

THE WHITE BOOK
**ATROCITIES AGAINST
HUNGARIANS**

IN THE AUTUMN OF 1944
(IN TRANSYLVANIA, ROMANIA)

RMDSZ (DAHR) KOLOZSVÁR, 1995

by

Mária Gál Attila Gajdos Balogh Ferenc Imreh

Published originally in Hungarian by the Political Section of the
Acting Presidium of the
DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE OF HUNGARIANS IN ROMANIA
(DAHR)

Publisher: Barna Bodó

Editor: Mária Gál

Lector: Gábor Vincze

Corrector: Ilona N. Vajas

Technical editor: István Balogh

Printed by: Écriture Press Printing House

Manager in charge: Gyula Kirkósa

Technical manager: György Zoltán Vér

Original title:

Fehér könyv az 1944. őszi magyarellenes atrocitásokról.

Foreword

75 years have passed since Trianon, the humiliating and unfair event that has been a trauma for us, Hungarians ever since. Even though we had 22 years at our disposal for analyzing and defining political and social consequences, the next disastrous border adjustment once again driven us to the losers' side.

Since then, the excruciating questions have just multiplied. When was the anti-Hungarian nature of the second universal peace agreement decided upon? What were the places and manners of this fatal agreement, which, although unacceptable to us, seemed to be irrevocable?

Some questions can probably never be answered. Devious interests have managed to protect certain archives with non-penetrable walls, or even succeeded in annihilating them. Other vital events have never really been recorded. Lobbying procedures are not the invention of our age...

State authorities could easily ban prying into some delicate affairs if special cases – like ours – occurred. There seemed to be no possibility for answering the question of the bloodshed in the autumn 1944 in North Transylvania. The very formulation of the question being, even in a narrow, scientific formulation, declared as hostile to the state, there were no possibilities for arriving at any conclusion, any historical analysis of it. No private answers were allowed either.

We experienced the same in 1990, in a better political and social climate, when we tried to bring the truth out into the open.

Nevertheless, we continue to fight for our elementary rights. Let it be said once and for all: Transylvania's Hungarians are neither bloodthirsty, nor xenophobic nor fascist. They are not barbarians. The nature of our "different kind" does not rest in such things. Differences in the tradition of various ethnic communities could easily be bridged, if only the political powers involved did not prevent it.

The historical truth should be voiced in matters that were for decades only used for manipulations of government-level nationalism. It has to be said so that we should finally get rid of our awkwardness, our political good manners hammered into us which tied our speaking out loud to a special permission almost as a conditioned reflex.

Let our truth be finally told.

Should this fact raise arguments from the part of those, who are not at ease with other people's truth, well, it is only natural. A clarifying argument of the two sides has long been needed. Silent acceptance of never-ending contrition has for seven decades been the condition for us to be recognized as truthful. Yet if our severe judges considered our repentance insufficient, they have offered us an extra load for our own grievances as well.

This White Book contains issues banned for 45 years. We have gathered everything we considered as being professionally relevant and within our reach for illustrating a chapter of history that has officially not been exposed yet.

The book is a professional shop-work. Its only political implication consists in the decision taken at the Brassó (Brasov) conference of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR), by which the organization decided to launch, generate and develop the process of historical explanation. We offer this work to the national and international professional or political public opinion as the first product of this process.

Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), May 1995

Barna Bodó

On the Chess-Board of the Great Powers

By the time of the birth of national identities, the centuries old Hungarian-Romanian coexistence in Transylvania bore some minor conflicts. Nevertheless there was no relevant discord between the two countries until the 1920 Trianon peace treaty. Delimiting correct ethnical borders and creating national states have been emphasized as primary intention of the Paris peace-makers. Yet, due to its mixed populace, the task of determining state borders on a strict basis of nationality proved to be impossible in East-Central Europe. The appearance of an ethnic minority of some proportions on the territory of one or both of the two countries would have inevitably occurred with the Transylvanian border planning. At the end, the conference, that is the Great Powers, have favored Romania to Hungary.

The Trianon verdict could never be accepted either by Hungary, or by Hungarians in Transylvania. Although Hungary lost two thirds of her territory, the rapidly spreading revisionist attempts, later incorporated into state policy, were mainly concentrated primarily upon Transylvania. Between the two world wars this historical province continually bore special importance in Hungarian politics and public opinion. The Hungarian minority in Transylvania managed to conform to the new reality much more easily. After two years of passive expectance for some miracle to happen, Hungarians tried to reorganize their life under the new border circumstances. Confiding in the promises of the Gyulafehérvár (Alba Julia) agreements¹, they were mostly driven by existential needs and were drawing upon the tradition of co-existence in the region. Formerly a state-forming element, minority then, Transylvanian Hungarians rapidly became one of the most active political subjects of post-WWI Romania.

Romania found herself in a rather difficult position as well. Having neither democratic traditions nor those of minority nationalities, she could hardly put up with the Peace Treaty requirements. The Transylvanian power succession led to discrimination at governmental policy level, and to local anti-minority atrocities. Local abuse was mainly based on the “eye for an eye” principle. Victimizers claimed to pay back atrocities suffered by Romanians when in minority. Although it had taken several human lives, the power succession by the end of the First World War had by far not been so cruel, so intentional and so “xenophobic” as the ones that came 22 and 26 years later. The spreading of fascist

ideology had its well-determined part in the cruelties of the Second World War. Yet the main reason for the atrocities in Transylvania was the fact that the ethnic structure of Transylvania became, or at least seemed to become, an increasingly determinant factor in international politics.

With European borders undergoing a process of change², the main goal of Romanian foreign policy by the end of the thirties and in the beginning of the forties was to preserve the territory earned in Paris. Hungarian foreign policy on the other hand had above all pursued the acquisition – re-acquisition – of territories. Both Germany and the Soviet Union continually exploited the two conflicting interests. Germany – until the end of the war – and the Soviet Union – until the signing of the 1947 peace treaty – had used Transylvania as a trump card against both countries. On August 30, 1940, the Second Vienna Verdict transferred Northern Transylvania to Hungary. The operation constituted the re-acquisition of a 43,000 square kilometers territory for Hungary. Almost half of the two million inhabitants of the region were Romanian, while more than half million Hungarians remained in Southern Transylvania. Neither of the two governments and peoples were content with the situation.

As a consequence of the Soviet ultimatum³ of the June 26, 1940, Romania entered the anti-Soviet war on the German side right from its beginning. Hungary had no territorial claims against the Soviet Union. This is how Miklós Kállay, Hungarian prime minister (1942-44), wrote about Hungary's joining the war in his memoirs: *“Actually, the only reason for us to join the war, to send our armies to the Russian front was the fact that the Romanians were already fighting at full power. Our passivity would have affected the benevolence of the Germans and would have endangered Transylvania... The Germans had warned us, saying that a situation of Romanians fighting and Hungarians not would have made it morally impossible for Hitler not to modify his stance in the Transylvanian issue for the benefit of the Romanians.”*

Writing about Germany's satellite states⁴, John Montgomery, US ambassador in Hungary from 1933 to 1941, who, unlike his predecessor Nicholas Roosevelt, sympathized with this remote country, was of opinion that the Hungarian government had no other choice but to join the anti-Soviet war. Public opinion was centered on Transylvania to such an extent, that no Hungarian government dared to oppose it. Irrespective of its political orientation, even at the costs of having the country transformed into a German military base, any Hungarian government would have accepted Hitler's eventual promise to re-annex Transylvania to

Hungary.

Between May and June 1941, Chief of Staff Henrik Werth forwarded three petitions to the Hungarian Prime Minister arguing that the fulfillment of revisionist claims depended on Hungary's entering the war against the Soviet Union.⁵ Miklós Horthy, Hungary's head of state of the time, has written the same in his memoirs. As Romania had already joined the war, Hungary, according to Regent Horthy, risked losing by further hesitation. Instead of securing Transylvania for herself, she could easily lose even the territory she had gained by the Vienna Verdict.

The reasons for Romania's joining the war were almost the same.

The Romanian-Russian conflict was deeply rooted in the history of the two countries. By not recognizing the borders set by the Trianon Peace Treaty, the Soviet Union aggravated the situation and determined the attitude of Eastern European communist parties as well.⁶ Romanian diplomacy was also aware of the fact that beside wanting to annex Bessarabia, the Soviet government urged Hungary to set forth her territorial claims against Romania.⁷ It is true, though, that on February 22, 1939, Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Gafencu, had informed the Reich of the Black Sea Treaty the Soviets had offered Romania. He did not deny that Romania was prepared to accept the treaty as long as her relations to Germany was not cleared.⁸ Moscow's leadership tried to win the Romanians over even after Romania and Germany had signed their commercial agreement. Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Litvinov acknowledged to the Romanian ambassador the willingness of the Soviet Union to support Romania in case of an eventual German invasion. By Turkish mediation, the King of Romania tried to obtain a Romanian-Soviet non-aggression treaty during August. The Allies had to postpone the negotiations of the French-British-Soviet alliance in Moscow on August 17, as Romania and Poland refused to allow the Soviet army free passage through their territories.⁹

In a short while, changes took place in Romania's foreign and domestic policies. In the spring of 1940, King Charles (Karl) II announced a program of national reconciliation. Imprisoned "legionaries" were set free, moreover, they were even allowed to join the government. The Iron Guard prospered, while the neutral policy of Armand Călinescu was replaced with a directly German-oriented one. On July 1, after losing Bessarabia, liberal Prime Minister Tătărescu gave up Anglo-French guarantees, and three days later he submitted his resignation as prime minister. Ion Gigurtu and his pro-Nazi government took over his position.

Knowing of the Hungarian and Russian standpoints, King Charles II turned to Germany for further guarantees. Romanian-Hungarian negotiations began on August 16 at Turnu-Severin, Romanian-Bulgarian negotiations on the 19th at Craiova. (Although he has never made it official, Molotov was ready to support Hungarian claims against Transylvania even when Hungary and Romania were negotiating at Turnu-Severin.) As bilateral negotiations ended in failure, the Romanian government invited Germany and Italy to act as arbitrators.¹⁰

Germany counted on the human and natural resources as well as on the strategic position of both countries. By dividing Transylvania, she committed Hungary to the German cause and managed to have Romania under control as well.

On September 4, 1940, Ion Antonescu became head of the Romanian Cabinet. He established his military government in ten days' time. Romania was declared a National Legionary country.

The leading Romanian political and common thought of the time welcomed the attack on the Soviet-Union. Bessarabia had already been transferred to the Soviets for a year, and Northern Transylvania had been re-annexed by Hungary ten months previously. The mutilation of Greater Romania declared as eternal for 22 years caused nation-wide convulsion and uncertainty. Propaganda between the two World Wars laid great emphasis on idealizing national glory as an outcome of historic justice. In the meantime the mystic-fanatical legionary ideology that supported the messianic aspirations of the Romanians had reached great proportions and grew into a kind of religious fervor. Anti-Bolshevist "crusades" were among the main goals of this disguised fanaticism. Under the circumstances, Antonescu only had two choices: either to give up the separated territories, or to fight in the front line on the "victorious" German troops. Neutrality would have created serious political opposition in the country. Not to wage war against Bolshevism would have offended the Iron Guard, while not to militate for Northern Transylvania gained by the government of 1918 and lost by Antonescu's Cabinet in 1940, would have offended Maniu and his followers.

Hungary had the same motivation: a desire to prove her worth. According to what Moscow declared to the Bárdossy government, the Soviet Union had no territorial claims against Hungary. Moreover, she regarded Hungarian territorial claims in Romania as well-grounded as the Soviet claims for Bessarabia. The Soviet Union wished to maintain good relations with Hungary, and was inclined to support her at an eventual Peace Conference. The promises of Soviet diplomacy during those turbulent days were

focused upon the issue of preventing further satellite states – as Hungary – from joining the war. On June 23, 1941, the aftermath of the German attack, Molotov let Hungarian Ambassador Kristóffy in Moscow know that the Soviet-Union would guarantee Hungary's existing borders; furthermore, Molotov promised to support Hungarian territorial claims in Romania if Hungary stayed neutral.¹¹ But in those critical days when entering the war and the issue of Transylvania were at stake, the guarantees of a Soviet-Union threatened by the seemingly unbeatable Wehrmacht, did not count for much in East-Central Europe. Both Kállay and Horthy mentioned the Kristóffy-telegram with a certain historic remorse in their memoirs. Horthy described the situation as if László Bárdossy (Prime Minister at the time when Hungary entered the war) kept the Soviet guarantee secret from the Hungarian government and the Regent until the final decision was taken. There are no proofs for this, yet taking the conservative and anti-Soviet stand of the two politicians and the fact that the country was threatened by the Soviet Union, the results might probably have been the same even if Molotov's promise had been known.

The Soviet attitude towards Hungary in the following period was mainly determined by the fact that the Soviet Union viewed Hungary's entering the war as unjustified. Soviet diplomacy was consistent in regarding Hungarian revisionist successes as not valid after Hungary had joined the German attack. By 1942, when Romania and Hungary fought with equally serious forces on the side of the Germans on the Soviet front, British Foreign Minister Eden, had already informed Washington of the Soviet standpoint regarding Hungary. On Eden's visit to Moscow, Stalin declared he would compensate Romania for the loss of Bessarabia by offering Transylvania, to wit the "territory occupied by Hungary" in exchange.¹² On June 9, 1942, Molotov informed Benes who lived in London at that time, that the Soviet Union did not recognize the Munich Decision and the resulting border changes as valid. According to what Molotov wrote in his letter of June 7, 1943, addressed to the British government, the Soviet Union considered the German arbitration verdict of Vienna of August 30, 1940, that re-annexed Northern Transylvania to Hungary as not entirely justified.¹³

The Western Allies had their own individual policies for East-Central Europe as well, but these strategies were subordinated to after-war stability interests of the Great Powers. When the war began, the United States of America and their idealistic president, Roosevelt, failed to recognize their European interests and

responsibilities. They rejected Soviet demands as unacceptable, resented policies centered on areas of influence, and held on to the principles of the Atlantic Charter. These principles stated that every nation had the right to choose its own form of government.

