowd shouted: "The old man has come out", indicating that Sütö had been awaited according to a plan. At this spectacle, the majority of the Hungarians behind Sütö took fright and ran back into the building. Only two or three Hungarians got up into the back of the truck. They carried Sütö with them. There was one soldier posted in the back of the truck.

Sütö had of course requested a hard-skinned truck. The Romanians tore down the tarpaulin of this soft-skinned truck, jumped up onto it, and tried to hit and kick Sütö and his two or three companions from every side.

The solitary soldier in the back of the truck tried to protect Sütö and the others, but due to the blows he too received, he fell down between Sütö and Mrs. Juhász.

A group of seven or eight other soldiers - perhaps inspired to save their comrade - jumped onto the back of the truck and began to push away the mob while shouting at the driver to get going,

After its settling of accounts with Sütö outside the Hungarian party headquarters building, the armed mob left. And so the 60 or more Hungarians remaining inside were able to leave in safety.

The truck set out for the hospital emergency department. But the doctors there were afraid that the mob from the Hungarian party headquarters would follow Sütö and descend on them too. They therefore asked that the injured man be transferred to the vicinity of the army barracks. The officer in charge there refused this, saying that he could take no responsibility for Sütö's life.

In the early hours of the next morning., Sütö was flown to Bucharest. In the military hospital there, he was visited by President Ion Iliescu. Iliescu expressed his regrets to Sütö's wife, Éva. He said that they should be reassured, the perpetrators of

this attack would receive exemplary punishment. With the assistance of available films, an investigation would be carried out and the culprits identified.

Apart from his other injuries, Sütö was left permanently blinded in one eye. When Sütö returned to Tirgu Mures after futile visits to clinics in several world capitals, he was told that following the attack upon him in the back of the truck a certain individual had gone up to Colonel Judea and reported that they had finished off Sütö, that they had beaten him to death. Judea put his hand over the man's mouth and told him to shut up.

Most of the Romanian media reported the events of the night of March 19 in a couple of sentences. After the full-blown pogrom of the following night, they acted as though nothing had ever happened on the night of the 19th.

The Cuvintul Liber of Tirgu Mures - mouthpiece of the Vatra - was the exception. An article in this newspaper said that the Romanian peasants who had been transported to town from the countryside around Reghin had had nothing to do with the attack on Sütö and the others. They had dispersed a long time before certain "un-known persons" had manhandled other "unknown persons" outside the Hungarian headquarters building. This whitewash put even Colonel Judea in an unpleasant situation. For if the perpetrators of the violence were not "from Hodac" (Hodac is one village in the Reghin region and is used as a generic term by Romanians and Hungarians alike. The mob was transported from about ten villages.) then somebody else must have been criminally responsible. Perhaps it was Colonel Judea or General Scriciu!

In these circumstances Judea was forced to try to defend himself and his own role that night. An article by Judea was published in the Hungarian Népujság, a newspaper of Tirgu Mures. Judea was trying to counter published versions of the events of that night that had white-washed the "Hodac peasants", but not him. Despite the conventions on the media right-of-reply, even this article by Colonel Judea had been rejected by the Romanian-language press!

### **In the Name of Truth**

... Our wonderful heroes, who sacrificed their lives on December 21-22, 1989, for genuine freedom, democracy and fraternity, would protest violently and condemn those barbaric and destabilising deeds, the hateful things that happened in the hallowed place where they fell...

...I regret that the headline on the article published in the March 27, 1990, issue of the daily Cuventul Liber ("Understanding, tolerance and mutual respect have found an abode in the soul of the Hodac people") is entirely contrary to the shameful deeds committed on the night of March 19 and to which I was an eyewitness. Immediately after the ravaging of the headquarters of the RMDSZ I was present also when the last

hostages were removed from the building after scenes of dramatic tension and horror that had lasted more than six hours.

Have the gentlemen forgotten the incidents they caused, that they set fire to the

building and threatened death to those who had taken refuge in the attic?

Have the gentlemen forgotten the request of mine and of Lieutenant-Colonel Moldovan, who was at the scene with approximately 20-25 policemen? Do they no longer remember that they twice broke through the protective cordon and refused our call to quit the building and desist from besieging. it?

Have they forgotten that their own followers, full of hatred, no longer obeyed their own calls either...?

..As far as I am personally concerned, I have talked to no-one. No person in an official or private capacity has called me from Hodac so that I could describe the facts. I consider that the circumstances in which my name has been mentioned in the press in connection with violent, barbaric, destabilising actions - things to which I always have been and always will be opposed is a grave attack - against all the members of the Provisional Council of National Unity of our municipality. In the course of my actions, I have never taken recourse to nationalistic discrimination, and will never do so. I have dealt with equal respect with Hungarians, Gypsies and Romanians, and I can say with a clear conscience that among those whom I have served faithfully, no-one has reason to plan my death through hanging. These unbridled ideas were born in the brains of ill-intentioned and vengeful people, against whom we have to form a common front and prove again that the Transylvanians are good, honest and clean gentlemen. And further, that as long as Transylvania exists., Romanians, Hungarians, Gypsies, Germans and people of other nationalities will live in this part of the country in peace and fraternity. I am convinced that by joining forces and by honest work - such as the Transylvanians are accustomed to - we shall rebuild within a short time all that has been ruined, both in the material and spiritual sense.

On March 20 of this year, I accompanied Mr. András Sütö to the Military liospital of Bucharest on a special plane of the Romanian army. Both of us expressed our regrets about what had happened on March 19, 1990, neither of us suspecting at the time what a catastrophic influence the next day (of sad memory) was waiting to exert on Romanian-Hungarian brotherhood.

The same day, I was received by Mr Ion Iliescu, the President of the Provisional Executive Committee of National Unity, to whom I explained that I was deeply troubled and dissatisfied with what had happened in Tirgu Mures between March 15 and 19,

Ioan Judea

Engineer-Colonel

Paying no attention at all to this evidence coming even from their own side, the "official" Romanian media, the propaganda machinery, tried to chalk up the events of

March to the account of the Hungarian neighbour. They pumped out well-worn accounts of Hungarian "interventions" .

The role of alleged Hungarian "tourists" - a story which has been repeated non-stop in the extremist Romanian press since the events of these days. - was already refuted on March 16 in an Hungarian-language broadcast of Tirgu Mures Radio, The refutation came from the police chief of Satu Mare County, Colonel Gavril Irsic. The April 11 issue of Romániai Magyar Szó published the entire interview with the colonel, from which I quote one question and answer:

Reporter. "Colonel, another question. Have you got any information that large groups of tourists arrived from Hungary and provoked scandalous scenes in the centre of Satu Mare, including the unfurling of banners, the laying of wreaths, and other manifestations testifying against, or hostile to, the Romanian people?"

Colonel Gavril Irsic: "No, I have none."

As far as the alleged presence of Hungarian "tourists" is concerned, the only truth behind the assertion is that Transylvanian Hungarians who had previously emigrated to escape ethnic and economic oppression used the Hungarian national holiday of March 15 and the following long weekend to visit relations in the old home. These people returned to Hungary on Sunday 18 March, Monday being a normal working day. The killings occurred on Tuesday, 20 March.

To this day, the frank words of Colonels Judea and Irsic have not been generally disseminated in the Romanian media. But after this necessary clarification, let us describe what happened the next day, how the tragedy of Tirgu Mures occurred (with-out, of course, the participation of any Hungarian "tourists").

## **THE CHRONICLE OF THE POGROM OF MARCH 20**

### **Early morning: 'Now or never'**

I had joined the events in Tirgu Mures at 16:00 and will therefore document what happened earlier by reference to video and sound records. The news of the barbaric treatment of András Sütö and of the siege of the RMDSZ headquarters the night before spread through the town like wildfire. Hungarian workers downed tools as one man, and set out for the main square, for the town hall building and the headquarters of the County Provisional Council of National Unity. An Hungarian demonstration began there, which was to continue during the whole day.

The county leadership of the RMDSZ would have liked to get these Hungarian crowds back into the factories and off the streets so that the Romanian provocation that could be anticipated wouldn't lead to the violent clashes which we knew the Romanians sought. This was how our strike demand was born. It called on the Hungarians of Tirgu Mures to conduct sit-in strikes at their workplaces or to stay at home until our four-point agenda had been fulfilled. This agenda was read out in the Hungarian broadcast of Tirgu Mures Radio at 9:30 by István Káli Király, the vice-chairman of the Maros County branch of the RMDSZ. The text read:

First: The immediate and undistorted presentation of our nationalities position on Romanian Television with the participation of our own experts. We hold Romanian Television and Radio, and also the local daily, *Cuvintul Liber*, responsible for the grave situation which has come about today because they have regularly misinformed the public - both nationwide and within the county.

Second: Those members of the Council of National Unity who are responsible for organising these criminal events - beginning with the forced resignation of Előd Kincses - should resign from their civil and public offices. Those people being by name: Engineer Colonel Ioan Judea, Major Vasile Tira, Major-General of the Reserve Ioan Scriciu.

Third: For their passive and collaborative behaviour, we hold the police responsible for the moral and material damage caused, as well as for the grave bodily injuries suffered by innocent Hungarians.

Fourth: We demand the banning of the Vatra Romaneasca Association which organised these manifestations and the initiation of criminal proceedings against those who instigated the pogrom of Tirgu Mures committed by a mob armed with axes, bludgeons and pitchforks.

We call on the population to refrain from individual initiatives, and to keep away from every violent manifestation and provocation.

Mures County Executive of the RMDSZ.

After the call had been broadcast, the crowd did not move but began to demand that President Iliescu should immediately come to Tirgu Mures. Several prominent personalities of Tirgu Mures then began to address the crowd.

...I am the painter áindor Zolcsák (H)..-I pray to you, my dear brethren and sisters, to be disciplined. Let's not get separated, let's not yield to provocation. My dear friends, the policy declaration of President Ion Illiescu asserts that all our rights are ensured - and that they will actually be ensured in practice too. We shall stay here until this promise is fulfilled."

The crowd.- "Now or never. We are brothers. Justice."

György Szabó (H): "...We have described our nationality programme, our rights which are due to us. All these are universal human rights and European rights without which Romania cannot enter the European House. We shall insist on our nationality rights, on our rights equal to those of Romanians, even at the cost of our lives."

The crowd., "We are not murderers."

Szabó: "We are not murderers, and our Romanian friends will also draw a line between themselves and those who are murderers. I trust that I shall not be disappointed by them. I ask you again that we should present to the world a European bearing, without violence, because any violence will be considered a provocation. We should show them that we are an educated, cultured, humanistic nation (...) we only want human rights."

The crowd: "We want our rights."

Szabó: "We want to have our schools, our University School of Medicine - this is our fundamental right, not a privilege."