Great Britain and Churchill were much more indulgent in their relation with the Soviet Union. The giant Soviet army terrified the British, the only one in Europe to face the monster German military machine. Britain was aware the Soviets had, as early as in the fourth week of the war, already formulated ambitious claims although the very existence of the Soviet Union was at stake then. After the Stalingrad victory the British expected Stalin to have his pretensions growing along with his army advancing in Europe.¹⁴

Four weeks after the invasion of the Soviet Union, Great Britain promised firearms to the Russian army. But Stalin had been from the very beginning more concerned with the political implications of the forced alliance than with material aid. Instead of arms, he wished to negotiate the issue of future borders and areas of influence. In December 1941, after the above mentioned visit of the British Foreign Minister to Moscow, Stalin declared to the Allied Powers that the main Soviet military goal was to restore the borders established in the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. By this he meant to re-annex Bessarabia and gobble up Eastern Poland, the Baltic region and certain Finnish territory as well. Stalin signaled further that he viewed the Western part of East-Central Europe as pertaining to his area of interest. He was of the opinion that a division of Europe into Soviet and British areas of influence would be the best solution. He proposed the signing of a secret document on territorial guarantees. The British and the US leaders rejected his offer arguing that problematic territorial issues were to be decided upon at a new Peace Conference, to be conducted on a more correct basis than the 1919-20 ones.¹⁵

Through the Stalingrad victory the Soviet Union became an international power of full rights. The US delegation at the Quebec conference¹⁶ had already been aware of after-war Europe's special characteristics. They could foresee that after the defeat of Germany the Soviet Union was to become the greatest power and political influence in the region, and no one would be capable to resist her terrifying military power. They reached the conclusion that the United States had their best interest in gaining the benevolence of the Soviet Union and in securing her participation in the Japanese war. According to the US strategy, the fate of Japan and of the Far East was directly related to the Soviet influence in East-Central Europe.¹⁷ The East-Central European strategy of the State Department had

been modified accordingly.

The after-war economic and political alliance of the East-Central European states was still considered as a certainty at the first meeting in January 1942 of the State Department's Advisory Committee. They were thinking of a loose alliance based on economic and security principles. This alliance was assumed to dissolve lingering social tensions that characterized the region. In addition, it was expected to ensure democratic conditions and to offer the East-Central European states the strength to withstand possible German or Soviet aggressions.

The Americans elaborated their strategy under the guidance of Eastern European politicians. The proposals forwarded by Polish Sikorski, Czech Benes, Austrian Otto von Habsburg and Hungarian Eckhardt and Pelényi were consulted. By the end of 1942, however, it became clear that the Soviet Union regarded East-Central Europe as her sphere of interest and followed all regional aspirations in the area with great suspicion. Although they stated that the planned East-Central European Confederation was only possible with Soviet consent, the Americans hoped they could persuade Moscow that a subjugated East-Central Europe divided by inner tensions did nothing but harm to the Soviet Union. A prosperous and politically stable confederation created by the Western democracies and the Soviet Union together would be far more advantageous for the Soviet Union, too, especially in matters of security.¹⁸

Moscow proved to be unyielding. In his above-mentioned letter of 1943, Molotov made it clear: his country was against such a confederation and objected to Hungary and Austria being part of it. Referring to the cordon sanitaire once set against the Soviet Union, the Soviets at the Moscow conference of the Foreign Ministers rejected the confederation concept of the Foreign Office. In Teheran, they stressed it once more: they did not welcome the union of Hungary and Austria, nor did they allow any other forced alliance in the area. After the Teheran conference, the Western Allies gave free way to the Soviets. The question was not any more whether or not to divide East-Central Europe, but how and where to divide it, where to draw the demarcation line. As the Western states had only few, strategically rather indirect interests in the area, they had finally accepted to have the East-Central European nations under Soviet influence, no matter how terrified these nations were.

The Yalta meeting of Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt did not much more than verify the already existing situation. Although it was viewed as determining the after-war fate of the world for decades, the conference was actually of much less significance. Professionals are only arguing upon which side succeeded in

attaining greater victory. British researchers consider Yalta as Stalin's success while the US scientists – the defenders of the Rooseveltian traditions – declare it for a US diplomatic victory. The basic conflict between aggressive Soviet and principle-based US policies ended with the Americans capitulating. The USA triumphed over Great Britain but by accepting the Yalta compromise they had failed at the same time to defeat Stalin.¹⁹ Soviet military presence in Europe grew to frightening proportions by the time of the conference, January 1945. (The Red Army just had temporarily stopped its advance to assault Budapest). It became obvious that with such military power, and without any powerful European opponent, the Soviets could easily break their former promises as there was nobody to stop their advance. For the time being it seemed Stalin was ready to allow Anglo-American influence to extend over Western Europe, Greece and the Far East in exchange for having his Eastern European interests secured.

From the US stance, this was the fatal point for the future of Eastern Europe. The region was meant to be traded for the Far East. Churchill had done everything in his power to distract the US attention from British positions and to impede an eventual Soviet-US agreement. Almost imperceptibly, he influenced Roosevelt in taking his decision. *“A ticklish game began, the stakes of which were hidden in the mist of the future. As a direct consequence, Eastern Europe found herself overwhelmed by insecurity. The willingness for compromise was continuously crossed by conflicts of antagonistic interests. Creating enmity, the pre-runner of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States, was among the greatest successes of Churchill's career even though those two powers wanted nothing more between 1942 and 1945 than to come to an agreement.”*²⁰

Arthur Schlesinger has concisely formulated the essence of the Yalta conference, considered as determining the fate of the after-war world: *Yalta was an unsuccessful universalistic attempt for world government (an attempt that due to structural reasons had no chance to succeed), yet it had both preliminaries and consequences in modern political history.*²¹

How the US view of Transylvania did change in line with the European military success of the Soviets. The Territory Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee had no ambitions to radically re-arrange political borders. They correlated their basic principle of ethnic correctness with the concept of minimal change, taking into consideration circumstances of security and economy. They did not apply the principle of reprisals even against Germany

and Japan – the countries which unleashed the war –, and they considered the satellite states – Finland, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania – as victims rather than aggressors.

The Territory Subcommittee dealt with the Transylvanian issue three times in 1943, but they never succeeded to reach an agreement. Transylvania ranked between the five most urging issues of Europe, yet every proposal submitted had still failed to fulfill all claims. The reinstatement of the Trianon borders was unacceptable as it would have meant one and a half million Hungarians living under Romanian rule. The restoration of pre-Trianon borders was also out of the question, as that would have driven three million Romanians under Hungarian rule. This variant would also have opposed the principle of minimal change. The fate of one million Romanians in Northern Transylvania and matters of economy and transport could be raised against the Vienna variant. The concept of an autonomous Transylvanian state had certain appeal, but there was fear that the majority of both nationalities would wish to attach Transylvania to their respective mother country. No decision was taken, as meetings did not reach any agreement. As a result, the decision taking was always postponed to the next session.

Despite former promises, the Territory Subcommittee failed to discuss the Transylvanian issue again. Its declaration, issued on March 2, 1943, was the last one on the matter in which two of the four proposals were emphasized. According to the first, Transylvania belonged to Romania, with the proviso that the Székely (i.e. Hungarian) territory was given autonomy and the Western borders were modified or even pushed a little further to the East, according to language limits, for the benefit of Hungary. The second variant conceived Transylvania as an autonomous member of a would-be Danubian or East European confederation or as a Romanian-Hungarian con-dominium.²²

The two standpoints were modified according to changes in the international political and military situation. The solution of an autonomous Transylvanian state became a possible but not recommended variant by April 1944. The Székely autonomy and the Arad-Szatmár borderline (145,000 square kilometers, 1 million 98 thousand inhabitants) were presented as a final solution. The securing of the Székely autonomy was not included in a document of early May (5 months before the Romanian breakaway), merely the transfer of the Arad-Szatmár border zone to Hungary remained. This was the variant submitted by President Roosevelt to the participants of the second Quebec conference between September 11-16. (The Romanian-Soviet armistice was signed on September 12). This small border strip got thinner and thinner from 1945 on.

At the peace conference session, held on August 14, 1946, the Hungarian delegates requested the transfer of 22,000 square kilometers. The Americans advised Hungarian Foreign Minister Gyöngyösi to ask for only 4,000 square kilometers.

The request of the Hungarian government was last discussed on September 5. The Americans did not support the Hungarian claim. Consequently the Transylvanian issue was neither decided in the Peace Treaty of February 10, 1947, nor it was influenced by the Romanians' switching over to the side of the Allied Powers on August 23, 1943.

Mária Gál

Notes

¹Point III/1 of the resolutions on union passed at Gyulafehérvár states: Comprehensive national freedom is to be guaranteed for every nation living together. Every nation has the right for education and government in its own mother language and for public administration managed by officials elected from its own bosom. Every nationality is to take part in legislative bodies and national government in proportion of its number.

²Germany annexed Austria on March 11-12, 1938, and she occupied the Sudetenland on October 1-10. The First Vienna Verdict adjudicated Northern Transylvania and Upper Northern Hungary to Hungary on November 2.

Germany occupied the entire Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939, and Hungary re-annex Sub-Carpathia (Ruthenia). On April 7, Italy overrun Albania, and Germany started the invasion of Poland on September 1.

On April 9, 1940, Germany occupied Denmark and Norway and the Netherlands surrendered unconditionally on May 14, and Belgium on May 28.

³On June 28, 1940, the Soviet government presented an ultimatum to Romania on the evacuation of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina.

⁴John F. Montgomery: Hungary, the unwilling Satellite, New York, 1947

⁵Yehuda Lahav: A szovjet Erdély-politika (The Soviet Transylvania-policy) (1944-1946), Múltunk (Our Past), 1989, No. 3-4, pp 134

⁶The 5th Congress of the Communist International adopted the slogan "from self-government to secession" thereby calling the communists of the disannex territories – Yugoslavia, Romania and Czechoslovakia – to fight for the democratic revision of the Trianon borders.

⁷Yehuda Lahav's quoted work

⁸Marea conflagratie a secolului XX, Editura Politică, Bucuresti, 1971

⁹ib., pp 76

¹⁰Sándor (Gellért: Magyar diplomaták Moszkvában (Hungarian Diplomats in Moscow), Új látóhatár (New Horizon), 1975/II

Marea conflagratie a secolului XX, Editure Politică, Bucuresti, 1971, pp 126

¹¹Several works have been dealing with Hungarian-Soviet diplomatic relations in the early period of WWII: Andor Gellért: Magyar diplomaták Moszkvában (Hungarian Diplomats in Moscow), 1934-1941, Új látóhatár (New Horizon), 1975/1; Gyula Juhász: A második bécsi döntés (The Second Vienna Verdict), Külpolitika (Foreign Policy), 1978/5; Yehuda Lahav: A szovjet Erdély-politika (The Soviet Transylvania-policy) (1944-1946), Múltunk (Our Past), 1989/3-4; Islamov Tofik: Erdély a szovjet külpolitikában a második világháború alatt (Transylvania in the Soviet foreign policy during WWII), Múltunk (Our Past), 1994/1-2

¹²Ignác Romsics: A State Department és Magyarország (The State Department and Hungary), Valóság (Reality) 1999/11, pp 54

¹³ib., pp 55

¹⁴Ferenc Fejtő: A népi demokráciák története (The History of People's Democracies), Magvető Publishing House, Budapest, Magyar Füzetek (Hungarian Brochures), Paris, 1991, Vol. 1, p 5

¹⁵Ignác Romsics' quoted work, pp 37

¹⁶British and US politicians made a decision on landing in Europe at the Quebec conference in August 1943

¹⁷Ferenc Fejtő's quoted work, p 6

¹⁸Ignác Romsics' quoted work, pp 38

¹⁹Ferenc Fehér –Ágnes Heller: Jalta után (After Yalta), Kossuth Publishing House, 1990

²⁰Ferenc Fejtő's quoted work, pp 13

²¹Ferenc Fehér –Ágnes Heller's quoted work, p 6

²²I have taken out and compacted the concepts and proposals of the Advisory Committee from Ignác Romsics' paper, The State Department and Hungary (A State Department és Magyarország). The files of the Advisory Committee provided primary sources of the paper, which was handed over to the US National Archives in 1970, and made available for researchers in 1974 under the name of Notter File. "Its significance is unique, and its value simply inestimable", writes Romsics in the preface of his study.

Transylvania – or the Greater Part of It

By the summer of 1944, every soberly thinking politicians both in Romania and Hungary realized that Germany had lost the war. The chances for a breakaway from Germany were considered on various political levels in both countries. Nevertheless the Communist ideal the Soviet Union stood for, was unacceptable for Hungarian and Romanian leading politicians. They could only consider the possibility of reaching an agreement with the Western Allies and surrender for them.

Through the Kállay-government Horthy tried to contact the Western Allies from 1942 on several times and in several venues, including Switzerland, Stockholm and Ankara as well. After the German capitulation at Stalingrad, Kállay and the Hungarian conservative politicians expected Britain to occupy Hungary. Accordingly, they tried to obtain a peace agreement with the Western Allies. On September 9, 1943, after several exploratory talks with the Western powers, Hungary accepted the armistice conditions. According to them, she had to gradually reduce the economic and military support offered to Germany and concurrently, by the time the Allies reaching the Hungarian border, her army would have turned against German troops. The agreement was theoretically come in force by September. Actually, it depended on Western operations, on the planned Balkan landing and on the Allies reaching the Hungarian borders before the Soviet Armies. By the end of 1943 it became clear: neither landing on the Balkan, nor advance on the Italian front in Europe were expected. There was only one chance left for Hungary and the states of the area to break away: come to an agreement with the Soviet Union. István Bethlen (Hungary's Premier in 1921-31) raised the possibility in December 1943, but Kállay, although was aware of the circumstances, could not accept it. "István, I am not going to be the leader of Muscovites", replied the Hungarian Prime Minister, otherwise famous for his shuttlecock policy. Beside his strong anti-Communist feelings, his attitude was influenced by a certain diplomatic sternness and by his fear of German occupation.¹ Despite of all this, neither his government, nor the opposition made any serious preparations for prevent a probable German intervention.

When the Germans invaded Hungary on March 19, 1944,

the Regent and the government showed no sign of resistance. Under threat, Horthy appointed Döme Sztójay Prime Minister on the 21st. The government of Sztójay, who also became known as the Hungarian Quisling, readily met all demands of the occupiers. They dissolved left wing and opposition parties, purged the state administration and the army, and began to round up Jews and authorized their deportation. By sending further divisions to the front, they raised the number of Hungarian soldiers fighting on the German side to 300,000. They increased food and raw material transports to Germany and bore some of the costs of German occupation. István Bethlen, hiding from the Germans during these days, wrote: *“The tribulations of Hungary have just started now. We were on our own with no one to support us, persecuted by friend and enemy as well. We were heading toward our annihilation by leaps and bounds.”* ²

Helplessly watching the events, Hungary and her Regent were unable to organize the breakaway. The Hungarian political leadership made the first steps towards this direction only after August 23, Romania's breakaway. In line with the logic of years long war policy, the successful Romanian coup made the breakaway compulsory for Hungary. Regent Miklós Horthy relieved Sztójay of his post on August 29. He called on Colonel-General Géza Lakatos to form the breakaway government. In the meantime he secretly negotiated with the leaders of the left-wing Hungarian Front, Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, Árpád Szakasits, László Rajk and Imre Kovács. Unfortunately, he was unable to offer arms to the masses that stood behind them, nor did he appointed any left-wing politicians in the Moscow peace delegation.

During his short government, Lakatos tried to realize the most urgent changes. He relieved extreme right politicians of their ministerial and county administration positions, and secured immunity for the Jews against German claims. Although he tried to lessen some of the former decisions, but there was no significant change in foreign policy he could demonstrate. He failed to create national concord – compromise – necessary for the great event.

There were two groups of conflicting feelings and concepts in the general staff of the Hungarian army. One of them gathered around Chief of Staff Henrik Wert and Döme Sztójay, and they were pro-German unconditionally. The other group, composed of mostly Transylvanian generals, the so called nationalists, like Lajos Dálnoki Veress, Béla Miklós, Vilmos Nagy, József Bajnóczi and Géza Lakatos himself, who wished to preserve Hungary's sovereignty even by opposing the Germans.

The structure of the Cabinet reflected the two concepts. Two

ministers were Veessenmayer's³ people while the army was under the Regent's command. The Germans found out every move of Lakatos at an instant. Doomed to fail from the very beginning, the poorly equipped and exhausted Hungarian army launched an attack on Southern Transylvania on September 5, 13 days after the Romanian breakaway. Wishing to prevent the Soviets from advancing at all costs, the Germans sent the Second Hungarian Army against Southern Transylvania. By occupying it, they intended to defend Northern Transylvanian positions along the Carpathians. But the Red Army was already heading northward through the straights of the Southern Carpathians, while the promised significant German support failed to arrive. The exhausted Hungarian troops run out of their last resources and could withstand the Soviet-Romanian counter-attack only for a few days.

Transylvanian politicians was quite aware of the fact that Hungarian minority civilians were going to pay for the passing glory of the two-week Hungarian rule of Southern Transylvania. *"Béla Teleki stated openly at the Crown's Council of September 10 that as Germany had lost the war, Hungarian and German troops were soon to be chased out from Transylvania. On behalf of the Hungarians in Transylvania the Regent was asked not to sacrifice North Transylvanian Hungarians, not to leave them as a burnt-out, bombed and dispossessed prey for another Romanian occupation. Teleki suggested to declare Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) an open city (this meant Hungarians would not try to defend it) and to retreat from Transylvania as soon as possible. The proposal was immediately and vehemently supported by Count István Bethlen and adopted by the Council as well."* ⁴ They managed to spare Kolozsvár from destruction, but they could not stop the second offensive in Southern Transylvania that was launched at Arad on September 13.

The General Staff of the army did not recognize the necessity of the breakaway. The Regent kept trying to circumvent the Soviets to the last minutes, thus the Hungarian peace delegation left for Moscow only on September 28. But only a preliminary armistice agreement was signed on October 11, and the better-organized extreme right, supported by the Germans, prevented the government from making concrete actions. Putting Hungarian nazi (arrow-cross) Ferenc Szálasi in the post of prime minister was the last trump card of the Germans, which they exploited from October 16 to the end. Horthy and Lakatos were interned. On November 4, Szálasi took on the previously non-existent title of National Leader, namely he unified the functions of President and of Prime Minister. Using the

power he longed for, Szálasi transformed Hungary into a theatre of war and gave free way to pillage and cruelties.

The failed breakaway attempt in October ended all hopes of the Northern Transylvanian Hungarian minority. Many Transylvanian soldiers deserted the retreating Hungarian army, trying to await the end of the war at home. Béla Teleki and Béla Demeter, and other senior members of the political elite of the Transylvanian Party, realized “the only way-out for the Hungarian minority in Transylvania was to approach left-wing organizations”. They contacted local left-wing leaders by the end of the summer and managed to co-operate for rescuing the Hungarian minority and its spiritual values, despite all differences between their political views. The majority of Transylvanians had no illusions on territorial affiliation.

More successfully though, Romania’s breakaway happened nearly the same way. Alike Kállay, Horthy and István Bethlen, Maniu, Brațianu and their companions were conservative, anti-Communist and British-oriented politicians. Still, Maniu discussed the formation of a National Front with local Communist leaders in the summer of 1943. They planned to form a wide national coalition to overthrow Antonescu's military regime and to start armistice negotiations with the Western Allies. Claiming Bessarabia back, Maniu intended to declare the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact invalid, prevented the parties to reach an agreement. The Peasant Party leader [Maniu] did not expect Western Powers to give up their economic interests in Romania – mostly petroleum during the war – for the benefit of the Soviets. By the time the Red Army was approaching the borders, Maniu sent Prince Stirbei to Cairo to discuss the conditions of an eventual breakaway with Western parties. Antonescu was informed on the event and raised no arguments against it. But by the summer of 1944, the Anglo-American diplomacy was already aware of Soviet interests and had no intentions of interfering into the Soviet influence areas. The most important armistice condition transmitted to the Prince demanded Romanian troops to capitulate to the Red Army, as the Soviets ranked for the military authority of the area.⁵ Antonescu firmly rejected the offer. Maniu hesitated as long as the military successes of generals Malinovsky and Tolbuhin opened the way towards Romania.

The King and his Council, the Communist-oriented Patriotic Front, led by Groza, the National Liberal Party and the National Peasant Party finally reached an agreement at the very last minute. On the evening of August 23, the young King of Romania made Antonescu arrested and announced the end of the anti-Soviet war in

a declaration made on air. General Satanescu's government was formed during the same night. Although the cabinet was mostly included soldiers, all layers of Romanian political life, except the extreme right, were represented in the government. As they counted on its co-operation, Soviets recognized the national government. Romanian Communists and their allies were far from being able to form a government, as they were not respected neither by civilians, nor by the army. The Romanian Communist Party had one more flaw. Double oppression between the two World Wars radicalized national minorities, consequently there was a sound working class tradition in the industrially more developed regions: the Bánát and Transylvania. The ideals of social democracy and communism had mostly spread among minority nationalities. Escaping from illegality on August 23, the Romanian Communist Party entered the political life with a disproportionately great number of minority – Hungarian, Jew, Russian and Bulgarian – members.

To join the anti-German alliance and signing an armistice, King Mihai needed the support and respect of the historical parties and the generals. According to Eugen Cristescu, Antonescu's counterintelligence chief, the Romanian Communist Party had 1,150 members on August 23, 1944. More than half of them were agents of commissar Sava Dumitrescu, who was in charge of anti-Communist affairs. Confiding in Western guarantees, the so-called historical parties still tried to rally more members for counterbalancing the imminent Communist danger that grew with the approach of the Soviet army. The haste was pointless, after all. Most of the Romanians had Peasant Party or Liberal affinities. Eugen Cristescu, imprisoned as a war criminal, sustained even in prison that the two parties were generally considered to be the sole political chance for a moral and political equilibrium that was supposed to rescue the nation.⁶

The Soviets were familiar with the Romanian public opinion. They knew that under the circumstances of the centuries-long enmity over Bessarabia they had to offer or at least to promise more than Transylvania to have the Romanian divisions fighting against their former allies. They, in fact, accepted a compromise – recognizing Satanescu's anti-Communist government – for having the Romanian army on their side.

The interest areas of the Great Powers had been delineated by the time of the Romanian breakaway. Political sympathies had not yet formed accordingly. On the Southern, British-dominated part of the Balkan, communism became increasingly popular. The Greek Communist Party had a strong base. French Communists could not be disregarded either. Anti-communism was the strongest in

Eastern Europe, Romania and Poland, in the very neighborhood of the Soviet Union. (It is true though, that both countries had territorial claims against the Soviet empire.) The Allies could only perform the new world division decided upon at the conference-table, if they dissolved all socially and nationally antagonistic political powers within their own influence areas. The Soviet Union did the same in Romania. Under the guise of compromise, she continually enforced the position of Communists and tried to eliminate the anti-Soviet and anti-Communist political elite.

Although they feared Soviet political pressure from the very beginning, Satanescu and his cabinet subordinated their disgust to national interests and agreed to join forces with the Communists. They armed the Bucharest working class that helped in chasing the Germans out. They accepted to lose Bessarabia, subordinating everything to the cause of having Northern Transylvania back.

The Romanian delegation signed the armistice treaty in Moscow on September 12. Romania agreed to send 12 divisions⁷ under Soviet command against Fascist powers. In exchange the Soviet Union agreed not to demand full compensation for all the war damage caused by Romanian troops. As former enemy, now defeated, Romania lost her independence until the signing of the Peace Treaty. The Allied Control Commission (ACC) exercised actual power. In Romania as well as in other countries of the area, ACC, in fact, meant the Soviet Union, as the Allies gave her free hand in managing internal affairs.

The Romanian armistice treaty brought no surprise in territorial matters. Romania lost Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina and Southern Dobrudja. The Transylvanian issue was settled as follows: *“The Allied governments regard the decisions pertaining to Transylvania of the Vienna Verdict as not valid, on condition of the Peace Treaty, Transylvania (or the greater part of it) is to be re-annexed to Romania.”* (my italics)

The US and Soviet standpoints on Transylvania's future were in open conflict when the conditions of the Romanian armistice were being decided upon. The State Department considered settling delicate territorial issues a primary task of the Peace Conference. The Soviets, in order to secure Bessarabia for themselves as early as then, asked for the paragraph on Transylvania to be included among the conditions of the armistice treaty. Persuaded by Churchill, the Americans, against their best conviction, finally accepted the Soviet version of the text. Nevertheless they requested that the paragraph on the arbitrary right of the Peace Conference to be included as well.⁸

By the time the Treaty was signed, Soviet troops were advancing in Northern Transylvania. The Romanian army occupied the two largest cities of the Székelyland, Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfintu Gheorghe) and Csíkszereda (Miercurea Ciuc) while Hungarian troops were concerned with the Southern Transylvanian attack. Under the prevailing circumstances, there was no need to consider Hungary's cause. Nevertheless, Soviet diplomacy did not overlook the implications of the Transylvanian issue. They formulated the territorial decision in such a way, as to leave the door open for the Hungarians in case of need. Thus they managed to have the Romanian historical parties under control. The part of the paragraph on Transylvania, put in brackets –“or the greater part of it” – became the starting point of Hungarian and Romanian political moves in the following decades, determining in many ways the internal and foreign policies of both countries.