The crowd: "Now or never, Iliescu, Király."

Szabó: "Our first condition is that Ion Iliescu, Károly Király, and representatives of the political parties should immediately come to Tirgu Mures. We are expecting them,"

The crowd: "We shall wait for them,"

Noémi Abrám (H): "I would like to make the crowd aware of just one thing, make both the Romanians and the Hungarians aware. The three youth organisations formed in Tirgu Mures - all three that are registered, the OTV (R), the ODT (R) and the MADISZ (H) - have stuck together from the beginning. I would wish this unity to remain and to be an example for the entire town, for the entire country. This is what we should all achieve. Let us stick together and build our future in the way of reasonable and civilised people. Thank you."

**Late morning: "Regrettable events occurred last night"**

While all this was going on in the square in front of the town hall, an extraordinary session of the Mures County Council of the Provisional Council of National Unity met inside. At this session, very unambiguous speeches were made condemning the violent events of March 19. I was restored in my absence to my position as a vice-president, and a proclamation was formulated which was read (in Romanian) to the crowd in front of the building at around 11:00.

The following recordings were made of the session of the Council of Unity from which it can be clearly noted that the punishment of the perpetrators of the events of the 19th was unequivocally envisaged. And also that the Romanian speakers equally condemned the vandalistic acts of the day before.

General Ton Scriciu, County First-Vice President: "Regrettable events occurred last night. We have examined them and have so far identified 17 perpetrators. They came from the Lapusna Valley. The authorities wanted to arrest them but they fled to the forest. The village people rebelled and don't want to hand them over. But as you may see, we conducted an investigation during the night, and the investigation continues. "

Aurel Florian, County President of the Social Democratic Party: "...And I may ask the question, where is Mr. Vasile Tira, who directed the hostilities, and where are the others - all the culprits? And why do we turn our backs on each other, why do we not want to soothe the atmosphere and behave in the manner of civilised people? The truth is that what happened (at our meeting) in this hall yesterday - the way it happened - this was vandalism. A group of 20 people invaded - I do not know who they were - well, some of them I know - and they started to threaten us. You all know the rest, there is no use detailing it. But let us not examine the events from the perspective of those simple people who were manipulated and who may continue to be manipulated after this time too."

Engineer Zoltan Kolozsváry (RMDSZ): "You probably all know that groups of workers have set out towards us from the factories. There is no way we can permit this violence and vandalism to continue. So a communique must be issued. We must address the issues which have hurt the peoples ".

So the Mures County Council of the Provisional Council of National Unity (on which there was a Romanian majority) ended its extraordinary session by adopting the following communiqué, which was read to the Hungarian crowd outside the town hall: The Mures County Council of the Provisional Council of National Unity condemn the violent events which happened in the

municipality of Tirgu Mures which began on March 16 and which culminated on the afternoon and evening of March 19.

\*\*\*\*\*

96

Owing to these undesirable events several persons including the writer András Sütö, President of the RMDSZ - were gravely manhandled, and the headquarters of some political parties - primarily those of the RMDSZ - were ransacked.

We have arrived at a turning point in the political and social life of our county. Let us be patient and show moderation. We ask you to trust in the ability of the Provisional National Unity Council to solve all social, political and cultural questions facing our county. Do not forget that in this region Romanians and Hungarians have lived in understanding, have suffered equally, and have together brought about the civilisation which exists here.

In order to prevent the repetition and widening of the harmful actions of the past days, the Provisional Council has resolved:

First: The immediate calling to account of those persons who are at fault in these barbarous actions and of those who organised these violent actions and initiated the instability.

Second: The immediate convocation of an extraordinary session of the Provisional County Council and the removal of all those who were unable to fulfill their tasks..

(The crowd [in Romanian]: "Down with Judea!")

Third: The activities of the police should be analysed, and an adequate and stable framework for creating the conditions for order and peace throughout the county should be established.

Fourth: The Provisional Council of Unity condemns any form of nationalistic or chauvinistic propaganda and calls on the Romanian, Hungarian and German population of the county to maintain the traditional mutual respect which has existed among these peoples. At the same time, it appeals to all not to pay heed to the manipulations of extremist elements.

After the communique had been read out, a police officer addressed the crowd in the square - a fact that helps to disprove the allegation that the Hungarians had occupied the building of the Provisional Council, although anybody could have entered. Nor was anyone maltreated there.

Officer: "...I am addressing you on behalf of the police",

The crowd (in Romanian): "Where were you yesterday?"

Officers. "Regrettable things happened in our town yesterday. These events have developed since March 16. We dissociate ourselves from these deeds."

The crowd: "Where are the perpetrators?"

Officer: "We already began the examination last night and we have already apprehended some of the perpetrators."

97

The crowd: "Where are they?"

Officer: "They are to be accused - in an open hearing - for the destruction of the headquarters of the political parties and the RMDSZ. It is on account of these extremists that we have got into such a difficult situation. It is owing to them that there is hatred, that we can't look each other in the eye. Nobody wants such a situation."

The crowd: "We want our rights! Down with Vatra!"

Officer: "We have to live and work together. We must not demonstrate against each other. Please go home."

The crowd: "We are not going home!"

Officer: "This is your response. If you don't go, well then you stay here. But the danger exists..." (This remark shows that already, at 11:00, it could be suggested that this police officer was calculating with a new invasion.)

Sándor Zolcsák (H): "...I implore you all to behave in a civilised way, to follow our example and not to do the same as happened yesterday."

The crowd: "We promise." (The crowd begins to sing the Szekler anthem, Who Knows What Way Fate Leads.)

József Mihály (RMDSZ County First Vice-President): "...Scrieciu says he doesn't want to come out here because he will be shouted down and won't be allowed to speak. I told him that if he comes out and tells us that we have our rights, then every-one will listen to him and acclaim him."

György Szabó: "Mr Scrieciu is currently talking to President Iliescu. He will be here presently. While we wait, I shall read out the new demands of the Mures County Executive Committee of the RMDSZ so that we should all know what rights we are insisting on."

"I read:

The Executive Committee of the RMDSZ calls on all its members, and on members of organisations sympathetic to it, and on all citizens, to mount a nation-wide strike. Our action will be a silent sit-in strike at the workplace between 8:00 and 9:00 on March 22. On the afternoon of that day we will call all the county branches to a nationwide RMDSZ gathering, during the course of which we shall corporately and solemnly declare our adherence to the Timisoara Proclamation [a programme devised after the revolution by an ad hoc grouping of Romanian reformists issued in Timisoara, the birth-place of the revolution] as well as to the principled stands which guard the noble spirit of the December revolution.

Our demands are:

In every locality where the proportion of the national minority is more than 10%, bilingual - or trilingual - inscriptions should appear by March 29: street names, the names of enterprises and institutions. Everywhere, at every faculty, education in the mother tongue should be provided in accordance with the proportion

98

existing among the nationalities. By March 29, 1990, the Bolyai University of Cluj and the Hungarian section of the University Medical School of Tirgu Mures should be restored to their autonomous rights, which means they will be able to organise themselves as autonomous nationality institution in time for the autumn start to the new school year.

We resolutely declare that we do not consider the above demand to be bargaining chips either now or in the future. These demands follow on from the international agreements signed by the Romanian government: the Helsinki Conference, the Vienna follow-up conference, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As such, they can not be compromised by the provisional nature of the current Romanian government.

We protest against the manipulation or distortion of these stated and granted rights in the published programmes of any Organisation or party, or in the forthcoming election campaign. We accept only the caveat formally entered by the current Romanian government, which states that these rights should be simultaneously enjoyed by the majority Romanian public as well. (...)

If our demands are not fulfilled, we request that the national leaders of the RMDSZ call a general strike from March 30 until the above formulated demands are indeed fulfilled.

Mures County Executive Committee of the RMDSZ

The crowd: "We shall fight for this."

After the call had been read, Hungarian Roman Catholic Archdeacon Ferenc Lestyán - who had previously suffered persecution for his activities - went to the microphone.

Lestyán: "Peace be with you. Praised be our Lord, Jesus Christ!"

The crowd: "Forever, amen."

Lestyán: "Before 8:00 this morning, I was talking to the county authorities. I presented - also in the name of the Hungarian Reformed Pastor, Dénes Fülöp - a petition in which we declare that in view of the events of the 19th we shall not take part in further meetings of the County Council while this uncertainty lasts. We cannot agree to sit there arguing while nothing is being done to protect human rights.

"Now I call your attention to our individual, personal request in the name of the Churches. It is that we are entitled to demand our human rights, but this must be done in the right form. For the sake of our dignity and our dignity and our Honour, nobody should answer violence with violence. Those who do so call forth new violence and debase themselves. Unjust bloodshed solves nothing. And therefore we now repeat our request in the name of the Churches. The [Romanian]

Orthodox deacon was also with us and his opinion was the same. Consequently,

we all emphatically ask the assembled that while they can repeat their demands and request their rights, they should avoid violence. And so that this should be so, let us recite the Lord's Prayer."

99

The crowd prays aloud.

Lestyán:: "Now I shall read our petition:

In connection with the events which occurred in Tirgu Mures, the undersigned respectfully submit the following declaration. Seeing the violence committed on March 19, and having learned that the competent authorities did not intervene in time to maintain order and protect public buildings - despite the appeals for their intervention broadcast on the radio - we regretfully advise that in such circumstances we cannot take part in Meetings of the County Council. We wish to express through this decision our protest at the violence and the passivity of the competent organs. Our Churches reject every form of violence because it impedes peaceful dialogue.

Tirgu Mures. March 20, 1990.

Ferenc Lestyán for the Catholic Church  
and Dénes Fülöp for the Reformed Church

Kálmán Csiha, Hungarian Reformed Deacon and later Bishop of Cluj:

"We again ask that you show discipline, but you can and must continue to demand your rights. I was at the radio station earlier this morning, and we protested in the name of the Reformed Church against the national government. We rejected what has happened here, every tendency leading to pogrom. But I ask you now to listen not only to the human word but also let us listen together to the Word of God."

Csiha ended his sermon, saying: "We have to light the candle of love in this frequently dark world so that we should have life and peace. Let us sing The Lord is Our Strong Fortress."

Árpád Gampe, economist (in Romanian): "...How can it be explained that the policemen - including a major - were standing around in the multitude while the headquarters of the RMDSZ were destroyed and those trapped inside were beaten.? How can it be explained that the army didn not intervene?"

György Szabó: "General Scrieciu is here. Let us first listen to him, and then we shall argue with him if we disagree on something. You have promised that you will listen to him. Let us provide proof of our education."

Loud applause from the crowd.

Ioan Scriciu (in Romanian): "I ask for your attention. The President of the Country, Mr. Iliescu has asked that we maintain peace and order. He shall visit us within two or three days..."