Volunteers for Transylvania (Voluntarii)

As I have already mentioned it, all Romanians were united by the desire to win Transylvania back. This aim even made any political compromise possible. The Romanian capital was still flooded with German soldiers on the evening of August 23, the general staff of the army was already planning the Transylvanian operations. The Chief of Staff ordered to call up all mobilizable regional battalions in Transylvania (batalioanele fixe regionale pentru Transilvania – in Romanian) during the same night. Colonel P. Leonida, in charge of military operations, signed the order.⁹ Colonel Manu Oliviu, commander of the locally mobilized battalions, transmitted an order by telegram to the headquarters of the border guard army corps stationing at Ocnele Mari, to transform recruit units into operative ones during that night. Operative battalions of recruits, consisting of two infantry companies and a heavy-armed one, should be set up by mountaineer troops. Artillery regiments were ordered to form one squad or battery, equipped with rifles and horses. The rest of the recruits had to be organized in one or two infantry battalions.¹⁰

The orders transmitted during the night of the breakaway did not reveal the special purpose of these battalions. However their names did still suggest the fact that these troops were actually organized as garrison ones. Six days later, on August 29, progress reports of the locally mobilized Transylvanian regional battalions¹¹

determined their designations and garrisons as well. The report sent to the 1st Army in Nagyszeben (Sibiu) named five garrisons: Offenbánya (Baia de Aries) in County Fehér (Alba), Szentmihály (Mihai Viteazu) neighboring Torda (Turda), under the unit name of Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), subordinated to the Vissarion commando, the battalions stationed at Abrudbánya (Abrud), Jósikafalva (Belis) and Topánfalva (Câmpeni). The commander of these battalions, Colonel Lindembach, was in charge of the execution of “Operation Mihai”, commanding the sub-zone of Topánfalva under the HQ of the 2nd military zone of Torda. The battalion of Jósikafalva was named Szamos (Somes,). Battalions Körös (Crisul) and Codru of the 7th regional corps were mentioned as well, but no locations were given for them.

The report dealt with food-supply issues, stating that they were unsolved and food brought from home ran out. It also pointed out to the lack of equipment as well as the lack of officers (50%) and non-commissioned officers (60-70%). *“Under these circumstances these battalions can only be used within the limits of the principle they were created on, namely to fight partisans and paratroopers and to support the border guards on territories around the garrisons, well known to the recruits”* the report said.

The locally mobilized “battalion fix” entered history and gained “immortal ill-fame” few weeks later, by participating in the “fights against Hungarian partisans” and cleansing behind the front-line along the “Vienna border”. Survivors have always remarked about the “weird troops” that took part in the atrocities committed near Torda, in the valley of the two Körös rivers, that they seemed rather down-and-out, with no officers and no apparent military discipline. They were pillaging under the pretext of searching for arms and partisans. Except for the operation area of these battalions, there are no records of crimes committed against civilians by soldiers.

The army was not the only one to support the holy cause that united all Romanians. The Red Army reached Bucharest on August 29. The inhabitants of the capital accepted the presence of their new allies with certain disgust as if they were occupants. Actually the Soviets acted as occupiers at the very beginning.

On August 30, the Romanian General Staff decided to enter military operations by joining the 2nd Ukrainian Front. Soviet and Romanian troops set forth to Northern Transylvania. Simultaneously, the historical parties, led by Maniu’ Peasant Party, launched their anti-Hungarian propaganda in the capital. Romanian citizens read about anti-Romanian atrocities committed by

Hungarians in Northern Transylvania and about the criminal nature of the Hungarian people day by day on the pages of newspapers as Dreptatea, Curierul, România Nou, Desrobirea, Universul and Ardealul.¹² According to these papers, anti-Romanian atrocities were committed not only in 1940, at the time of the Hungarian take-over, but every day during the following four years. Hungarian civilians murdered dozens of peaceful Romanian citizens and soldiers day by day as the front-line advanced in Southern Transylvania.

The paper Curierul¹³ made it public: 290,000 out of 1,300,000 Romanian inhabitants fled, 17,000 were interned and 28,760 murdered. According to official Romanian sources, 205,193 Northern Transylvanian refugees entered Romania. The November 27, 1940 issue of Székely Nép (Székely People) published the Hungarian official figures: between September 5 and November 25, 9,340 persons left Northern Transylvania, 7,277 of them opted for Romanian citizenship and 243 were expelled. It is obvious, the truth lies somewhere in between. The Romanian data were blown up for propaganda reasons, the Hungarian ones are ridiculously reduced. (*!!!Editors note: Some of these "expelled" should be called "repatriated". These people from the Old Kingdom were settled on expropriated Hungarian land, against the letter and intention of the Trianon Peace Treaty of 1920. The Romanians are secretive on this point of the Treaty and most Hungarians do not know about it.!!!*) (The 28,760 figure for the murdered is utterly ridiculous. The Joint Italian-German Commission reported about 200-300 killed on both sides in this period. - The lector)

Both anti-Romanian and anti-Hungarian measures were taken on the divided Transylvanian territory during the four years of war. The take-over brought about floods of refugees and change in inhabitants on both sides of the Vienna border. Hundred thousands of people tried to start a new life by trading a lifetime's work for money or for an estate on the other side of the border. Those Romanian officials who settled in with the 1918 Romanian administration and those who had been actively involved in politics were the first to flee from Northern Transylvania. Expulsions also occurred in mass-like proportions on both sides. The mutual change and trade of houses and estates were outstanding examples for discrimination after 1944. The Hungarians that left Southern Transylvania had no right over their former homes after 1944, while Hungarians who had bought the houses of Northern Transylvanian Romanian refugees had to give them up for the initial price that was

by far under the after-war inflated prices.¹⁴ Many Transylvanian Hungarians became homeless this way.

The take-over of autumn 1940 victimized many innocent lives. Ip, Ördögkút (Treznea) and Oroszfalva (Ruseni) were sites of cruel massacres. The murder of Dean Munteanu of Bánffyhunyard (Huedin) was a harrowing and barbarian act of Hungarian civilians. Unfair imprisonments, internments, and the patronizing and humiliating attitude of the “paratroopers” (clerks of the Hungarian military administration) provided a solid ground for the 1944 autumn fervent anti-Hungarian propaganda.

Béla Teleki recalled the 1940-1944 events as follows: *“It is easy to be wise now and looking back recognize that the Hungarians were offered the chance for demonstrating a fair treatment of the minority question during those years. Northern Transylvania could have been a fine example for fairness and tolerance. Gábor Páll, the first leader of the group of Transylvanian MP's appointed to the Hungarian Parliament, was of the same opinion. But the reality was different: the flood – the insufficient knowledge of the Transylvanian issue of those in charge in Trianon-Hungary – washed the chance away. One of the impeding factors for it was the revenge the Romanians taken for the loss of Northern Hungary on Hungarians remained in Southern Transylvanian. Expulsions, including even ordinary miners from Petrozsény (Petrosani), brought about expulsions of Romanians from Northern Transylvania. The Hungarian government committed the mistake of adopting an eye for an eye policy of revenge. Romanians were always the initiators, but paying back the same way was a mistaken policy for the Hungarians to adopt. I realize that all this required exceptional composure, firm determination and strength to oppose public opinion. The Hungarian government failed to show such qualities, consequently it is no wonder they failed. (...)*

*Things were wrong from the very beginning. The glorious and victorious march of the Hungarian army should have been avoided. (...) Military administration, despite the good will and efforts of Pál Teleki, was a great mistake as it failed in almost all their activity...”*¹⁵

There were abuses, mistakes, arrests and murders – this is unquestionable. Nevertheless, unlike the 1944 September-October anti-Hungarian vengeance campaign, these events were far from being organized.

Peasant Party policy kept feeding public opinion on ridiculously distorted data that passed far beyond common sense. They intended to prove that Hungarians were genetically determined

war criminals and murderers in order to demonstrate that Hungarian civilians in Northern Transylvania in one prosecuted the Romanians, murdered and tortured their neighbors of other nationalities.¹⁶ News on crimes committed by Hungarian civilians against Romanian soldiers were among the most conspicuous ones. During the Romanian advance in Transylvanian, newspapers like Dreaptatea, Curierul or Desrobirea blame Hungarian inhabitants for the death of Romanian soldiers.¹⁷

It was absolutely unimaginable that the unarmed and terrified civilians, hiding in cellars, could fight or organize partisan attacks against the army. According to press reports, Romanian soldiers wounded in battles were beaten to death with axes, mutilated and robbed by (Hungarian) villagers. These papers perhaps aimed at increasing hate and desire for revenge. Volunteer murders and huge war damages could thus be “justified” for the Government and the General Staff.

Their propaganda was effective above all among Romanians concerned for their relatives, friends and acquaintances, who fled from Northern Transylvania. The recruiting and organizing of volunteers for the re-capture of Northern Transylvania started in Bucharest and in Southern Transylvanian cities, like Brassó and Nagyszeben shortly after the breakaway on August 23.

On September 8, România Nou, Romanian newspaper in Nagyszeben, heralded under the title of **Volunteers for Transylvania (Voluntarii pentru Ardeal)** that *volunteers for the “Belis” commando of Nagyszeben could report themselves at 20 Universitatii Street, between 9-12 a.m. and 4-7 p.m. at Dr. Stefan Pascu each day. Stefan Pascu was named as the sole **officially appointed** (my italics) commander of the volunteer commandos in Nagyszeben, and nobody else could claim this post for himself.*¹⁸

According to a report published by Curierul on September 18, more than 50,000 volunteers – 5 commandos – had started off for Northern Transylvania from Bucharest before September 12 (that is before the signing of the armistice treaty, 20 days after the breakaway). Troops from Brassó and Nagyszeben had joined them on their way. On September 17, another battalion left the capital for Northern Transylvania. The reports also stated that these departures took always place in festive atmosphere. Eminent political personalities, including the leaders of the Association of Transylvanian Refugees gave speeches. After the taking oath (to revenge on those who had torn Transylvania apart) by the statue of Mihai Viteazu, the volunteers marched towards the royal palace, and then to Hotel Ambassador, the ACC HQ, and left for the railway

station. "The volunteers of death" started off for Transylvania, wrote E. Bocsa-Mălin in *Curierul*.

The October 4 issue [of *Curierul*] wrote about the departure of the 7th commando, named Cornesti. The festive event started by noon with a demonstration that hailed Peasant Party leader Maniu. He was accompanied by Corneliu Coposu, Ion Anton Muresan, director of editorial office of *Ardealul*, and Dumitru Nacu, Chairman of the Association of Transylvanian Refugees, the main organizer of the volunteer troops.

"The 7th commando, led by Major Dudescu, rallies Colonel Iuliu Maniu's volunteers. Their headquarters are in 65 Dionisie Lupu Street and in the editorial office of *Ardealul*. Lieutenant Stnescu is commanding the cavalry regiment. The first Romanian lady parachutist, Smaranda Brescu, is the commander of the woman's volunteer troops", wrote the article "Fighting Volunteers". It was also reported that similar units were set up in Brassó, Gyulaférvár (Alba Iulia) and Nagyszeben as well. "The volunteers of death (itt a halál önkéntes kohorszái kifejezés szerepel.D.A.) call at every Transylvanian village one after the other healing wounds, punishing and fighting partisans. They have earned the appreciation not only of their leaders but also of the Russians' too". The aim – the mission – was obvious. They started off for Northern Transylvania as fierce lethal troops. This was a known fact to the people who had organized and armed them. But none of them assumed the glory of having initiated to form these units by the time of their dissolution, on November 16. The activity of the lethal units set off among great festivities as heroes, was officially declared a sporadic and isolated abuse, but the Soviets still drove Romanian administration out of Northern Transylvania as a sign of their "recognition".

No report described the destinations of the volunteers within Transylvania. The first stop of the Iuliu Maniu regiment (Regimentul Iuliu Maniu) established in Brassó, is known from newspaper *Desrobirea* of the volunteers, published in Sepsiszentgyörgy. The volunteer troop, lead by Gavril Olteanu, which became later ill-famed for their crimes committed in the Székelyland, marched in Sepsiszentgyörgy together with the members of the Romanian administration on September 19. On September 20, a **proclamation** entitled "**Our Present and Prevailing Way**", addressed their Transylvanian brothers in an inciting tune. Relating to the activity of the Maniu-guards, they invited Transylvanians to join in. The documentary value of the proclamation is in that it proves the volunteers were in direct contact with the army and authorities and it

mentions Maniu as founder of volunteer troops.¹⁹

The September 21 issue of *Desrobirea*, also published in Sepsiszentgyörgy, reported that volunteer troops annihilated and arrested Hungarian bandits in the neighboring villages. After securing peace for the region, the volunteers marched on to clean up the area behind the front line. The news did not include any facts, though.

On September 22, **the volunteers continued their anti-terrorist activities in Transylvanian villages.** This was the first news relating to the place and the leader of volunteers' presence in the Székelyland, published. Under the command of Miculi Florea, 120 volunteers went to the villages of Gidófalva and Zoltán, and after taking the necessary measures in co-operation with local authorities, they returned to Sepsiszentgyörgy. Necessary measures were not detailed. Yet, according to the records of the Hungarian People's Alliance (HPA), the volunteers, calling themselves Maniu guardsmen, appeared for the first time in Árkos, County Háromszék, on September 22²⁰ (after the military administration was installed – were their actions supported by the administration?). The so-called necessary measures consisted of robbery, rape and terror, yet no murder was committed during the first days. According to newspapers and the existing HPA records of the time, the terrorist rule of guardsmen in Northern Transylvania started on September 22. There are no information on the activity and garrisons of the 50,000 guardsmen who had left Bucharest, but they were, for certain, advancing behind the front line, after or by the time the Romanian military administration had settled in.

At 10 p.m. on September 22, the national radio broadcast the appeal of the Bucharest government addressed to the Hungarian government: *The Romanian Royal Government was informed on the fact that the Hungarian Royal Government had arrested all Northern Transylvanian Romanian bishops²¹, including Dr. Emil Hatieganu, and other intellectuals. The Romanian Royal Government appeals to the Hungarian Royal Government to release the respective Romanians within 24 hours. If not, the Romanian Royal Government will do the same with all Hungarian bishops and prominent intellectuals in Romania.*

The news were partially true. During the rule of the Lakatos Cabinet, Romanian bishops were placed under protection. The measure was actually necessary, as the death of Bishop Apor showed it. But the second part of the appeal has to be rectified. After August 24, hardly any free Hungarian intellectuals could be found in Romania, as most of them were kept in P.O.W. camps – at Tirgu-

Jiu, Belényes (Beius), Focsani, Lugos (Lugoj), Földvár (Feldioara), Temesvár (Timisoara), Pitesti, Radna (Rodna) and Caracal – from August 24 on, consequently they could hardly be put in “protection” in September. The Hungarian government sent a protest-note to Bucharest on September 1.

The Romanian government declaration was published in all Romanian newspapers on September 23. Desrobirea sacrificed almost its entire issue to it under the title: **Raving Hungarian atrocities get loose.** *“We have to shoot three Hungarians for each Romanian murdered by them, so that they finally come to their senses and put an end to atrocities for good. Transylvania is not no man's land. It is an ancient Romanian land. The Hungarians now will finally pay for the thousand year's cruelty they have committed against our brothers from the Carpathians to River Tisza...”*

Massacres started in the valley of River Fekete Körös (Crisul Negra), on the Southern side of the Vienna border on September 23. There are no written records for the area, nevertheless oral history and the records of the Reformed church of Gyanta claim that mountaineer units of the army were responsible. In knowledge of the garrisons, division and methods of the locally mobilized regional battalions we may state that crimes were not committed by regular troops advancing together with the Red Army, but by local mountaineer troops of „battalion fix”, stationing in the Western Érchegység (Erzebirge).

Survivors in the border villages casually mention „battalion fix”, but their images are entangled with the memories of guardsmen and gendarmes. At Szentmihály near Torda, the villagers still call the military HQ settled in the Calvinist church the garrison of the Kolozsvár „battalion fix”. Although they were formed as units of the regular army, it is true that their methods were quite close to the ones applied by volunteers and the gendarmerie. After quickly repelling the Hungarian-German attack launched on September 5 in Southern Transylvania, the soldiers of the „battalion fix” returned thirst for revenge behind the Soviet troops on September 13. Their vengeance was provoked not only by the five-day Hungarian rule or by the organization of the local militia during those days, but also by the unreasonably pompous and unnecessary celebration organized by the Imrédyist (Béla Imrédy, Hungarian Prime Minister in 1938-39) Mayor of Kolozsvár, Lajos Varga, in Torda. After Hungarian troops had occupied the small border-town, Lajos Varga and some of his companions went to Torda, and organized a huge festivity.²² Though it was obvious that there was no chance to withstand the Soviet counterattack. Somebody would have had to bear the consequences of the feast. The Soviets re-conquered the town in

five days. The participants of the celebration were arrested by „battalion fix” soldiers and gendarme, and they were deported by the Soviets.

HPA records state: “After the return of the Russian and Romanian troops, the Romanians threw themselves into Hungarian homes, taking furniture, bedclothes, clothes, household goods and food away and everything that had survived the war. But this was a trifle compared to what happened when they declared the remaining Hungarians as partisans, handing more than 400 men over to the Russian soldiers. These people were taken first to a Romanian prison camp then to Russia later. Very few of these Hungarians managed to return, just to die from various diseases caught in captivity. One landowner and six small holders were murdered at Szentmihályfalva just because they were Hungarians.”²³

The murders at Szentmihályfalva clearly indicate the method applied all over Transylvania: the commander of volunteers or locally mobilized soldiers (fix) arrested the majority of civilians, brought them before military tribunals, the officer sentenced them and then the soldiers executed the sentence. At Szentmihály, the commander of the „battalion fix” also declared the members of the militia, organized for security reasons at the time of the Torda reprisal, war criminals. All Hungarian men in the village were arrested on September 13. Landowner Dr. Gyula Wolff was executed – without any reason and as a deterrent – during the same evening. Six more death sentences were executed during the next day. The executions were carried out with the active help of the local gendarme officer.²⁴

Members of the Romanian public administration, policemen, volunteers and the soldiers of „battalion fix” operating under the command of the regular army, joined forces and made all their efforts synchronized in the revenge campaign against Hungarians. One of the first measures taken in counties where Romanian public administration was installed was to order Hungarian men who had refused to fight against the Allies or had deserted the Hungarian army, to report to the local police ²⁵

On September 21, seven days after the introduction of Romanian public administration in County Háromszék (Trei Scaune) a notice was issued: “All inhabitants of the town and the county are obliged to immediately report to the Romanian authorities. Those who fail to submit to the order are declared spies and are liable to respond before the law.”²⁶

Suspicion against the gendarmerie was substantial from the very beginning. Northern Transylvanians had vivid memories of the

22 years of gendarmerie-rule. Consequently many continued to hide. Those, who submitted to the order disappeared for years or forever. At springtime, after the snow melted, human bodies were found on the outskirts of some settlements.

Although murders of this kind were not unusual in Transylvania, atrocities were committed in a more subtle way. People were taken into prison camps, where great numbers of them died daily because of poor living conditions and rough treatment.²⁷ There is no precise data on Romanian internment camps operating at that time. One of the most cruel "death camps" was the one at Földvár near Brassó, established for protection reasons. Northern Transylvanians arrested by the volunteers of Gavril Olteanu in the Székelyland and by the gendarmerie in Counties Maros (Mures), Szilágy (Salaj) and Kolozs (Cluj) were interned here.

Tg. Jiu "hosted" Southern Transylvanian Hungarians originally (mostly from Brassó and Temesvár). These people were Romanian citizens but they were deported as enemies because of their nationality after August 23.²⁸

Focsani was an interim camp for innocent people gathered from all over the country, who were to be transported to forced labor camps in the Soviet Union.

There were several internment camps along the Vienna border, at Belényes, Temesvár, Kishalmágy and Lugos. Transylvanian Hungarians and Germans were interned there.

Mostly Hungarian and German prisoners-of-war were interned in the camps at Pitesti and Caracal.

Civilians arrested by the volunteers on the streets or in their homes and handed over as hiding partisans or "terrorists" to the authorities were also taken to these camps. The number of internment camp victims increased by the number of prisoners-of-war set free from Soviet, British or American camps and were arrested once more on their homecoming and taken to internment camps as Romanian captives. Many of the already sick or weakened people died as they could not resist the hunger or diseases that prevailed in these camps.²⁹

According to HPA records³⁰, Romanian authorities arrested 40,000 Hungarian men in Transylvania during the autumn of 1944.³¹ Many of them died while being deported or interned. The data is not reliable, as the records of the HPA estimated the Maniu guard membership at 10,000 while, as it is already known, more than 50,000 volunteers started off for Transylvania from Bucharest before September 12.

However, it is a fact: **the number of internment camp victims is far greater than the number of massacre victims**. On November 5, the committee in charge of the control of the armistice treaty forwarded a note to Premier Satanescu on the repeated violations of the Treaty: the Romanian government had not sentenced war criminals; it had not returned Soviet properties; it had sabotaged production behind the front-line, and the bloodthirsty guardsmen of Maniu were to cause civil war.³²

On November 7, at the mass meeting organized for the celebration of the Great October Socialist Revolution, Ana Pauker and Luka László condemned crimes the Maniu-guards committed in Northern Transylvania, and the gendarmerie terror as well as the instigating and anti-minority policy of the historical parties.³³ On November 8, Prefect Vescan Teofil of County Kolozs placarded that Northern Transylvania had been transferred under the military administration of the Soviet army.³⁴ On November 12, Colonel-general Vinogradov, on behalf of the ACC declared: “...*reactionary administration has to leave Transylvania as long as Romania does not have a truly democratic government which is capable to meet the requirements of the armistice treaty and guarantee the rights of democratic Hungarians.*” According to this declaration, the Romanian military administration had to leave Northern Transylvania in 48 hours. Soviet military administration was introduced instead.

Northern Transylvanian Hungarians welcomed the news frenetically. “In those circumstances it would have been totally absurd for Hungarians not to trust the Northern Transylvanian Soviet military authorities and the Soviet Union herself” said Gusztáv Molnár on the public opinion of the time.³⁵

The new status of Northern Transylvania brought anger and bitterness to Romanian political leaders. In his letter addressed to the president of the ACC, Iuliu Maniu accused the Soviet HQ of hindering the activity of Romanian administration authorities in Northern Transylvania. He stated that it was against the armistice treaty conditions and it offended basic Romanian interests as well. But according to another British report even the anti-Fascist followers of Maniu in Northern Transylvania were “distressingly chauvinistic, concerned only with wasting their energy and our time on anti-Hungarian, anti-Soviet and anti-governmental grievances.”³⁶

There are various interpretations of the Soviet decision. Knowing Stalin's and his government's view on the Transylvanian issue, the action seems to have been a successful strategic move of Soviet diplomacy. As I have already mentioned it, the recognition of

the first Satanescu-government was a compromise for the Soviets, they accepted it because the Red Army needed the authority of historical parties and the support of the Romanian general staff of the time. With the support of the Soviets, the political power of left-wing organizations grew during September and October. Communists were still in minority in Satanescu's second government, formed on November 4. Only 7 out of the 19 government officials were members of the National Democratic Front (NDF).³⁷ The NDF draft program published on September 26, undermined the coalition of the historical parties and the left, as the Communist Party declared war for state power.

But the composition of Satanescu's second government did not reflect actual internal political power relations. The NDF was far from having 36,8 percent of the populace, yet it was represented in the government according to this proportion. Maniu's Peasant Party and the other historical parties had overwhelming majority in the society and they held most power positions, as well. The public servants sent to Northern Transylvania were, in general, Peasant Party members (Ionel Pop, government commissioner of Northern Transylvanian territories, was Maniu's nephew; Ilie Lazar, the liaison officer of the military headquarters and of the council of ministers, was a leading politician of the Peasant Party; the Prefects of Counties Csík (Ciuc), Udvarhely (Odorhei), Háromszék and Maros were members of the Peasant Party, too). This way territorial control was totally in the hands of Maniu and his circle. Transylvania, however, was the sole card for the Soviets to blackmail the government in Bucharest. Transylvania was the only issue that could lead the Romanian political powers towards consensus or compromise.

The belief that a Soviet-oriented foreign policy would grant the re-annexing of Transylvania influenced internal political power relations from the very beginning. Even in August 1945, Maniu informed the British envoy in Bucharest on the fact that Prime Minister Groza was of the opinion that the British supported Hungary in matters of the Hungarian-Romanian border, and the only Soviet delegates supported the reinstatement of the Trianon borders. The Prime Minister declared that he was prepared to resign for the benefit of any politician appointed by Maniu, if the British would offer the same official guarantees he had been offered by the Soviets.³⁸

The Soviet decision implied – or could imply – certain motivations that heated inner political fights up. The Red Army was an occupation army on enemy's territory when it entered Northern

Transylvania. Facing reality and the delicate nature of the Transylvanian issue, the Soviet HQ changed its attitude. Instead of Fascist, Hungarian enemies they found an organized community that in fear of the revengeful Romanian authorities welcomed the Soviet troops as liberators. Hungarians were still a majority in big Northern Transylvanian towns. Many Hungarian Communists and Social Democrats took important positions in the quickly re-organized administration. Most of Transylvanian Romanians were followers of Maniu. Relying on the left-wing Hungarian administration was much safer for the Red Army. The co-operation with it was easier than with the Peasant Party leaders of Counties Csík, Udvarhely, Háromszék and Maros. This is why, despite Point 17 of the armistice treaty that promised the re-installation of Romanian administration in the entire Transylvanian territory, except a 50-100 kms strip behind the front, the Romanians officially appointed by Ionel Pop were not even allowed to enter the counties liberated after the October 11. (In Székely counties, behind the Soviet troops, Romanian administration was installed in the immediate neighborhood of the front. The Soviets then did not protest against the Romanians disregarding to set up and respect the zone envisaged by the armistice treaty, and against introducing military administration instead of civil one.)

On November 16, the government dissolved the Maniuguards. Maniu himself made the decision public at a mass-meeting in Bucharest: *“Young generations concerned for our country’s future and driven by great patriotic feelings have formed some volunteer battalions for the liberation of Transylvania. Some of these battalions bear my name.*

*My various occupations have hindered me from following the life and actions of these **military units** (my italics) and from effectuating the necessary survey visits. Thus I could not evaluate their results, and them being necessary and effective or not. Regretfully, I have no future possibility for doing this, as **these para-military units have been dissolved by a decree of the Romanian government** (my italics), and ordered to hand their arms over to the military headquarters. The General Staff of the army will decide upon the dissolving and disarming action. I call all volunteers to submit to the hereby orders. I also call all those who are liable for military service or are able to carry arms should follow military orders, thus serving the holy cause under the sign of national solidarity.*

The members of the guards will receive special orders on their homecoming. Those who wish to keep military clothes as indispensable, they are free to do so.

I express my gratitude (my italics) *to all those who have responded to their patriotic calls. May everyone contentedly look forward to the prosperity of our nation!*"³⁹ The Peasant Party politician expressed his gratitude to the guards in full knowledge of the expulsion order that mentioned the crimes committed by these guards as well.

Hungarian public opinion had for long considered that the Soviets driven Romanian administration out of Northern Transylvania for the crimes of the volunteers. The Soviet HQ stationing in the Székelyland were immediately informed on the events. In many cases the intervention of Soviet soldiers stopped the massacre. One and a half months yet passed before the expulsion decree was issued. Atrocities influenced the Soviet decision, but the essential cause was to be different.