The President would like to talk to the Hungarians and Romanians in the same house, at the same table. It would not do any good to receive the President and to talk to him separately. That would be no good. I ask for your understanding and for calm."

crowd:(in Romanian) "We shall not leave! " (in Hungarian) "Now or never!"

100

### **Early afternoon: "A beautiful demonstration"**

All this happened around noon. At that time, besides the Hungarians demonstrating outside the town hall, the Romanian Vatra demonstrators also began to arrive outside the Grand Hotel. This leader of the county therefore addressed them too.

Scriciu: "Those people there around the Grand Hotel should disperse immediately"

A voice (in Romanian): "They are Vatra people."

Scriciu: " Whether they are Vatra or not, they should disperse."

Unfortunately neither this appeal nor later ones were heeded, and the number of Romanians kept growing, Some of them had not even been home since the troubles of the evening before, but had spent the night at the Grand Hotel where people from their villages worked at the reception. After the Vatra demonstrators started to appear, decent Romanians talked to them, seeking to avert further violence.

The crowd (in Romanian): "Down with Vatra."

Traian Marcu (in Romanian): "I speak on behalf of the Democratic Youth Organisation (ODT). I call on every decent Romanian who condemns barbarian actions not to start out on the spiral of violence along which some people wish to proceed. I call on the Vatra - if that is the Vatra over there - and on every Romanian inclined to violence, to go home. There has been a beautiful demonstration here; no damage has been done to anything, you are not needed here. We the young people who made the revolution - some even dying for it - we don't need to be protected by your force. We ask you for the sake of your children too."

(Marcu was referring here to the Romanian fear that some Romanians inside the town hall had been taken hostage by the Hungarian demonstrators.)

Social Democrat leader Aurel Florian (in Romanian): "My brothers! Most of you know me from the time of the revolution. Gentlemen and brothers, we have been born to live on this earth. Think of it that if we set out with

the idea of revenge, we wrong ourselves, the country and the whole of Europe. I speak to the Vatra, to every Romanian. You must know that my intention is to provide holy freedom to every Romanian and every Hungarian. You must understand that hatred and hostility have to disappear. God has created us to love one another as we do ourselves. It is wrong that we who until yesterday had lived together and respected each other are now full of hatred,

The Romanian crowd: "  
Who started it?"

Florian: "My Romanian and Hungarian brothers! I only want to pass on the command of God. What you don't want to happen to yourselves, don't do it to others....!"

Marcel Bolboaca: (in Romanian): "I speak on behalf of the Organisation of Young Volunteers (OTV). I should like to remind you of just how the three youth organisations

101

occupying the building of the old Communist Youth Association understand each other. And there are both Romanians and Hungarians there, of course. Such an understanding should continue to live on among us. I would ask the Vatra Romaneasca to come to us and see how the young people work together, and to take an example from us and transplant it into practice.

"I ask that the former Securitate officer standing next to the Avram Iancu statue over there, and who incites the Romanians assembled there against the Hungarians, I ask him to disappear from there along with those assembled with him. Let this peaceful demonstration here unfold naturally. The Romanians should take an example from this Hungarian demonstration."

But the Romanian demonstrators did not leave. They shouted evermore aggressive slogans. The Hungarian crowd was still then much bigger, and it was to be feared that the Hungarians might lose their patience.

With this in mind, Sándor Zolcsák said: "We have called the attention of General Scrieciu to various dangers. We further demand that the military should be called out so that those who want to commit further crimes against peaceful Hungarian demonstrators should be stopped. We implore everybody that as long as this meeting lasts today, that as many Hungarian and honest Romanian brothers as possible should show up here. This is because we do not want the two peoples to commit a fateful mistake against each other. We want to live in this country with our rights. We ask our Romanian brothers to side with us because we do not want violence. We only demand our rights, the same rights that Romanians in the last century demanded for themselves with obvious justification."

The Romanians in front of the hotel shouted such slogans as these:

"We are at home - you are sub-tenants!

"You never had a piece of land here!

"We shall die, we shall fight, we shall not yield Transylvania!

'Thieves, thieves! Down with them, down with them!

You still have one option - you can go home [to Hungary]."

The Hungarians shouted back:

"Now or never!

"We are at home here! We demand our rights!

"We shall take up the fight with you!"

It went on like this until 16:00. The Romanians gathering around the Avram Iancu statue did not go home but joined up with the Romanian demonstrators in front of the Grand Hotel. Imperceptably, the Romanian numbers grew and grew, while the number

102

of Hungarians varied as people went home after their hours of demonstrating outside the town hall. No blows were exchanged between the two opposing crowds. The violence was brought on by the attack of the armed Romanian peasants brought into the town from the localities of Reghin and Iernut.

### **Interlude: the army that never was**

I joined the Hungarian crowd in front of the town hall at 16:00. There were then about 15-16,000, including many women and children, unarmed. There could have been many more Hungarians there to defend each other, but for the following reason:

The day before, at 19:00, I had gone to the nearby predominantly Hungarian town of Odorheiul Secuiesc for a court hearing. I felt happy at the time to be able to spend the night in peace. But in the morning, after 7.00, two local workers visited me in my room and told me that horrible things had happened in Tirgu Mures the night before. They said that in protest, the Hungarian workers of the town had gone on strike and wanted to go to Tirgu Mures to defend the Hungarians there.

I at once rang Attila Jakabffy, who gave me a detailed account of the injuries suffered by András Sütö and about the whole vandalistic action. I thought through the situation, and it continued to be my feeling that violent clashes had to be avoided. I talked to indignant crowds in two factories and in the main square of Odorhelul Secuiesc.

In my opinion, I was able to convince up to 12,000 people in this one town not to travel to Tirgu Mures and not to fall victim to provocation. (And now I know that I was probably wrong.)

But my argument at that time was that this is what the forces of regression were waiting for. I said I believed a scenario existed which depended on Hungarians going into the streets in response to a series of humiliations and acts of aggression. Clashes would occur. These clashes would then be used by the Vatra and the political forces behind the Vatra to confirm the charge of Hungarian separatism.

The political maturity of the Odorheiul Secuiesc people was (given my analysis then) one of the great experiences of my life. Usually crowds do not listen to reason.

I was called home to Tirgu Mures with the message that, at the request of the Hungarian demonstrators, President Ilescu and Károly Király would also be traveling to Tirgu Mures and that they would want to talk to me. If I had not been called back to Tirgu Mures at this moment. I would have gone on to Bucharest to attend a hearing of the Supreme Court set for March 21.

I arrived home at 16:00 only to learn the terrible news: Ilescu is not here, Király is not here. And besides our own demonstrators, 3-4,000 very aggressive Vatra people have appeared.

### **Late afternoon: "Europe is with us"**

I telephoned President Iliescu and appealed to him to come to Tirgu Mures at once. I said the situation was very dangerous and ethnic clashes could occur. I stressed that the Romanian mob violence that caused the grave injury to Amdrás Sütö had not improved the reputation of our country, and that it would be advisable to avoid a repetition of such incidents.

Iliescu answered that while the atmosphere was so tense he would not come. He would come in two or three days when the situation had calmed down. Iliescu never did come.

He also said that he was sending the deputy Defence and Interior Ministers and that they would take the appropriate measures. These gentlemen only appeared in public on the 21st, after the killings.

It wasn't only me asking Iliescu to intervene. The Romanian Greek Catholic Bishop (later Cardinal) Alexandru Todea called on the President as early as March 19 to do something to stop ethnic clashes. Iliescu refused then too, saying he would take steps only "at the very end".

I also talked on the phone to Dr Pál Kikeli, one of the vice-presidents of the Mures County branch of the RMDSZ. He told me that he and another vice-president, István Ká1i Király, had just decided to go into hiding together. He gave me a telephone number, but with a bugged telephone it was not certain that they wouldn't be found if a search was really on for them. He recommended that I should remind the people of the importance of peace and unity. But I already had my routine worked out here, for I had delivered three speeches earlier that day at Odorheiul Secuiesc. But he added something I had not thought of apropos this particular Hungarian crowd gathered in the town centre: I should send the people home because of the danger of provocation.

In the Romanian variants of my speech delivered so the Vatra crowd would also understand me, I also called on people to disperse, but in vain. (I shall return to this.) After my telephone calls, I had to talk to the demonstrators.

My Hungarian-language and Romanian-language speeches - which were video- recorded - were as follows:

Kincses (in Hungarian): "Dear people of Tirgu Mures! It is a very great responsibility to speak on these two days. Yesterday, when I stood here (and was forced to resign), other people expected me to say something entirely different to what I have to say here today. My opinion is that here and now, conciliation is the only possible road

to follow. We only have a future if we have trust in each other, if we do not constantly look on one-another with suspicion, if we do not let ourselves be misled by the extremists...

"In my opinion, yesterday's demonstration was a typical case of what terrible pain can be caused by a sick idea born in the minds of some irresponsible extremists, of what a Fascistic climate of pogrom it can call forth. We shall of course demand that the organisers of yesterday's demonstration be put before the courts and punished.

But no generalisations are permissible: it has to be established exactly who was at fault, and to what extent. And the punishments must be tailored to the individuals.

Let us not generalise. This is my request to the people of Tirgu Mures. I am very well aware that a great many Romanians of Tirgu Mures are stunned and shocked by the events of yesterday, We have to join forces with these true democrats in order to isolate those with sick minds. Those latter types we don't need. It is anyway very important that we behave in a civilised manner in order not to lose the sympathy and understanding we won through our self-restraint yesterday, when it was so difficult not to go out into the streets. We need the support of Romanian and European democratic public opinion, otherwise we cannot achieve the equal rights that are due to us and to every minority."

9/27/97\*\*\*\*\*

The crowd: "Europe is with us, Europe is with us!"

Kincscs: "I would like to stress that we are not demanding privileges. We don't seek equal rights at the expense of somebody else! We demand only those rights which have already been formulated in the Declaration of Alba Iulia in 1918 [the pact where Romanians outlined minority rights for Hungarians after the detachment of Transylvania from Hungary] and which were then included in the Versailles Settlement, also rights guaranteed in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in all international agreements which Romania has signed in the past 40 years."

The crowd: "We demand our rights!"

Kincses (in Romanian): "Dear fellow citizens! I said yesterday too that I was in favour of unity. (...) Today the healthy body of Tirgu Mures rejects the few sick cells which have ruined our coexistence. (...) We shall be able to restore the wonderful unity which characterised us during the December revolution, when our sons sacrificed their lives together here, in the Martyrs' Square. (...) We must be careful that in the local press no material should be published of the sort which appeared, for instance, in Los Angeles, which

gives rise to altercations here, because it awakens in the Romanians the suspicion that the Hungarians want Transylvania. It is a shame that such a thing could have happened in the local press, especially if we take into account that a gross forgery is involved. (... ) We shall soon read out aloud the draft programme of the RMDSZ, and I ask everybody to go home afterwards." (My comment: in the end, I did not receive this draft from Kikeli.)