According to the expulsion decree, the volunteer troops had been created without the knowledge and consent of the Soviet troops. Romanian administration entered Northern Transylvania under similar circumstances. (Point 17 of the armistice treaty authorized **civil** administration for the Romanians in Northern Transylvania.) In his essay on the Soviet Transylvania-policy, Tofik Islamov writes⁴⁰ that Moscow inclined towards the notion of an autonomous Transylvania during the World War II. But this autonomy was thought of as an instrument for controlling Hungary and Romania. The phrase in brackets on re-annexing Transylvania to Romania was included in the armistice treaty because Soviet diplomats thought it as a possibility of having Romania under continuous control, as in order to keep Transylvania, Romania had to submit herself to the Soviet will. In terms of Romanian home affairs, they were of opinion that the re-annexing of Transylvania was a good move to win the sympathy of Maniu and his party, the most popular political organization of Romania. Considering the expulsion decree from this stance, the explanation might be the fact that Soviet diplomacy miscalculated the development of Romanian political power relations. Consequently, they did not allow the clerks of Ionel Pop to enter Kolozsvár and expelled all forms of Romanian administration on November 12.

This time the Soviets calculated properly. From that moment on, Romania and Bucharest did everything the Soviets required for having Northern Transylvania back.

However, what is the explanation for the well-organized anti-Hungarian terror in Northern Transylvania? The leaders of the Romanian historical parties, except the extreme right parties', oriented towards the Western Allies. They were even in contact with

them to a certain degree. Maniu's British connections are (were) well known. He kept good relations with Benes, living in exile in London, as well. It was not a secret that the Western powers intended to organize a peace conference that would draw more correct borders than the Versailles conference did. But Maniu and his companions knew that there were no possibilities for drawing correct ethnical borders in Transylvania. They were also aware of that the problem could not be solved by the exchange of inhabitants, and Romanian politics was not disposed to give up an inch of Transylvanian land, anyway. Moreover, some Peasant Party leaders, like Mihai Popovici, president of the Transylvanian fraction, openly declared that the borders had to be extended to River Tisza.⁴¹

There was only one acceptable way for them to solve the fate of the one and half a million strong Hungarian minority. They had to be collectively declared war criminals and expelled them en mass. The session of the council of ministers decreed the elimination of the German ethnic group on September 26, under the pretext of being the "Hitler's 5th division in Romania". But it was difficult to openly declare Hungarians war criminals. When Romanian leaders realized that neither Moscow, nor the Western Allies supported deportation – the Czechoslovak solution – they tried to expel Hungarians out by various decrees and actions. The same procedure was applied for preventing those who fled to Hungary during the fights from coming home. The news on volunteers' cruelties committed at Szárzajta (Aita Seac) quickly reached Kolozsvár and Nagyvárad (Oradea). According to collective memory, Olteanu declared it several times: there was no mercy for the Hungarians. The returning of Romanian public servants, who were supposed to grant security, took part in terrorist actions – murders, beatings, robbery and panic-raising – against the Hungarians.

Thus, confiding in the deportation of the Hungarians, Romanian policy tried to "help" the drawing of correct ethnical borders and turned to mass terrorist methods. Volunteers were organized and armed by the General Staff after August 23, and started off for Transylvania. However, until the publication of the phrase of the armistice treaty – *Transylvania (or the greater part of it)* – actually, there were no atrocities reported.

The locally mobilized regional battalions were called in for security service on that very night, but they did not venture into murdering civilians before September 12.

The phrase in brackets of the armistice treaty determined the main direction of events in the following weeks and months: Hungarians had to be driven out by all means. Even at the cost of

murder, the ethnic minority had to be convinced to leave Transylvania voluntarily, so the region could be totally and not only partially re-annexed by Romania. The execution of the project had no major obstacles in its way. The Romanian army tolerated the actions of the volunteers in Transylvania, and the locally mobilized battalions even helped them. (General Avramescu, commander-in-chief of the Transylvanian front, and General Macici, the bloodstained leader of the massacres in Bessarabia, commanded the operations.)

Despite the great differences in ideologies, there was no basic contradiction between Maniu's Peasant Party and the Iron Guard. Members of the former Iron Guard (legionaries) joined Maniu's party after the 1937 election pact. The methods and zealotry of the volunteers were reminders of the Fascist ideology designed by Codreanu and Sima and suggested a massive participation of the young generations. Iuliu Maniu, Romania's number one politician, who declared in 1918 that "we do not intend to turn into oppressors from oppressed", 26 years later, did nothing to stop atrocities. He even agreed to the chauvinistic and anti-Hungarian propaganda of his party. For Maniu, the phrase in brackets of Point 19 of the armistice treaty endangered his victory of 1918.

Territorial integrity and the status of Transylvania was of such a great importance to the politicians of the time, that they agreed not only to atrocities and deportation but to willingly handing their power-positions over to the Communists as well. When they realized their politics had produced negative results, they were able to conceive radical changes.

After November 12, when Colonel-general Vinogradov, naming the abuses and atrocities of the administration and the volunteers for a cause, expelled Romanian authorities from Transylvania, the possibility for terrorizing the Hungarians in order to drive them out of their home country did not avail itself any longer.

Fierce inner political fights began in Bucharest as a direct consequence of the momentary loss of direction. Newspapers of various parties blamed each other for the Northern Transylvanian events. Left-wing papers unanimously accused the government and the Peasant Party, condemning their nationalist policy, the massacres in Northern Transylvania and the abuses of the military administration. The government knew the main directives were to be changed. On November 14, two days after the expulsion decree, the government decision No. 575 on the establishment of the Ministry Minorities and Nationalities was published in the Official Gazette. The historical political parties rushed to agree with it.

Power was being transferred in favor of the left. Led by of

General Radescu, former Chief of Staff, a new government was formed on December 6. The NDF was given six posts. In matters of quantity, it was not a great change, but there was a significant qualitative gain, as portfolios were of greater importance than before. Political fight lasted until 6 March, 1945, with a massive participation of Soviet diplomacy. On February 13, hundred thousands demanded the dismissal of Radescu and the establishment of a new government, led by the NDF, in Bucharest. Shootings broke out at a mass meeting held in front of the Ministry of Home Affairs on February 24, and armed conflicts spread all over the country afterwards. Soviet Foreign Affairs Commissar (Minister) Vishinsky arrived in Bucharest and demanded the King to appoint Petru Groza to the post of Prime Minister. He claimed that otherwise the Soviet Union would not guarantee for the integrity and sovereignty of the Romanian national state. Instead of assuming the risk of losing Northern Transylvania, King Mihai could do nothing but accept Groza's government on March 6. After his inauguration Groza asked for the introduction of Romanian administration in Northern Transylvania in a telegram addressed to Stalin. His consent arrived within a few days. While the peace conference was in progress in Paris, in spite of the democratic nationality policy pursued by the moderate government of the Hungarophile Groza, the low-level administration authorities passed regulations one after the other in order to reduce the number of Hungarians in Transylvania to the possible lowest level by the time the treaty was signed. Among others, Metropolitan (itt eredetileg mitropolita van, de azt nem tudom, hogy mi. sejtésem van, de az kevés D.A.) Niculae of Szeben stood for the this desire and mentality. His letter of August 19, 1945, addressed to Propaganda Minister P. Constantinescu-Iasi reflects the ambiguous atmosphere of Romanian public life at the time: *"The standpoint of our Sacred Church in the issue of Hungarian-Romanian rapprochement is the following: ... If Hungarians have the right to expel Germans from their country and if Czechoslovakia is allowed to adopt radical methods in solving the problem of the Hungarian and German minorities, why would Romanian not be entitled to have the same rights? We are not allowed to miss this unique chance ..."*⁴²

For the Romanian politicians, the future of Transylvania was still insecure. Its status was already determined, but the borders not definitely drawn. The tempting-threatening phrase in brackets of Point 19 of the armistice treaty was hanging above the heads of Romanian political parties as Damocles' sword before the signing of the peace treaty. This short phase determined their political activities and gave reasons for on-going but sporadic local atrocities.

The initial attempt of Maniu and his party had failed and led to a four-months autonomy of Northern Transylvania. A change was needed, as national interests required a different ethnic minority policy. The establishment of the Ministry of Minorities and Nationalities was the first step in this change. Decrees and regulations in favor of minorities were passed one after the other by the Groza-government, and they were never questioned by the historical parties either. Before February 10, 1947, the conclusion of the Paris peace conference, Hungarian minority in Romania had established its own institutions that could serve as an example for solving minority problems all over in Europe. The Communist Party, that is the supreme power of the time, treated the matter with the greatest tolerance. Abuses on executive-level at local authorities occurred, though. "There are still some grain of sand in the machinery" – Groza used to say in these cases.

Yes, there was a great deal of sand in the state machinery. It was just multiplied after the peace conference. Although the volunteer guards were dissolved, the spirit spread during their short activity and lived on despite party decisions and governmental decrees. And (maybe) there was no interest in destroying this spirit after February, 10, 1947.

Mária Gál

Notes

¹Magyarország Miniszterelnökei (Prime Ministers of Hungary), 1848-1990, second edition, Cégér Publishing Ltd, Budapest, 1993, pp 114

²ib. pp 147

³Veesenmeyer was Hitler's omnipotent representative in Hungary.

⁴Zoltán Tibori Szabó: Teleki Béla Erdélyisége (Béla Teleki's Pro-Transylvanian Character), Erdélyi Kiskönyvtár (Transylvanian Minor Library), Nis Publishing House, Kolozsvár, 1993, pp 17

⁵Ferenc Fejtő: A népi demokráciák története (The History of People's Democracies), Magvető Publishing House, Budapest, Magyar Füzetek (Hungarian Brochures), Paris, 1991, Vol. 1, pp 57

⁶Gabriel Bălașescu: Din împărăția mortii. Editura Gordian, Timisoara, 1944, pp 28

⁷Andrea R. Süle: Románia politikátörténete (Romania's Political History) In. Románia 1944-90, Gazdaság és Politikátörténet (History of Economy and Politics) Atlantisz, Medvetánc, 1990. According to Romanian

sources, 24 Romanian Divisions (and the Tudor Vladimirescu division) fought on the side of the Red Army. Documente privind istoria militară a poporului român, 7 septembrie–25 octombrie, Bucharest, Editura Militară, 1980., and Marea conflagrație a secolului XX. Editura Politică, Bucharest, 1971.

⁸Ignác Romsics: A State Department és Magyarország (The State Department and Hungary), Valóság (Reality) 1999/11, pp 55

⁹Nota a secției 3-a către secția I-a Marele Stat Major. No. 678 568 din 23 aug. fond 948, dos No. 849, f. 439, copie. Published in: “August 23, 1944” Documente privind Istoria militară României. Editura Militară, Bucharest, Vol. I. 1977

¹⁰Telegrama. Către Corpul grănicerilor, stat major (Telegram to the border guard army corps) / Ocenele Mari (Headquarters). Arhive Ministerului Apărării Naționale (War Ministry Archives, fund 1, File No. 318, f 17-18. Published ibidem.

¹¹Grupul de batalioane fixe regionale pentru Ardeal către Armata 1-a Sibiu (From the locally mobilized regional battalions for Transylvania to the First army of Szeben), No. 104, August 29, 1944. Copie/secret. Published ibidem.

¹²Curierul, September 17, 1944: Voluntari mortii (Volunteers of death). E. Bocsa-Mălin.

Curierul, September 26: Iarăși neomenii maghiare (Hungarian cruelties again).

Curierul, October 5: Ardealul, Ardealul, ne cheamă Ardealul, and Balsoi puski in acțiune

Curierul, October 10: Problema ungurească (The Hungarian problem), Mihai Popovici.

Curierul, October 28: Vin de la Clujul pustiit (Coming from the ruined Kolozsvár), E Bocsa-Mălin.

Desrobirea, September, 23: Atrocitățile maghiare se deslăntuie cu o furie nebun (Hungarian atrocities spread like madness).

Desrobirea, September 24: Voluntarii ardeleni stăpesc ultimele resturi de bandiți (Transylvanian volunteers eliminate the last bandits).

Desrobirea, September 28: Baia de sânge dela Turda (The bloodshed of Torda), Noul miseliale briganzilor germano-maghiari (Newer crimes of Hungarian-German brigands), Bătălia dela Aita Seacă (The battle of Százajta).

Desrobirea, September 30: Armatele române continuă victorioase (Romanian armies advance victoriously).

Curentul Nou September 2, 1944: Mars însângerat prin secuime (Bloody march through the Seclar regio), E. Bocsa-Mălin

Each paper sent special correspondent and reported in instigating tone of the events on the front.

¹³Curierul, November 12, 1944

¹⁴Monitorul Oficial (Official Gazette), April 4, 1945, Act No. 261. on

citizenship,
Monitorul Oficial, August 14, Act No. 645. on claiming back [properties],
October 10, Decree No. 105 005 of the Minister of Justice.

¹⁵Zoltán Tibori Szabó: ib. pp 12-13.

¹⁶At their national conference held in Brassó, Mihai Popovici, leader of the Northern Transylvanian faction of the Peasant Party, declared (published by the October 10 issue of *Curierul*) : “Dup 1940, când trupul Transilvaniei a fost sfâșiat de un monstruos dictat, ungurii s-au nașpustit cu toată puterea urii lor de rasă împotriva românilor care au rămas alături de căminul și glia strămoșească. Românii au fost dați afară din slujbe, femeile și copiii au fost omorâți, toată ticalosia sufletului lor s-a revarsat din plin asupra românilor, care nu aveau nici o apărare. Astăzi trebuie să ne răfuim și noi cu ei.” (After the shameful Decision, the Hungarians exercised their fascism on Romanians. Romanians were fired, women and children were killed. They have poured the filth of their souls on us. It is high time for our vengeance.)

Gh. Bledea in *Desrobirea*, September 30: “Prea și-au făcut de cap acești nepoti ai Sfântului Ștefan, prea mult sânge s-a vărsat în lupta pentru desrobirea pămintului furat de acești aventurieri, încât să nu fie reduși la tăcere odată pentru totdeauna sau desființați definitiv” (Saint Stephen’s heirs ‘have pretended being wise’ for too long. Too much blood has been shed in the war for the liberation of the lands stolen by these adventurers. They have to be silenced once and for all, they have to be finally discarded.)

In its editorial, the October 16 issue of *Scântea*, “Fasciștii din presa atâta la crime împotriva poporului maghiar” (Fascists instigate for anti-Hungarian crimes in the press) condemns the articles of Corneliu Coposu published in *Dreptatea* and Popa Augustin’s in *Curierul* for declaring the entire Hungarian nation war criminals.

¹⁷See Páké, Szárazajta, Torda, Cornesti, etc...

¹⁸After the Vienna Verdict the Romanian University of Kolozsvár was moved to Szeben. Among others, professor Dr Ștefan Pascu followed his students to Szeben.

¹⁹Drumul nostru de azi și de totdeauna (Our present and prevailing way), *Desrobirea*, September 20, 1944. See the complete text in the annex.

²⁰Gábor Vincze: *A romániai magyar kisebbség történeti kronológiája* (The History of Hungarian Minority in Romania) 1944-53. Published by the László Teleki Foundation Library and Documentation Service, the Social Scientific and History collection of the JATE Central Library and by the Modern and Recent History Department of JATE, Szeged-Budapest, 1994.

²¹Actually the only Transylvanian Orthodox church official who had not left his congregation was Bishop Hossu.

²²Teleki Béla emlékirata (The memoirs of Béla Teleki). Ib: Zoltán Tibori Szabó’s quoted work.

²³MOL. ROM. TÜK. XIX.-J-1-j., 18.d., 16/b.cs.

²⁴As it is recalled by the villagers.

²⁵Collective memory, Desrobirea on September 21; Szabad Szó (Free Word [Voice]) on November 12, Memoirs.

²⁶Desrobirea, September 21, 1944.

²⁷Minister Vlađescu Rađcoroasa for Nationalities, accompanied by HPA President Gyárfás Kurkó and Bányai László, visited the internment camps at Földvár and Hídvég on March 19, 1945. He [Vlađescu] promised to begin releasing prisoners in two days. Actually, the Brassó concentration camp was started to be dissolved on March 20, and the two death camps closed down before October 29. On April 8, Vlađescu Rađcoroasa announced the release of innocent Hungarian captives of the internment camps at Tg. Jiu and Slobozia has been started. Though the liberation of Sándor Kacsó was announced in the paper Világosság (Light), but the writer was kept in prison for a long time after. Romanian Communist party boss Gh. Gheorghiu Dej visited the labor camps in the Jil Valley in early December, 1944. Shocked by the shameful circumstances, he promised to mediate for the dissolving of the camps. His visit and promise were published in the September 16 issue of newspaper Népi Egység (People's Unity).

²⁸Sándor Kacsó: Nehéz szagú iszap felett (Filthy Mud Under). Autobiography, Vol. III, Published by Kriterion, Bucharest, 1993.

²⁹MOL. ROM. TÜK. XIX.-J-1-j., 18.d., 16/b.cs.

³⁰MOL. ROM. TÜK. XIX.-J-1-j., 18.d., 16/b., cs.

³¹Ildikó Lipcsey: Erdélyi autonómiák (Történeti tanulmányok) (Autonomous Communities in Transylvania [Historical Studies]), Budapest, 1990, pp 49.

³²István Katona Szabó: Nagy remények kora (Erdélyi Demokrácia, 1944-1948), (The Age of Great Hopes, [The Transylvanian Democracy]), Published by Magvető, Budapest, 1990, Vol. I, pp 79.

³³Scânteia, November 9, 1944., Népi Egység, November 15, 1944.

³⁴Published in the November 9 issue of Világosság.

³⁵Gusztáv Molnár: Önrendelkezési törekvések az "Észak-Erdélyi Köztársaság" idején. (Ambitions for self-government in the time of the [idea] "Republic of Northern Transylvania"). October 11, 1944–March 13, 1945. Romániai Magyar Szó (Hungarian Word [Voice] in Romania), January 26, 1994, part 4.

³⁶Yehuda Lahav quoted work pp 145.

³⁷NDF – National Democratic Front – Frontul National Democrat

³⁸Yehuda Lahav quoted work pp 149.

³⁹Népi Egység (People's Unity), November 19, 1944.

⁴⁰Tofik Islamov: Erdély a szovjet külpolitikában a második

világháború alatt (Transylvania in Soviet Foreign Affairs during the Second World War). Múltunk (Our Past), 1994/1-2.

⁴¹The September 27 radio-speech of Mihai Popovici. His October 9 speech addressing the Peasant Party mass meeting in Brassó

⁴²MOL. KÜM BÉO, XIX J-1-a, 63., IV-149., 41.026/Bé.

Counties Csík and Háromszék in September-October 1944

As it stood defenseless before the advancing Romanian and Soviet troops, Háromszék became the most endangered area after the turn in Bucharest on August 23, 1944. Hungarian and German military leaders decided to give up the “sack-shaped” area of the Székelyland, and to organize their defense along River Maros (Mures), similarly to the situation of the Romanian invasion in 1916. Consequently, the military authorities ordered the evacuation of the region in the first days of September 1944. Although the order referred to the entire civilian population, mainly intellectuals and the employees of public administration, education, justice and healthcare left the region. Besides city dwellers, the village intelligentsia (priests, teachers, notaries, etc.) left their homes as well. Those who stayed on had to bear serious consequences. Only in County Háromszék 6,000 families, approximately 30,000 persons were forced to leave their homes.¹ (In most places the majority of farmers hid in the surrounding mountains, woods, sheep-pens or remote hamlets.) According to a report by Béla Demeter, only 60,000 of the 170,000 inhabitants of County Csík remained in their homes by the end of December 1944. Demeter stated that people in Csík did not flee; they were simply driven away by Hungarian and German soldiers. (Instead of 8,200, the entire population of Csíkszereda and Zsögöd was 2,100 at the time.)²

Romanian-Soviet troops entered Sepsiszentgyörgy, the heart of County Háromszék, on September 9, 1944. (Csíkszereda fell to their hands two days later, on the 11th.) Except for a minor skirmish between retreating German and advancing Romanian soldiers in the neighborhood of Sepsiszentgyörgy, there were no serious fights in the valley of River Ólt during the first days of September. Returning Romanian administration followed the advancing Romanian troops. The confidential report of November 7, 1944³, forwarded to the Presidium of the Council of Ministers gave account on the state of public administration. Prefect Victor Cerghi Pop and five of his magistrates set up their office at Háromszék. Only 45 of the 65 notaries reported to work. The police and gendarme also returned.

The personnel of the appointed district education inspectorate appeared in full number but teachers reported to work only in a small number. Courts did not returned yet. Beside the Romanian currency (lei) the Hungarian (pengo) one was still in circulation. (Rate of exchange: 1:30.) Prefect Aurel Tetu also returned to Csík with only four of his 5 magistrates, and 21 of 59 notaries presented themselves. Neither education nor Court personnel returned. Most of the Hungarian inhabitants of cities fled.

For the time being, Romanian administration could only partially fulfill its tasks. Yet the report stated that *as a result of the energetic work of Prefect V. Cerghi Pop things are settling down at a quick pace.*⁴ What did it mean in practice? The Prefects tried to settle occurring problems in the spirit of *restitutio in integrum*, dictated by the instructions of government commissioner Ionel Pop.⁵ Hungarian signs were taken off everywhere. According to the government commissioner's decree, officials who held offices before August 30 1940 were restored to their position and were obliged to return to their posts. Hungarian schools established after August 1940, many of them were opened in the same building which were taken away from the Hungarians between 1920-1940, were closed down or they were forcibly taken over by the returning Romanian staff again. Instead of providing them protection against the Maniu-guards, the returning gendarme often terrorized local inhabitants. The arrival of Orthodox priests, who fled in September 1940 from Háromszék, in September 1944 caused serious problems. They also continued in the spirit of *restitutio in integrum* their forced conversion activity pursued between the two world wars.⁶

The letter⁷ written by the inhabitants of Bölön (Belin) of May 31, 1945 (already under Groza's government) give us an insight view of the activity of the Romanian public administration. According to the letter, Romanian troops entered the village on September 2. Hungarian officials (who did not flee!) were dismissed. The army brought a notary from the neighboring village, Lüget, and János Kölcse (Ion Calcea?), who fled in 1940, was appointed magistrate. The Romanian gendarme and the Romanian villagers (Maniu-guard members, according to the letter) terrorized Hungarian inhabitants. They were beaten, hand grenades were thrown at two houses and the mother of the Calvinist minister was badly beaten. Romanian gendarme arrested the members of the Székely Frontier Guard Forces, but they were released by the Soviets. Along with young factory workers, they were taken to internment camps at Földvár, Tövis (Teius), Nagyenyed (Aiud) and

Gyulafehérvár. *Many prisoners died because of food shortage during the winter. The measures were aimed at the physical destruction of the Hungarian people.*⁸ **These grievances could have been written in many other villages as well.** Local survey on the activity of the Romanian public administration in September-November 1944 could provide further important details.

We have to answer the question: What was the reason for the bloody terror in Székelyland? The **causes for atrocities** were quite varied. Almost anything from an old military bugle to an empty grenade box and unloaded arms found in the attics without ammo, was enough for the Maniu guardsmen to produce resistance fighters and hiding Hungarian partisans **under the pretext of hunting for partisans**. There would have been lesser reprisals if they had **really** been hunting for partisans or for those who kept arms at home illegally.⁹

Another pretext was the revenge for the demolition or damaging of Orthodox churches in Székelyland after the Second Vienna Verdict, or the re-orthodoxization of believers who in meantime returned to their original (Calvinist, Catholic) religions.

Many sources say that the volunteers in the autumn 1944, and later the authorities of the Groza government after March 6, 1945, considered the **Székely Frontier Guard Forces**, operating under the command of the 2nd Transylvanian army, as an **irregular and volunteer units**.¹⁰ Therefore Guardsmen looked first of all for their members both at Szárazajta and at Csíkszentdomokos (Sîndominic). (Though the search provided a good opportunity for robbery and murder as well.)

The third reason was **personal revenge**. There are several examples for it at Szárazajta, Csíkszentdomokos and Csíkdánfalva (Danesti).

Anti-Hungarian Atrocities in Háromszék

According to eyewitnesses' testimonies¹¹, the volunteers, under the command of Captain Gavril Olteanu, marched in Sepsiszentgyörgy with ceremony on September 19, ten days after the Romanian troops.¹² The guardsmen, arriving from the direction of Szotyor, quartered on the building of Mikó College. They thrown the valuable books and furniture to the street. Their initial action consisted of search for hidden arms, but it was a mere pretext for robbery and looting. An appeal was published on September 20 in

Desrobirea under the title of “*Our Present and Prevailing Way*”, inviting their Transylvanian brothers to join. The article mentions Iuliu Maniu as the founder of volunteer commandos: “*The Transylvanian volunteers of the Iuliu Maniu regiments have joined the army to bring the hour of final victory closer. Some of them have started for the final battle. (...) The others maintain law and order in cooperation with the military authorities. (...) Transylvanian Romanians! Let us regain our freedom by fire and blood. We will destroy Hungarian prisons and we will chase Hungarian-German hangmen out of towns and villages. We will take our cruel revenge for the four-year occupation. Let Romanian firearms and bayonets declare final sentence over the murderers of the Puszta [Hungarian steppe]. (...) Transylvanian brothers! Gather under the banner hoisted by Iuliu Maniu...*”

The September 12th issue of the Desrobirea gave report on the actions of the volunteers, stating that they continued to round up terrorists from villages. Let us see some examples to show the real nature of these actions. We, however, have to state it that these facts are nothing but the **tip of the iceberg**...

It is written in the records of January 13, 1945¹³ that guardsmen raped István Kovács' pregnant wife in **Árkos** (Arcus) on September 22. According to the testimony made by Vilmos Kisgyörgy¹⁴ Magistrate István Vánca compiled a list of those who had been members of the Székely National Defense Force. Most of the 70 persons were finally released in exchange for cash or food, but seven people condemned for anti-state activity were taken to the prison in Sepsiszentgyörgy and then to the death camp of Földvár. Arkos citizens say that those who called the guardsmen into the village were driven by personal revenge. Although they have no memory of István Kovacs, otherwise a Sepsiszentgyörgy-resident, they still have vivid memories of the robberies and abuses committed by Olteanu's people: *They took away everything they could move, animals, cattle, poultry, everything.* (V. K.)

According to a Desrobirea article, on September 23, a group of 120 volunteers, led by M. Florea, *went to the villages of **Gidófalva** and **Zoltán** and in cooperation with local authorities, they made adequate measures required by the situation.*¹⁵ (my italics) We have to read this report under certain reserves, as there were 100-150 volunteers stationing in Sepsiszentgyörgy at the time. It is highly improbable that the whole company moved to the two villages. The **Gidófalva** people remember no guardsmen to visit their village.¹⁶ The only thing they remember is the brutality and ravages of the entering Soviet troops.