105

The crowd: (in Romanian) "We shall not leave!" (in Hungarian) "Now or never! We shall wait!"

Mercifully, our earlier requests for people to go home had not been met. The Hungarian demonstrators feared that if they dispersed the Romanian crowds would settle matters with the Hungarian leaders who were in the town hall, and would beat up or murder every Hungarian they caught. Indeed, it is obvious that if the demonstrating Hungarian crowd had not taken up the fight with the invaders, the balance would have been much worse, and then we would have had to count with many more than the three Hungarian dead. It is incontestable that the opinion of the crowd was correct; they knew better what had to be done than we did. Arrangements were made for the potential fight. Women and children were told to leave the demonstration. The men were told to stay together in tight formation and to reinforce their flank facing the Grand Hotel.

Nicolae Juncu (in Romanian): "I call on everybody those here in the square. the ones standing in front of the Grand Hotel and those too who are standing in front of the Mayor's Office - to have patience. We shall try to solve the situation."

After I had finished my speech I was warned that information had been received by the Mures County leaders of the Provisional Council of National Unity that armed Romanian peasants from the Reghin region were again assembling. I therefore rang Interior Minister, General Mihai Chitac, to demand that the two demonstrating camps be separated by adequate forces, and that a repetition of the invasion of armed Romanian peasants from the Gurghiu valley and the Reghin region should be prevented. I stressed that the vandalism of the 19th had done great damage to the international reputation of Romania, and a repetition must be avoided.

Interior Minister Chitac reassured me that he had already issued orders to Colonel Gambrea, the police commander of Mures County, to separate the two camps with adequate forces, and to prevent the possible invasion of Tirgu Mures by outside groups.

The "adequate" force was a cordon of about 80 policemen to control 20-22,000 people. This cordon dissolved when the Romanian attack came. It had been set up at approximately at 13:30 by General Scriciu at the demand of the

RMDSZ. With the benefit of hindsight, it can be said that it would also have been

useful to supplement this official protection with some more comprehensive self-defence measures of our own.

Following my talk with Interior Minister Chitac, I at once telephoned County Police Commander Gambrea. He assured me he had taken measures to close down the Gurghiu valley so that the Romanian peasants would not be able to leave and come to Tirgu Mures. The town, he said, "cannot be penetrated."

106

After this I rang Károly Király in Bucharest. He said he would do everything possible and talk to all competent persons. In order to avoid further harm, he warned that we should also think of organising our own self-defence.

I spoke to Defence Minister Stanculescu, who told me that a deputy minister was coming to Tirgu Mures, to take appropriate measures. But the Defence Minister was unwilling to order the immediate intervention of the military.

Next on the phone, I appealed to General Constantin Cojocaru, the Mures County military commander, for the army to intervene and prevent clashes between the ethnic groups. Cojocaru first said that he did not have sufficient forces available. After the Romanian attack had started, and after a second telephone call, he announced that he had taken measures for the military to intervene.

After all these telephone conversations, I was warned that the Romanian demonstrators were getting more and more aggressive and that it was to be feared that the Hungarians would lose their patience. I therefore told County First Vice-President Sriečiu that we should try to convince the crowd - he the Romanians, and I the Hungarians that there was no place for violence.

A few minutes before 17:00, I addressed the crowd (in Hungarian): "Unfortunately it seems that there are also people who do not like peaceful demonstrations and are trying to disturb things. I ask you not to forget that the scenario is old one. They again want to provoke us, and want to try to prove that we are destabilising the country because we want to detach Transylvania. This would then, of course, serve as an excellent argument for the introduction of a military dictatorship..."

"We ask nothing but equal rights: an Hungarian section in the Medical University, a Bolyai School. This has nothing to do with territorial demands.... These are base manipulations to which we have fallen victims so many times, and now they are trying to manipulate public opinion again. On

this point, Bucharest Television is unfortunately very much at fault, having broadcast a number of lies... "

Ioan Scrieciú (in Romanian): "I ask everybody to keep calm. Do not respond to provocation. I call on the Romanians standing in front of the Grand Hotel to leave. No party should let itself be provoked because it is not right that we are behaving in this way. I beg you to leave the square in front of the Grand Hotel and to go home.

"People around the statue should also go home." (He was referring to the statue of Avram Iancu, where the Romanians had started to assemble a few hours before.)

To calm down the crowd, the Hungarian theatre director András Hunyadi announced that the Hungarian actress Kinga Illyés would recite poems to them.

Kinga Illyés: "I bring you, dear friends, the words of poets. The words of poets, who never took recourse to violence. They wrote and spoke only in the name of pure humanism, the soul, and justice."

Beautiful poems addressed to ugly times followed.

107

### **Early evening. "They have arrived, they're here"**

I returned to my office and received a telephone message that armed Romanian peasants, having been made drunk, were on their way from Reghin. In this situation there were two alternatives: either everybody goes home. or everybody stays. There@ fore I again went before the crowd and said the following:

"In Bucharest, a parliamentary session is beginning. This is the meeting of the National Bureau of the Council of Unity which is to deal with the situation in Tirgu Mures, and of the national minorities generally. It is, of course, impossible to know how long this meeting will last. Probably it will last a very long time, because the situation is extremely difficult and complicated. The question now is what to do? "

Shall we wait for the decision 'in Bucharest?

The answer of the demonstrators in front of the town hall: "We shall wait!"

Kincses: "Well, if this is the general opinion, then it is very important that everybody should stay in place and that the crowd should not disperse. And it should be very disciplined, because if only a few remain here, we can be subject to all kinds of attacks. This then is a collective duty, and everybody should stay here, and we should look after each other. This is the only way this can be managed."

The crowd: "Now or never! "

Kincses: "In that case, we also have to think of the fact that we may have to defend ourselves..."

I proposed that the following communique should be read on Tirgu Mures Radio: "Those who want to go home, should go home. Those who want to come, should come because they may be needed... "

We had to decide soon, because the Hungarian-language transmission of Tirgu Mures Radio lasted only until 20:00. But our tentative preparations to save ourselves were overtaken by events. Shortly after, at 18.00, the Romanian attack did indeed come.

This was how the moment was recorded by the person manning one video camera in the main square:

"Look, they have broken through. Jesus Christ, they have pushed out onto the square. With axes. They have gone crazy. I have never seen such a thing in my life. With pitchforks. Good God, he has fallen down. Where are the soldiers?"

One Hungarian journalist in the square prior to this moment describes noticing on the Romanian side a young woman, maybe 19 or 20, hoisted on someone's shoulders. She was always looking to the rear. He heard her shout: "They have arrived, they're here." The young woman jumped down and ran to the side, and suddenly the square was a sea of axes,

108

13y the time I got to the balcony from my office, I saw that the Hungarians had begun to fight back, and most of the Romanians had withdrawn to the Grand Hotel. I am told it is a mystery how the Hungarians ran only a certain distance before something made them stop, turn and confront the Romanians. Though at this point they were still without weapons and presumably used only their hands against the axes and pitchforks. From the town hall balcony, I tried to soothe the crowd with the following words:

"We have to end the struggle. Let us try it, perhaps we shall succeed. The soldiers are allegedly coming. In any case, we should not attack. We should not attack, only defend ourselves: Come back to the front of the town hall, to the centre! Come back, do not run!"

Parties of Hungarian workers and students started to arrive to supplement the original demonstrators who had been caught in the square by the first attack. I am told the workers were a model of team-work as they set down calmly to make Molotov Cocktails\*. one loading, one carrying, one stacking.

I went back to my office and phoned everywhere, and General Cojocaru promised that finally the army would come. (An hour earlier, the Hungarian demonstrators had begun chanting in Romanian: Let the army come! And so

often subsequently, I have asked myself: what would have happened if it had not been us who were trying to call in the army, but the other side?)

The Hungarians were now trying to arm themselves in order to return to the scene. They dismantled fences and benches - indeed, it was possible to know who was Hungarian because they held green staves.

They also raided building sites for weapons. In short they got hold of anything that appeared suitable and returned to the front of the town hall. From there, they drove the Romanians back to the Grand Hotel.

Let me note that the Hungarians of Tirgu Mures wanted to avoid clashes to such an extent that this was the first time during the whole of this period under review that they had actively responded to a Romanian provocation or returned a Romanian attack. Further, the first dead and injured were all Hungarian, which shows (in addition to the video-records), who started the violence. This particular piece of information was suppressed by Vatra doctors.

The Hungarians built barricades in the streets leading to the main square so that when after a big delay - three armoured vehicles arrived, they got caught in the street to the right of the town hall and could not continue.

The Hungarians refused to let them through, saying they did not trust the army, After repeated requests of mine, they dismantled a barricade, and thus the three armoured vehicles were able to get to the corner of the square next to the Grand Hotel, closing down the square and the road leading to the town hall.

After the army's arrival, I spoke again:

109

"The soldiers are here, they take their place. Nothing should be done to them. Everybody should now stay in place. I ask everybody to stay in place', nobody should pay attention to the military. Hungarians, remain in your places!"

But the arrival of the armoured vehicles emboldened the Romanians ("The army is with us"). They started to throw missiles at the Hungarians more and more aggressively. Paving stones were delivered by a dump truck, gasolin by another truck. Molotov Cocktails were being produced, which they threw at the Hungarians. (This information was provided to me by witnesses, since I was in the town hall until the end,)

According to some witnesses, the Vatra people syphoned off fuel from the army vehicles too in order to make Molotov Cocktails.

After a successful missile barrage, the Romanians began to climb over the armoured vehicles and advanced again. During this time, according to other witnesses, at least one of the annoured vehicles drove over to the Romanian side, turned around, and then proceeded towards the Hungarian lines slowly, while the Romanian mob sheltered and followed behind it, throwing stones.

One Hungarian describes how he became aware of a curious sound, like a tin house collapsing. He looked up to see a big Romanian truck descending upon him. He leapt out of the way, at the same time reallsing that the sound was the noise of stones thrown by more alert Hungarians pounding the sides

of the truck. The windscreen was smashed, the driver pressed on blindly, demolishing a lamp-post and a fountain before striking the steps of the Greek Catholic church. This truck struck and killed one of the Hungarians. The crash was forceful enough to kill one of the Romanian passengers. When the vehicle came to a halt, the other Romanians on board immediately jumped up and started throwing down iron bars. They had come to arm their compatriots, but this area had just been cleared by the Hungarians in one of their sweeps.

The square was full of broken staves and bottles and the clanking of armoured vehicles manoeuvring, belching smoke. One Hungarian witness recalls seeing three people on fire that night: one of them hit squarely on the back by a Molotov Cocktail.

The ambulances had approached from all directions, though they concentrated on retrieving the wounded the Hungarians from one end of the square and the Romanians from the other. Parties of Hungarians launched out into the Romanian lines and took prisoners. One captured Romanian was beaten severely by other Hungarians despite the appeals of his captors that he was a prisoner. He had to be put straight into one of the ambulances, his head a bloody mess.

Control over the square ebbed and flowed during this time, with the Hungarians facing the difficulty of confronting the Romanians sheltering behind the armoured vehicles. The Romanians began to advance again. Then, at about 20:00, small parties of young men began to arrive with silent steps behind the Hungarian lines'. They wore white so that they would identify each other, and they were well armed. The Hungarian Gypsies of Tirgu Mures had arrived.

110

The Gypsies called out: Hungarians never fear! The Gypsies are here! The Hungarian crowd roared. Together, they attacked and forced the Romanians back behind the armoured vehicles. One of the Gypsy leaders told me: "Mr. Kincses, should we not come to help the Hungarians, when we are Hungarian Gypsies, and it hurts us if the Hungarians are being beaten! " He added: "Today you, tomorrow us ..."

After this, the Romanians only continued to throw things, but did not dare again to cross the line formed by the armoured vehicles. And many of the Romanian vehicles that had transported the mob to Tirgu Mures now began to burn.

At this point, I rang Colonel Gambrea, the police commander, and asked him how it was possible that he had not provided security for Tirgu Mures against the Romanian peasants. To which Gambrea answered in an off-hand manner: "What can I do if I don't have enough men available."

The truth about the behaviour of the police was told later, in an April transmission of the Panorama programme of Hungarian Television, by the physician Dr. Elöd Uri. He was then the Vice-President of the Reghin branch of the RMDSZ, though he has since resettled in Hungary, his life having been threatened by Vatra people. He reported that at the edge of Reghin, the buses and trucks carrying the peasant force were indeed held up, but only until approximately 12 vehicles had assembled. And then it was a police car that led them to Tirgu Mures!

I was repeatedly telephoned in these hours by Hungarian leaders in Covasna and Harghita counties, who asked how they could help us. They said several thousand people wanted to come and help Tirgu Mures. I said that such help was not needed, that the conflict should not be broadened. I proposed that instead they should bombard Ilescu, Stanculescu, Petre Roman, Chitac - the main Romanian leadership, in other words - with phone calls, insisting that these men finally take measures.

### **Late evening: "I know you, though we have never met"**

I too several times rang President Ilescu and Defence Minister Stanculescu, who only kept promising help and mentioning the trip by the two vice-ministers as a solution. They said that as soon as they arrived in Tirgu Mures, the Vice-Ministers for Defense and the Interior would take the necessary steps. I do not know why, but the two gentlemen were visible in town only the next day (the 21st), but kept away from the events on the 20th.

Seeing that the clashes continued and nobody did anything to prevent the escalation of violence, I also rang Prime Minister Petre Roman and introduced myself to him. He said very curtly in Romanian.- "I know you, though we have never met, nor even spoken to each other on the phone." I immediately remembered the February threat by General Cojocaru (he then said that he would have me court-martialled and

111

had already discussed it with the Prime Minister). I told Roman that the necessary and adequate military steps would be outlined to him by a reserve-major of the army. I then handed the phone to this reserve major, the Hungarian Géza Nagy, who sketched out what measures would put an end to the bloodshed, Petre Roman told Nagy to hand the receiver back to me and he told me that within an hour an infantry battalion would be in Tirgu Mures.

All this happened between 20.-30 and 21:00, when we had as yet been informed of only two dead and 100 injured.

After 75 minutes I again rang Roman, who told me the infantry had not arrived because it could not get through the barricades set up in the Hungarian villages. Finally parachutists arrived, and from Luna (a village between Ludus and Turda) an infantry formation. In this direction, by the way, there are no Hungarian concentrations on the road to Tirgu Mures. But what can a few peasants do against the army anyway?

Not that Hungarians outside the town weren't active. On the road from Hodac, where there are indeed Hungarian settlements, local people fought valiantly for hours to try to block or delay the transit of the convoys of Romanian peasants into Tirgu Mures. While Hungarians inside Tirgu Mures fought back against the mob, scenes of equal heroism were taking place without our knowledge on the roads through the villages of Singeorgiu de Mures, Ernei, Gornesti and Dumbravioara. Indeed, two of the Hungarian dead of that night fell on this road - crushed by Romanian trucks. I must stress that without the help of these Hungarian villagers, the Hungarians inside the town would have lost far more blood than they did,

At around 23:00, Hungarian Szekler people from the Niraj district arrived. And together with the Hungarians and the Gypsies of Tirgu Mures, they dispersed the Romanians who were still in the area behind the tanks, in the Square of the Martyrs, and drove them out of town.

The main body of the infantry arrived in the main square only at 5:00 the next morning. They threw a defensive cordon around the Hungarian demonstrators who had stayed all night in the square. They had covered the distance of 50 kilometers in eight hours. Why did it take so long? When the military arrived, only Hungarians were left in the square.

During the second main counter-attack which finally dispersed the Romanians from the town centre, the Hungarians also took prisoners, whom they questioned during the night. The prisoners confessed that they had come because they were paid money, or because their village mayor forced them to come. They even said that the bells had been sounded in the Orthodox churches. They were usually drunk. But it is still a fact that they behaved very strangely, and that I cannot explain their behaviour by the influence of drink alone. Some recordings were made of these interrogations, and there were also written confessions,

Given the emotionally-charged nature of the moment, these interrogations were chaotic, contradictory and often self-defeating. But I shall record here some essential details from the video-recordings made with the Romanian prisoners (all in Romanian):

1 st voice: Why have you come here? Look at me when I am talking to you. What is your name?

2nd voice: Ilie Petra.

1 st voice: Where have you come from?

2nd voice: From Ibanesti.

1 st voice: How did you travel here?

2nd voice: By bus.

1st voice: Who told you to come here? How did you know that you should come here?

2nd voice: I was on my way home from the factory...

1 st voice: Where do you work?

2nd voice: In the Ierbus, in furniture plant No. 2.

1 st voice: How old are you?

2nd voice: Twenty-three.

1st voice: Well, who told you to come here,?

2nd voice: On my way home I was stopped at the bridge and told to come here.

1 st voice: How many came from Ibanesti? In how many buses?

2nd voice: In three buses. Approximately 400.

1 st voice: And why did you come here? What was the reason? Were you only being told to come...? They must have had some reason... well, what? Did you want to have a look at the town?

2nd voice: No, but...

1 st voice: Well then? Did you want to defend Transylvania? Was that the reason? Was that you were told?

2nd voice: Yes, but...

1st voice: Of course, tell us in stages what you were told, why you should have to come here. First, to defend Transylvania, and then? Well, you must have been told something in the village before you came here.

2nd voice: I was in the factory.

1st voice: Still, after you left the factory, you must have been told something. You were told where you had to go and why. Did they not tell you?

2nd voice: I won't tell; if I tell, I will be killed.

1st voice: Tell us, we won't harm you. Continue.

2nd voice: The chairman. He had the church bell sounded.

1st voice: And how much money did you get? And how many gifts did you get?

And drinks? You are saying that you know nobody who instigated this. What arms did you bring along'?

2nd voice: None.

Ist voice: So you came empty-handed. Then where did you get the clubs and the axes with which you fought? Aren't you telling? Or by what car you came? Every registration plate has been noted down. So are you sure that we want to take Transylvania away?

2nd voice: No.

1st voice: Then why did you come? We have never asked for this. We have as many rights as you do. We are here too, and we want to stay here. Who said that we want to take Transylvania away? What shall we take it away with? By our hands? You well know that we do not want Transylvania, and you nevertheless turned against us. Why? Tell us, why?

3rd voice: Answer. I have a son who is as old as you are.

Ist voice: Would you have the courage to tell in front of others too?

2nd voice: We were told that the Hungarians broke the shop windows and destroyed the shops.

Ist voice: Listen, you came here in order to beat up the Hungarians, isn't it true? Who then broke up everything here? Did not you break the doors and windows of our headquarters? Confess that you came to beat Hungarians. You were here yesterday too, weren't you? Who brought you here yesterday?

2nd voice: The Mayor of Hodac.

Ist voice: Are you certain that it was him? What is his name?

2nd voice: Ioan Brinzaru. He was there, and he got hold of the bus.

4th voice: What did you come for? I still don't understand.

Ist voice: You came to beat up the Hungarians, didn't you? Look and see how Transylvania looks in your eyes, how beautiful it looks. On account of your idiots. Can you see what it looks like? Don't you have a single Hungarian friend? Well, close your eyes and don't look either right or left, be ashamed. Do you know how many injured there are, that there is no room for them in the hospitals? More than 100. Quite a few from Hodac too. Can you see how beautiful Transylvania is now, this place that you want to defend from us? You who beat up our people. We do not need Transylvania, we need friendship, do you understand? You don't need Transylvania either, you who also know how it was on December 22, when we together proclaimed brotherhood. We wanted brotherhood, do you understand? This is what you want to destroy now. Have we taken anything away from you? Do you know what we are asking for? Our rights provided for in the constitution. Why does a Hungarian school disturb you?

4th voice (a Romanian interrogator!): So you have many Hungarian friends, have you not? Or haven't you any? All right, boy, I am glad that you are from Ibanesti. You

see, I am from Suceava county, from Radauti. See, I am not from here, I have only been living here for seven years. I have only one question: Why did you come here to stir up trouble. Why, what for?

2nd voice: I have not done anything, I have only just got here.

4th voice: You have just got here? But why have you come here?

2nd voice: I heard that the Hungarians had plundered and smashed up the shops.

4th voice: Have you heard what happened here yesterday when you came in? Have you heard what your friends and brothers have done? Have you heard about the butchery which they arranged yesterday.? They attacked innocent unarmed people with sticks and axes. Have you heard about last night?

2nd voice: I have heard about it.

4th voices. You have heard about it. And then why did you nevertheless come here today? What were you lookin for? Did you again want to eradicate this nationality? Can't you feel that we have become ridiculous in front of the world?

Ist voice: Is this how you would treat the Hungarians? You did not bandage anybody there, you did not look after them. What would have happened if I had got into your hands like this?

4th voice: They would have killed you.

Ist voice: Tell me frankly what would you have done if a man with a broken skull had fallen in front of your feet?

2nd voice: I say that I would not have killed him.

I st voice: No. Would you have left him there?

4th voice: Listen, a cross- examination. If you people at Hodac had asked for some rights, and if Hungarians had gone to your village and hit you over the head, how would you have liked that? What would you have said then? See, this is the only question I have, you know. Because you never think. You are excited and then let go. Have you ever imagined in your life that a Hungarian should have gone to Hodac to take your rights away?

2nd voice: No.

4th voice: Have you seen in the press, have you heard over the radio a single Hungarian asking for Transylvania?

2nd voice: No. Not us.

4th voice: Then what do you want? When the entire world knows that they only ask for their own rights, that they should be treated like human beings. How shall we treat them? As some kind of slaves, as dogs? This is how far we Romanians have got. This is too much. Rather think of it that on the [December] 21st and the 22nd when the bullets were flying, you were

not here. Did you have to come now? I am only asking you this, because in December you were then resting at home...

115

1st voice: What did you get this money for?

2nd voice: I had a fine from the council, and they told me, if we don't come, then...

1st voice: What would they do then?

2nd voice: Put me in jail.

1st voice: Put you in jail? And how much did they give?.

2nd voice: As much as the fine was. Three thousand lei. That much.

1st voice: Who told you this.?

2nd voice: The mayor.

1st voice:

What is his name?

2nd voice: Milu Borzean.

1 st voice: Where did you come from?

2nd voice: From Ulisiu.

I also know about a witness (unfortunately his words were not recorded) who said that they had been called to Tirgu Mures because the Hungarians there were murdering Romanian children.

And further, the fact that the attacks against the Hungarian population of Tirgu Mures had been planned was also let out by Mihai Cofariu, an Ibanesti man transported to the town. In an interview on an Hungarian-language broadcast of Romanian Television, he said that at the previous Sunday service it had been announced that when church bells were sounded people should go to Tirgu Mures to make order, to teach a lesson to the Hungarians.

Nothing has to be added to this!

116

### **AFTER THE POGROM: EVIL COMPOUNDED**

After much confusion, it was later tentatively established that five people died in the events of the night of the 20th: three Hungarians and two Romanians. Two Hungarians were killed in villages on the approach to Tirgu Mures when they tried to stop Romanian trucks carrying armed peasants. The third was hit by a Romanian truck crashing its way into the town centre. On the Romanian side, one died from injuries received when the truck mentioned above, and in which he was a passenger, crashed into the stone steps of a church in the town centre. A second was found wounded in another part of town with no explanation of how or why he received his wounds. He died later in hospital.

In addition to these five dead, several hundred people were severely wounded. But here the figures were tampered with and are not reliable. The tendency was to only register the Romanian wounded, while many Hungarians were too afraid to go and seek treatment for their wounds anyway.

Doctors belonging to Vatra tried to make documents about the pogrom disappear. Dr. Bratisteanu, for instance, confiscated from a video-cameraman the cassette on which some of the injured were recorded and which also showed the first two dead then still unidentified. These were the two elderly Hungarians, Antal Csipor and István Gémes, struck by the Romanian trucks on the way into town.

Having said that, one further thing must be mentioned: the solicitor Nicolae Juncu, Mures county leader of the National Peasant Party, visited all

the Tirgu Mures hospitals on the night of March 20-21, and reported to Gencral Scriciu and also to me that both the Romanian and Hungarian doctors treated the Hungarian and Romanian injured in an absolutely correct way, loyal to their Hippocratic Oath. In discussions held on March 22, Dr. Silviu Olariu, Honorary President of Vatra Romaneasca, stressed the same. But I can only say the same about these gentlemen as I said about the teacher Matei, (the Romanian deputy headmaster of the Bolyai Lyceum): Why did they not also tell this truth in public? Why did they permit Hungarian doctors to subsequently be libelled by the extremists' claims in the Romanian press that they had mistreated the Romanian wounded?

Similarly, on the night of March 21, I asked the police to interrogate the prisoners. They answered that it was late. It seems that the day of justice (and of its administration) has still not yet come since March 21 for nobody from the Romanian assault on the Hungarians as yet in jail.

Further, all through the day of the 20th, about 60 young Hungarians belonging to

117

the MADISZ youth Organisation defended the headquarters of the Vatra Romaneasca in the main square, so that nobody seeking revenge should damage it. Come the Romanian assault, these young people also fled. After the attack had been repulsed, the enraged crowd broke into the Vatra office. I was able to look at the seized documents for a few moments. It was then that I read their handwritten minutes, which showed that this political organisation masquerading as a cultural one was established as early as December 27!

Mr. X. who had the chance to study the documents coming from the Vatra Romaneasca headquarters at greater leisure, told me that in addition to their secret political programme, he also found correspondence between the Vatra and President Iliescu. And he also found the list of police officers who were Vatra members (300!), plus lawyers, etc. And the contract with Cuventul Liber, according to which this "independent democratic daily" undertakes to publish the propaganda of the Vatra.

Vatra also possessed photocopies of all the documents which I had signed as a county National Salvation Front Vice-President. It is with some satisfaction that I note they found nothing exceptionable in my work.

Perhaps one other discovered document should be noted. According to (Transportation) Order No. 1008., the Vatra Romaneasca requisitioned already on March 15 - well in advance - some of the vehicles which would be needed to transport the armed attackers to the pogrom,

After 6:00 on the 21st, I went home to get a few hours' sleep. It turned out that my flat had been guarded by young Hungarians all night.

Before I returned to the town hall that morning, I told in a 30-minute Romanian language interview what had happened in Tirgu Mures. This interview has not yet been broadcast by Bucharest Television.

After 9:00, together with three young persons accompanying me, I tried to enter the headquarters of the Provisional Council of National Unity, guarded by the military and the police.

A non-commissioned police officer asked one of the persons accompanying me to show his identity, and told me that I had no business in the headquarters, since I had resigned. And incidentally, he added in Vatra fashion: "We have received sufficient beating on account of you."

I went home, but was soon told over the phone that I was expected, because the county leadership of the Provisional Council of National Unity was holding an extraordinary meeting..

I told my caller what had happened on my first attempt to enter the building., whereupon a military command car was sent for me and an adequately-armed escort was provided. My neighbours asked whether this meant I was receiving protection, or was it indeed the opposite?

118

Over the next two days I commuted between my flat and the headquarters in the same way. Of course, I did not sleep at home, but in a flat the address of which was kept secret.

During these same days, the leaders of the Vatra Romaneasca slept inside the army garrison. Did they get protection there, or did they provide guidance there?

In this context, I was asked by Patrick Claude, the reporter of Le Monde, whether I was sleeping at home. I said that I was not. Why? Because I had fallen out with my wife. To which he impishly asked: "And when will you sleep again at home?" My answer: "When we have made peace, but currently I am not thinking of my wife."

On March 21 the Provisional Council of National Unity called on the people of Tirgu Mures to end their demonstrations at 15:00 and go home. As a result of our long work of persuasion, the Hungarians abided by the deadline. The Romanians continued to demonstrate very aggressively for several more days. In the afternoon the government commission charged with investigating the events of Tirgu Mures finally showed itself and started its sounding-out discussions. In order to assist, the Romanian writer of Cluj, Augustin Buzura, intervened and called on the Vatra Romaneasca to be good enough to sit down at the negotiating table.

On the morning of March 22, when I sat down at my office desk, I noticed that it had been forced open. (The building had been guarded by the military!) I complained about this to Attila Verestóy, the Hungarian member of the governmental commission, and he returned with Romanian Vice-

President Gelu Voican Voiculescu, the man who three months earlier - while  
still incognito - had

sentenced Ceausescu to death in that dramatic kangaroo court encounter.

For at least 40 minutes we talked with the owner of the famous beard, and told him of our complaints.

I asked how, despite our protests, Bucharest Television could have presented only the previous evening such a tendentious, false picture of the recent events. What do they want? Another bloodbath?

I stressed that the television had displayed its pictures in such a way that it did not at all show that on the 20th armed Romanians had attacked unarmed Hungarians. It was impossible to know who was beating whom. The truck which arrived carrying armed Romanians ran into the steps of the Greek Catholic church much earlier in the sequence of events than the broadcast claimed. Those pictures which showed armed Romanian peasants lying in the truck and jumping down from it with their supply of iron bars were not broadcast. The report also failed to mention the fact that the driver, before he tried to run over the Hungarian demonstrators, had driven more than 300 metres 'in the red' (for it is not permitted to drive a truck into the main square), etc.

The driver, Marin Preda, crushed "only" the Hungarian Zoltán Kiss to death. And among the armed aggressors lying on their stomachs in the truck, the Romanian

119

Teodor Rusu suffered such a grave injury in the crash that he died a few days later. Of course, Vatra propaganda has talked about him as a victim of the Hungarians ever since.

I asked why they had not shown a video-recording of the siege of the Hungarian Party headquarters on March 19, so that the Romanian TV viewers would have understood why the unarmed Hungarians had gathered to protest on the morning of the 20th.

I told Voican Voiculescu what had really happened. He partly believed and partly disbelieved what he heard.

Then the teacher Peter Theil, headmaster of the Joseph Haltrich Lyceum of Sighisoara, interjected. Theil said he was a German, an ancient rock who had stayed here in Romania. He had been here right through these days, he said, and could testify that everything had happened as I had just described. (Others present also interjected here and there.)

Theil also asked Voican Voiculescu: "Do you want to turn Tirgu Mures into a Beirut? For if I were a Romanian, I would already be sitting on a train headed for Tirgu Mures to teach the Hungarians a lesson. This would be the only action I could take after having seen yesterday's TV broadcast!"

Peter Theil's words absolutely convinced Voican Voiculescu, who behaved correctly and objectively for the rest of the negotiations. Following Theil's intervention, Voican Voiculescu telephoned Prime Minister Roman and

demanded that only material should be broadcast about Tirgu Mures which had been vetted and approved by his visiting government commission. Unfortunately, he was not listened to.

(The following June, having been warned by Vatra not to make a nuisance of himself over restoring the Joseph Haltrich Lyceum as a German school, Peter Theil fled to Germany with his family.)

### **The evidence disappears**

In our frustration over the manipulated images from Tirgu Mures shown on Romanian Television, we let loose at Dorin Suciu, its local correspondent. We told him that this was not the first spiteful thing he had done, that he had not behaved correctly during the February demonstrations either. He said he was not to blame. He said he had shot at least three full cassettes of film on the night of the 20th (material lasting six hours) from his Grand Hotel vantage point, and that he had sent this material to Bucharest by air. It had left him undoctored, he said. His material was not shown, and he did not know where the film that was broadcast had come from. I asked him whether the Romanian attack could be seen on his pictures, and he said it definitely could be seen. This perhaps explains why Razvan Theodorescu, the President of Romanian Television, claimed that the films taken by

120

his staff had been violently stolen by persons unknown. (On the aeroplane, at least, we must exclude the use of this force, since there is a strong guard on every flight in Romania.)

At the RMDSZ-Vatra Romaneasca negotiations, ten-strong delegations attended. Stenographic minutes were taken.

The two RMDSZ Vice-Presidents (Káli-Király István and Kikeli Pál) who had gone underground, did not join the negotiations,, preferring to remain underground. Before the negotiations started, the Vatra team protested against my presence. But Gelu Voican Voiculescu insisted on my participation, and of course, the other RMDSZ members did too.

While we talked, the anti-Hungarian demonstration of Romanians belonging to the Vatra continued in front of the Grand Hotel.

Dumitru Pop made a revealing slip of the tongue when he said to the joint panel that the Hungarian danger had been indicated to President Ilescu as early as the end of January. I recalled what date it was that our President had mentioned the threat of "separatism" on television - January 25. Other news from the Vatra people appears to be even more interesting in light of the miners' rampage against antigovernment demonstrators in Bucharest the following June. Concerning the Tirgu Mures pogrom, they said: "The

miners were already at Razboeni, but they were sent back". See how clear everything becomes!

We urged that the events of Tirgu Mures should be investigated by an international commission, but they would not hear of it. It is understandable that they wanted to prevent the discovery of the truth at any price, this attitude being fully explicable in light of the "solutions" to problems the authorities of Romania have sought to apply subsequently.

We succeeded in drawing up a common communiqué, the most valuable point of which was - in my opinion - the second, which reads:

"The representatives of the RMDSZ declare the loyalty of the Hungarian population to the territorial integrity of Romania, and that the RMDSZ does not intend and never intended to separate Transylvania from the whole of the country.

The Vatra Romaneasca Association takes note of this stand of the RMDSZ, and will inform the Romanian public of it."

I believe this point should be waved in front of the Vatra Romaneasca all the time, so that it should be induced to publicise this declaration in accordance with its given word. Civilised people keep their word, don't they?

The next day, on March 23, the Executive Committee of the Mures County and Tirgu Mures Council of the Provisional Council of National Unity was re-elected. A young Romanian proposed that those five Romanians and five Hungarians who were

121

most contested by the other side should be omitted from the leadership. I was on this list. Károly Király (who had earlier voluntarily resigned from his Mures County presidency) headed the list. Among the Romanians were Judea and Scrieciuciu.

They made only one exception, and that was with Dumitru Pop. In vain did the "unpopularity list" contain the representative of the Vatra Romaneasca. He was left in the leadership.

After our removal General Ion Scrieciuciu came up to me and thanked me for my correct behaviour.

I did not at all regret my lawful removal. For I had sensed earlier (and had said as much in my interview with Cuvintul Liber) that our activity was not of much use, much less so since practical questions were resolved at the level of the mayoral offices.

But I had to admit that when I had accepted the office of County Vice-President, I had trusted that the cart of the country could be moved in the direction of democracy, towards the creation of equal rights.

But the results have been miserable, and we are still seeking the answer to the question. why?

On one occasion during these two days when I had the opportunity of talking with Voican Voiculescu, he asked me why the Vatra people detested me so much. "Why do they consider you an extremist, since with your intellect and mentality, you cannot be an extremist? "

I answered that the reason was definitely because I always aimed to react to their actions and it probably happened that I had on occasion frustrated their calculations.

I also recall the occasion during these days when he reprimanded Major Vasile Tira, reminding him, that he had already been told to put an end to the open incitement that had continued among Romanians. At the time, Voican Voiculescu added: "Look out, we can apply other methods too." Though unfortunately, we still await evidence of that resolve.

Indeed, this same Tira was the officer who directed the attack against András Sütö, but he has in the meantime even been promoted from major to lieutenant- colonel.

I told Voican Voiculescu of my desire to return to Bucharest with him and to tell the relevant people there the truth about the events in Tirgu Mures. My plan surprised him. He agreed, but rather reluctantly. It was from this reluctant "yes" that I drew the conclusion that he did not really want to hear the truth.

On the evening of March 23 the military refused to escort me home despite the fact that the most aggressive Vatra demonstration was taking place at that time (even Voican Voiculescu had been shouted down). The military's excuse to me was they were parachutists and had no car!

This set me thinking. For it was also characteristic of the times' mentality of

of the Romanian demonstrators that on the evening of March 23 they also demanded the resignation from the county administration of the Hungarian engineer Zoltán Kolozsváry, who had been elected as my successor that day. The essence was that there should be no Hungarian representative at all. Unfortunately, since then, these Vatra demands have one after another found a warm reception with the supreme Romanian leadership,

Next morning, on the 24th, I travelled into the countryside with my family.

There, I became aware of certain unfavourable developments. The police began inquiring about me at the homes of my young relatives. Bucharest Television also began broadcasting demands for punishment arising from the Tirgu Mures events. From the available evidence, I had to assume this meant the punishment of leading Hungarians.

I considered it important that the truth should be told about Tirgu Mures. And not knowing then the potential scope of the recriminations that might lie ahead, I decided to make use of my valid passport and to go abroad.

On March 30, I crossed the Romanian-Hungarian border in a black Dacia car in imitation of a formal government delegation and began my temporary stay abroad. I understand that three days later, my name appeared on the border guards' watch list.

### **QUESTIONS, including those I often ask myself:**

I. As a lawyer I cannot get around the question of what the penal responsibility of the planners and organisers of the violence of March should be.

The answer is Section 357 of the Penal Code, which defines the crime of genocide as follows.

Genocide: in order to destroy fully or in part a community or national, ethnic, racial or religious group, by committing some of the following actions:

- a) Murdering members of the community or group.
- b) Grave injury to the corporeal or spiritual state of the members of the community or group, etc...

The law punishes these by death and complete sequestration of property, or 15-20 years jail. (The death sentence was abolished, shortly after the revolution.)

And now comes the essence. The last paragraph of the section reads: An accord made for the sake of committing genocide is punished by 5--15 years' jail, the suspension of some rights, and partial sequestration of property.

123

II. Many people have asked whether the central Romanian leadership could have prevented the two nights of violence in Tirgu Mures (especially the second) if it had tried. Of course it could have done! First, if it had applied the full rigour of the law against the organisers and participants of the attack on the RMDSZ headquarters in Reghin on January 25 (This demonstration was accompanied by wild anti-Hungarian slogans - drinking Hungarian blood, etc.), then the invasion of Tirgu Mures two months later could not have occurred.

The government similarly did not act after the anti-Gypsy violence in Reghin on February 5.

And then, come the violence in Tirgu Mures, not only did the military and the police fail to intervene on March 19, but by their encouraging presence, their commanders behaved as accomplices!

On March 20 a single tank should have been placed across the road between Tirgu Mures and Reghin, and then the armed peasants could not have been transported to Tirgu Mures. Local police commanders simply did not carry out the order of Interior Minister Chitac to do this.

The Minister of Defence, General Stanculescu, himself acknowledged to the Budapest Television programme Panorama that he had known the Hungarians would demonstrate peacefully to protest the violence of March 19, that there would be many of them, but that he did not think the Romanians would attack. But many people warned him by phone about the danger of a Romanian attack, that it could be anticipated, and that the military should intervene. Why did he not act on the 20th?

It would really not have been such a big deal. On the morning of March 21 the soldiers were indeed able to intervene, and it was of course these order-restoring pictures that were broadcast to the West!

III. Why would the Romanian leadership need the spectre of bloody clashes between ethnic groups?

A) Because it was able to reactivate immediately the Securitate, the unemployed officers of which had not received their full pay for exactly three months, i.e. the period between the revolution and March 21.

(I recall that in early January, I proposed that the police building in Kogalniceanu Street be handed over to the health authorities so that the destroyed Clinic of Dental Surgery could once more be able to function. My idea was that the police could move into the empty Securitate building. To my proposal General Scrieciu, the County First Vice-President, answered that we should maybe wait a bit with the redistribution of buildings...)

B) Because violence made it possible to divert attention from the economic impotence of the government.

C) Because it offered a good occasion for the nationality question to be wielded again as a club in the political struggle.

124

D) Because they were able to arrest the democratisation process and begin the task of political regression,

After I drew up this list., an economist member of an old Transylvanian Romanian intellectual family suggested adding the following analysis of their motives:

E) The inducement of ethnic conflicts in Transylvania could also have been stimulated by leading sons of the old Romanian kingdom (Moldavia and Vallachia) as it existed prior to Versailles/Trianon. Their fear was that Transylvania would achieve a position of economic hegemony over their own regions. All other things being equal, foreign capital would naturally give priority to the already much more developed Transylvania, and Romania would find itself further cut into two. So they needed the tensions induced by ethnic conflicts to diminish Transylvania's attractiveness to outside investment.

IV. Why was the pogrom programmed for this date, and could it have been avoided if the Hungarians had conducted a cleverer policy?

Hungary was experiencing at that time a political interregnum or power vacuum ahead of elections at the end of March which were to finally replace the post-Communists with a democratically elected Western-oriented government. The resultant weakness there highly justified the choice of date for the pogrom. I believe this situation explains why the Budapest Foreign Ministry, the Hungarian leadership generally, did not react to the Romanian provocations earlier in March, specifically the oft-repeated charge that "the Hungarians want to take Transylvania back." Whatever complaints they did make were certainly not public, anyway.

To foster anti-Hungarian feelings, Romanian propaganda also used the wreaths with the Hungarian colours which were laid at the Hungarian embassy in Bucharest and at other sites on the occasion of the Hungarian National Day of March 15. Though this wreath-laying had the permission of the Romanian government.

But concerning the wisdom of our actions in these months, Hungarians also made a mistake when - in the euphoria of December - they did not immediately begin to bombard the "newly-liberated" Romanian mass media with materials which would have begun to correct the traditional Hungarian enemy-image that existed in the Romanian mind.

It is beyond doubt that Romanian Television, the newly-named Rompress news agency, and most of the press remained in the hands of the old Communist-Fascists who had served the Ceausescu regime. A change in the climate of ethnic distrust would therefore have been very difficult to achieve. But intensive, clever publicity - started immediately would certainly not have been wasted.

Be all this as it may, a singular historic opportunity to make peace between

Romanians and Hungarians was lost during these days. This peace is no less necessary now, though its achievement does not seem likely any time soon.

It is very difficult for an Hungarian to live today in Transylvania, where the victims

125

are imprisoned and humiliated while the culprits are glorified as national heroes and elevated to the best positions and offices. Let it be stressed, the situation of true Romanian democrats is also very difficult; they are also constantly threatened and terrorised by the agents of the Vatra. President Ion Iliescu and his government bear great historical responsibility for this situation.

On March 20, at the meeting of the Presidium of the National Council for Unity, Iliescu condemned the events of the 19th in Tirgu Mures and reported that 17 persons and the mayors of three Romanian villages were under arrest.

At a press conference on March 21, Prime Minister Roman declared that 38 persons, including two village mayors, had been arrested, the latter having led the (March 19) attack of armed peasants against the headquarters of the RMDSZ.

We also informed him of the far more serious events of the 20th. But instead of telling the truth about that, he and others like him embarked down the path of consciously misleading domestic and international opinion. Thus they ruined any remaining chance for peaceful coexistence in Romania, of achieving an acceptable Romanian-Hungarian relationship.

\*\*\*\*\*

Finally, let me print here open letters which I sent to Ion Manzatu, the then Vice-President of the Temporary Council of National Unity, and to the then leaders of Romania, Ion Iliescu and Petre Roman. Manzatu took over from Voican Voiculescu as leader of the committee investigating the Tirgu Mures events. Needless to say, this was not done at the request of the RMDSZ,

The report of the investigating committee did not condemn me, though in general it strayed far from the truth.

Later, however, Manzatu began to speak differently and far more harshly about my role, and this is why I wrote this open letter, in Romanian of course. The two Romanian newspapers in which he had accused me (Viitorul Romanesc - Bucharest, and Cuvintul Liber - Tirgu Mures) have not yet published my answer, although I mailed it a long time ago.

(Note that on the night of the violence, we knew of three dead. In subsequent days. that rose to six dead, then eight. One problem to do with this counting was those who were in a coma and considered unlikely to survive. The figure from the night of March 20 later settled down at five dead. Though when I wrote these letters, the fashion was still for six. I have retained the references to that incorrect figure as they appeared in this correspondence. Five is not so different from six; the moral remains the same. EK)

126

September 18, 1990

Dear Mr. Manzatu!

I was taken aback by the grave accusations which you levelled against me in the in the triple September 5-11 issue of the weekly Viitorul Romanesc. I was all the more surprised because (to quote from the contents of the editors introducing this item) "...the opinions published, needless to emphasise, are authorised by the high office that the person forming the opinions filled in the course of the investigation of the events of Tirgu Mures. "

To the question of whether you would be able to name the instigators (of the violence), you casually answered with the following:

"Instigators existed among the local population, as for instance a certain Kincses. And instigators existed in Budapest too. These sent messages through the Hungarian radio transmitter in Tirgu Mures, etc. "

I have studied the report which you have put together, and my full name - Előd Kincses - is mentioned on three occasions. But now here is it claimed that I have been an instigator.

You explain your new statements by "documents which I obtained subsequently" which were handed over by "official people, some wearing military uniform, others being policemen, others again representing the judiciary or the office of the attorney, and others being workers belonging to institutions in the surroundings."

First of all I declare that there does not exist a single document which would testify to my alleged instigating activity. And consequently you are quite simply not telling the truth!

I can not omit to mention the first instance when you publicly reappraised your originally formulated opinion(as it had appeared in the official report).

What I am thinking of is that when you returned home from your visit to the USA, on March 21 1990, at the meeting of the Provisional Council of National Unity, you praised the activities of Bishop László Tőkés in America. You said that when he was received by President Bush, László Tőkés presented a correct view, not the one which was published by the

international press, but rather one where he supported the measures promised by the Provisional Council of National Unity.

When Bishop Tökés the Honorary President of the RMDSZ, returned to Bucharest from his American trip, you offered the RMDSZ an electoral alliance with the Republican Party (of which you are the President).

You told the Bishop that you were fully sensitised to the Transylvanian question, and that in this you differed from those who come from the Regat [the pre-1918 Romania], because your mother, Margit Sipos [Hungarian name], came from Bobilna [a village in Transylvania].

127

After this electoral alliance failed to be established indeed after only a very few days, you initiated a very sharp attack in an election campaign television programme against Bishop Tökés. In addition you entered into an electoral alliance with the political party which stood "nearest" in your estimations to the RMDSZ: the "Partidul de Uniune Nationala a Romanilor din Transilvania" (PUNRT, the National Unity Party of Romanians of Transylvania) the political variant of the "cultural" organisation called Vatra Romaneasca!

I always insisted after the announcement of this electoral alliance that, on the grounds of incompatibility, you could not occupy the chairmanship of the committee investigating the events of Tirgu Mures. But in vain.

Of course, the truth about the events of Tirgu Mures is not what you, the ally of Vatra Romaneasca, "discovered" in your report. But in that report, at least, you did not accuse me of actual instigation.

This is an extremely serious accusation, because on March 20 six persons died owing to the situation in Tirgu Mures - four Hungarians and two Romanians. That's the same number that died in the revolution of December 21, when it was also four Hungarians and two Romanians.

Do you not consider this tragic coincidence alarming? The common struggle for the removal of the Ceausescuss and the democratisation of our country demanded exactly the same number of victims as the fratricide provoked by the forces that subsequently wanted to prevent the democratisation!

My ideas about which I wrote to President Iliescu as early as May 26, 1990, are still very topical, and therefore I am publishing them here. I wrote:

"I trust that you, as the chosen president of every Romanian citizen, will not tolerate the continuation of violations of the law in Tirgu Mures, where the victims of the pogroms are mistreated by the detectives, and are sentenced - although they are innocent, - while the real perpetrators are glorified.

The "documents" (illustrating my instigatory role) to which you (Manzatu)

refer, according to your own claim, come exactly from those whose official duty

it would have been to prevent the repetition of the pogrom of March 19 on the following night. They come from those who are engaged in the perversion of the truth.

I assume that you have no knowledge of the order which General Chitac, the former Interior Minister, issued on March 20 to Colonel Gheorghe Gambrea, the Mures County Police Comander. This order required adequate steps to be taken to separate the demonstrating groups, and adequate steps to prevent armed Romanian peasants from the Reghin district from again invading Tirgu Mures and attacking its peaceful population.

Do you know what Colonel Gambrea told me, even after the clashes in Tirgu Mures had actually begun? "What shall I do, I don't have enough men available?"

It is characteristic of the times that the colonel, after fulfilling his duty so "excellently"

128

on March 19 and 20 (just as he did at the time of the revolution, when we had six dead), has remained in his office and has even been appointed to the bureau of the Mures County Prefect.

In contrast, I, who was not even present in Tirgu Mures between 19:00 of March 19 and 16:00 of March 20, have been named as an instigator by you.

Do you know what instigating activity I conducted on the morning of March 20?

I calmed down the [Hungarian] population of the town of Odorheiul Secuiesc, who wanted to go to Tirgu Mures to defend the Hungarians against the attacks of the Romanian peasants who were armed and transported to the town for this purpose. Can you imagine what catastrophe would have occurred if I really were the instigator of the type that you present me? Without going into details, I can declare that the Hungarian-language transmission of Tirgu Mures Radio did not incite at all, but on the contrary, desperately asked (in Romanian) that the army and police should intervene to free the writer András Sütö and those others trapped with him inside the Hungarian party headquarters building.

In conclusion I declare that I am ready at any time for an open debate, with the presentation of documents and video-recordings of all that happened in Tirgu Mures. I have nothing to hide, and would like the viewers of Romanian Television to also finally learn the truth.

As long as the truth has not been told, I cannot live in safety in my own town, Tirgu Mures.

Yours sincerely,  
Előd Kincses, solicitor,

former Vice-President of the Mures County National Salvation Front  
and Provisional Council of National Unity

\*\*\*\*

Budapest, June 8, 1991

Dear Mr. President!  
Dear Mr. Prime Minister!

I, the undersigned, Előd Kincses of Ghiocelului-Hóvirág utca 10, Tirgu Mures, presently reside at Dániel ut 52, c/o István Szerdahelyi, Budapest 1125, Hungary.

Mr. President! One year has passed since I submitted my first memorandum to you, to which I have unfortunately received no reply. In addition, I now find that I have been charged with "incitement to commit genocide".

I am convinced that such violations of justice happen in Tirgu Mures because members of the Vatra are allowed to be prosecutors, judges and policemen. As a result,

129

members of this so-called cultural organisation are the ones who investigate those very criminal acts in which Vatra Romaneasca evidently played a role.

As a result, many innocent Hungarians and Gypsies have been convicted who did none other than resort to the right of self-defence on March 20.

On the other hand, the known murderers of our Hungarians on March 20 have not been tried.

Similarly, those who are responsible for permanently blinding András Sütő in the left eye and injuring 150 other ethnic Hungarians on March 19 have not been tried.

Similarly, those responsible for the December 21, 1989, murder of six freedom fighters in Tirgu Mures (Sándor Bodoni, Lajos Hegyi, Adrian Hidos, Ilie Muntean, Károly Pajk6, Ernő Tamás) have not been tried.

The fact that those who organized the March 19-20 terrorist attacks in Tirgu Mures and who committed numerous criminal acts and that those who, despite former Interior Minister Chitac's order, did not stop the further flow of people into the city, the fact that these people have not been charged or brought to trial, is obviously illegal and is causing severe tensions.

Perhaps you remember my own desperate attempts on March 19-20 to prevent violent ethnic clashes from occurring in the first place and then to try to stop them reoccurring.

I even appealed to you, Mr. President, to travel personally to Tirgu Mures, but you replied that given such a strained situation, you had no such intention.

As "payment" for the position I took, I have been chased out of my hometown and, along with Smaranda Enache, prevented from running for office in a totally illegal way.

Moreover, the Vatra anger is far from subsiding; rather, before the second congress of the Hungarian Democratic Alliance of Romania, the criminal investigation organs again subpoenaed me. They sent an oral message that I am being charged with incitement to commit genocide.

This measure is quite surprising in light of the fact that you, Mr. Prime Minister, unequivocally stated during a press conference on January 29, 1991 in Strasbourg that no charges would be brought against any of those who had been cited by reserve General Ioan Scrieciuciu. Those people being András Sütö myself and others.

Even the official report of the committee that investigated the Tirgu Mures events has not found me guilty of anything, so why then am I being persecuted?

I would like to contribute to identifying the real criminals and therefore I have enclosed a copy of (transportation) Order No. 1008 which Vatra Romaneasca filled out on March 15 so that they would be able to transport their followers to Tirgu Mures in time to carry out the attacks of March 19-20.

In closing, I repeat my request of one year ago: take the necessary steps to cease

130

these illegal investigations concerning me and ensure that I not be brought to trial and that I not be murdered by "unknown" persons.

As a lawyer, I know very well that under the Ceausescu regime citizens' requests and observations did not receive the response within the 30-day time limit required by law. I trust that your regime will adhere to these regulations and that I will receive a response as specified by law.

Respectfully,

Előd Kincses

131