Under the title “Voluntarii ardeleni stârpesc ultimele resturi de banditi. Crimele din comuna Páchia” (Volunteers annihilate the last remains of the bandits. The crime of Páké.), the September 24 issue of Desrobirea writes about the revenge campaign of captain Olteanu at Páké a couple of days after the volunteers arrived in Sepsiszentgyörgy. Two Romanians were murdered that village, Olteanu, accompanied by 50-60 volunteers went to Páké to revenge it. According to the villagers, retiring German soldiers had probably killed the two shepherds. Their hanged bodies were found on the banks of River Feketeügy two days after the front had moved away.¹⁷ The procedure at Páké was the same as in Szárazajta and other villages: one inhabitant called the volunteers for reasons of personal revenge. As a reprisal for the death of the two Romanians, Olteanu arrested **100** Székely villagers to execute them without any legal sentence. The innocent victims were lucky to have two Soviet soldiers incidentally patrolling the village. Albert Illyés, one of the accused, who had learnt Russian in a First World War prisoner's camp, reported to the soldiers that they were to be illegally executed. The Soviets ordered the Olteanu guardsmen at gunpoint to set the Hungarian free. Not forgetting to pillage it first, Olteanu's men had left the village in the end.

There were no murders committed at Sepsiszentgyörgy, but pillage and abuse was customary. According to the records of the HPA, merchant Béla Lapikás was arrested and beaten, and his warehouse was looted.¹⁸ Volunteers, wearing all kinds of uniforms, Romanian, captured Hungarian and German ones or even civilian clothes, had no official supplies. Consequently they lived on pillage and robbery during all the way they were raving in Székelyland.

As the guardsmen was marching on northward along River Olt, their appearance at Szárazajta, the remote Erdovidék village is rather queer. To entirely conceive the matter, we have to go back to the history of the settlement between the two world wars.

Szárazajta: Local Vengeance or Fight Against Partisans?

Romanians have been living in the small village since the 18th century. Alike the farmer Székelys, the Romanians were shepherds. As their trade was prosperous, they managed to buy great amount of lands from impoverished Székely villagers from the end of 19th century on. As a result of two centuries of co-existence – except for their religion that remained Orthodox – a gradual

change in language had started (without forced assimilation) (As a 1930 Romanian census revealed, 1,649 Hungarian and only 16 Romanian inhabitants¹⁹ lived in Páké. The 1920 Transylvanian census, using the method of name etymology, recorded 217 Romanians in the village.²⁰ (301 villagers were Orthodox or Greek Catholic in 1910.)

Re-romanising Hungarianised Romanians was one of the main tasks of Romanian governments between the two world wars. As one of its results was that during the 1921 land reform all persons of *Romanian names* or of Orthodox or of Greek Catholic denominations – who might not even speak Romanian at all – received land, while many Székelys just as entitled to it did not. Beside the unfair discrimination in land distribution, grazing was another serious reason of conflicting interest. Between the two world wars the Székelys often quarrels with Romanians shepherds as they used to graze their sheep on the cultivated lands of the former. In most cases the authorities supported the cause of the majority Romanians.

After the two-decade Romanian rule, Northern Transylvanian Hungarians/Székelys welcomed the entering Hungarian troops. The Székely inhabitants of the village celebrated the news of the Vienna Verdict with frantic joy – but not only joy got into some of their heads. A few lads threw stones at the houses of Romanians, but beside minor damages, nothing serious happen. (In his declaration published by the end of the 80s, János Berszán (Ioan Birsan), said to be the instigator of the Szárazajta events, mentioned only **shatters** but not crimes nor torture en mass.²¹) But after Hungarian gendarme showed up law and order was re-established. No atrocities occurred. The Orthodox priest of Baráthely was the only one to leave the village with the retiring Romanian administration after the Vienna Verdict. Those who were forcibly converted to Orthodox religion between the two world wars, returned to their ancestors' churches, like in many other Székely villages.²² In 1941, the Romanians were also called up [in the Hungarian army]. They submitted themselves to military service together with the Székelys. Although, the village was located close to the Vienna border no Romanians fled for Southern (Romanian) Transylvania.

After the breakaway on August 23, 1944, the frontline quickly reached the village. Unfortunately local intellectuals, including Calvinist minister Géza Kolumbán, teacher and parish choir-master Viktor Incze, left the village when the evacuation order came. **The village was left without leaders. On September**

2, a minor skirmish between the advancing Romanian troops and the German rear-guards took place on the confines of the village. As a result of an unexpected German tank counterattack from the direction of Nagybacon (Ba[˘]t,ani), the Romanians suffered considerable losses. *“Well, looking out of the cellar window, we saw the retreating Romanian soldiers running into the village. Some were wounded, or something else, in this or that statement, some were undressed and other lost their caps. They were running away.”*²³ Villagers gathered almost twenty corpses in the streets. In meantime both the Romanians and the Germans retired. However, the unexpected Romanian defeat had to be explained: The villagers helped the Germans in one or another way, and for sure, they murdered wounded Romanian soldiers. Szárazajta consequently was a village of partisans and had to be severely punished.²⁴ Eyewitnesses we have interviewed state – and the same was reported by Albert Incze – that **Tódor Bardoc** (Teodor Barduti) was the one who **called the guardsmen into the village**, when he heard that they were stationing in Sepsiszentgyörgy. It is supposed that Bardoc presented Olteanu a complete list.²⁵ The guardsmen appeared at Közéapajta on September 25, Monday morning. No one was injured there, as Magistrate György M. Vánca (Gheorghe Vancea) told Olteanu: *There is nobody guilty here. Anyone who committed any crime has already taken to the citadel in Brassó.*²⁶ **The decent local magistrate of Romanian origin rescued the Székely population of Közéapajta from the revenge of Olteanu and his commando.** (Although he himself had quite a good reason for revenge as he was persecuted by Fascist bandits in the first days of 1940!²⁷) Pretending to go for searching German soldiers, and traveling on wagons confiscated in Közéapajta, the 30-35-strong group of volunteers arrived in Szárazajta on the afternoon of the 25th. *When we left the house – Tódor Bardoc lived in the next one – I saw a group of men arriving They were dressed half civilian, half military, and half Hungarian, half Romanian. A group, a platoon.* (B. N.) The guardsmen were quartered in the houses of Tódor Bardoc, Simon Bogdán and other Romanian villagers. One of the local lads, Gábor Domokos was also ordered to transport the guardsmen from Közéapajta on his cart. According to his recorded testimony, he saw the list in Olteanu’s hand. He even warned Gyula Németh and his family, that their names were on the list, but they did not believe him.²⁸

Béla Gecse was the first victim. With the help of local

Romanian guides, volunteers started to collect the people on the list at the dawn of the 26th. Around half past four, a group of guardsmen appeared at Gecse's house. When they “knocked” at the door with the rifle butt, Béla Gecse tried to escape, but one of the guardsmen shot him dead. His name was recorded in the official death register on October 16, 1944, with the note *accidentat de război* (war accident!).²⁹ But the death register of the Calvinist Church has always recorded the real reason and it recorded this case as execution by the Maniu-guard.

József Málnási was the second victim of the massacre. During the 1945 trial of the guardsmen in Brassó, his widow confessed the following: *On September 26, Bogdan Alexandru and a volunteer broke into their house. The volunteer³⁰, defendant Romoceanu – as she recognized him at the trial – fired at her husband. He was taken to the schoolyard, where he died of his wound. József Málnási also tried to escape. He was shot with an explosive bullet in his thigh. The most horrible was that then this man who was shot and who was wounded, was taken to the schoolyard and exposed on a blanket in front of the other Hungarians there. The poor man was begging right to the end for somebody to give him a slip of water or shoot him dead! (S. I.)*

At early dawn, the guardsmen and their Romanian guides collected the unaware Székelys who were just preparing for work. János Berszán and one of the volunteers picked up **Izsák Németh**. He had a personal conflict with him, dating back to before the war (when Németh once beaten Berszán for grazing his sheep on his second crop). Simon Berszán took the guardsmen to **Lajos Elekes**. Elekes was accused by Olteanu of firing at Romanian soldiers from the bell tower of the Szárazajta Calvinist church.³¹ Viktor Bogdán and Ferdinánd Bardoc made **Gyula Nagy** and his son, **Gyula Nagy Jr.** taken to the school hall, the “arrest room” for the accused. (They were accused with firing at Romanian soldiers from a German tank...) **Dániel Nagy** was lucky of being informed on the arrival of the shady visitors by József Benko”, a coachman from Középjajta, he managed to hide and escape. In the morning hours, Simon Berszán made it announced by the village drummer that all Hungarians aged between 16 and 60, had to gather at the schoolyard. Those who would hide and not appear, were to be shot dead.³² Hearing of the order, **Albert Szép** started off for the schoolyard. But his wife, **Regina Málnási**, was taken there by force, and accused her of cutting off the finger of a wounded Romanian officer in order to take his ring. The **Nagy brothers**, **Sándor** and **András** were dragged in the building of the

kindergarten behind the school. (One of the sources states that 26 accused were gathered in the schoolyard.)³³

5-600 Hungarians were surrounded by gunmen at the schoolyard, with a machine-gun pointed at the frightened mass from the roof of the building on the opposite side. The wounded József Málnási and the body of Béla Gecse were taken there too. Captain Olteanu read the accusation according to which the accused had committed various crimes against the Romanian army. Then he announced their death sentence. (*No mercy for Hungarians!*)³⁴ Then the guardsmen started a show of force to intimidate the Hungarians. **Ferenc Kálnoki**, chairman of landowners' community of the village, who due to his positions had many enemies among the Romanians anyway, was laid on a stump and beaten half death with a wet rope. He was followed by his son-in-law, **Zoltán Incze**, then **Viktor Nagy** and [Ms.] **Sára Németh. Gábor Domokos**, who warned the Németh family, shared their fate and was mercilessly beaten up.

Unimaginable cruelties followed this "warming up". Sándor Nagy and András Nagy were brought in. They were accused of hacking wounded Romanian soldiers to pieces by spades and hoes.³⁵ Other sources nevertheless explain the murder rather differently: *Some local Hungarians captured one of our wounded officers and killed him with an axe, then they cut his finger to steal his ring. The battalion command decided to sentence them to death and to be beheaded.*³⁶ Albert Vaszi claims that the guardsmen returning to Sepsiszentgyörgy from Szárazajta *said that ...they executed that man, they beheaded him because that man... An officer, a Romanian one, got wounded, and he had an engagement ring on his finger, they wanted to take it off but they could not, so they cut his finger off. That was why they [the volunteers] beheaded them. I have heard the lads were brothers, that's what they said.* The problem is that **at that time** they did not accuse Sándor Nagy and András Nagy of cutting the soldier's finger off and stealing his ring. In fact it was the personal revenge of Sandi and Guszti Bogdan, who had a tussle with the Nagy brothers once when they took part in compulsory paramilitary ["Levente" youth org.] training.³⁷ The hatchet hit Sándor Nagy first. (He put his head on the stump thinking he was going to be beaten.) Then András, his elder brother, was dragged to the stump who was begging for his life on his knees. Because of his wry-neck, three times did the hatchet hit, and could not cut his head off. The second bullet fired at him finally put an end to his suffering. *The most horrifying thing was that his mother and his father had to watch all this. His mother*

fainted. (S. I.) According to the quoted death register, the two persons died in war accident – accident de război – as well. The death register of the Calvinist Church records beheading by the Maniu guard for the cause of death. In connection with the decapitation of the brothers, we have to speak about the headsman.

The statement that the executioner was a man from Sepsibükszád occurs frequently in the study of Levente Benkó. (Gergely Nagy, the brother of the beheaded victims, who was doing his military service at that time, still believes that Albert Vaszi, living in one of the neighboring villages, was the murderer.) Many people stated the same. Eyewitnesses nevertheless recognized Traian Stana, the headsman of the axe, at the 1945 Brassó trial. What are the reasons for this misbelief? Without going into the details, we can state the following.³⁸ The Romanians captured Albert Vaszi from Sepsibükszád and three of his companions at Illyefalva in September 1944. As his name was originally Romanian, they had taken him for a Romanian and released him from the Brassó barracks three days later. As he heard there were call-ups for partisan hunting guards or something at the city's tourist office, he joined them thinking that he would be able to get to Sepsibükszád with the volunteers. (*Villages had already been full of Russians, there was no other possibility of avoiding them.*) By the time he realized what he had got into, it was too late. (*They promised land or juridical positions to those who joined in...*) As he did not even speak Romanian well, they didn't entirely trust him, thus he wasn't given firearms. He had to go with them as far as Csíkszereda, where he could finally escape. Several Szárazajta coachmen stopped by his brother-in-law in Sepsibükszád in November 1944, and betraying, he stated that Albert Vaszi was one of the guardsmen and he for sure was in Szárazajta, too. (*He told it because he wanted them to kill so he would inherit my properties...*). A couple of weeks later the people's militia took Albert Vaszi to Sepsiszentgyörgy. He was questioned for several days. When eyewitnesses faced him, they did not recognize the Szárazajta executioner of axe in him. (*Neither of them said he saw me. Everyone said he didn't look like me, he was not me...*) He was released next day, but he could never get rid of the suspicion. He is still said to be the Bükszád executioner even these days...³⁹

But let us return to the accused. After the brothers, the guardsmen executed the **Szép couple**. Regina Málnási, the wife, was accused by Olteanu of cutting the finger of a wounded Romanian soldier in order to steal his ring during the fights in early September. (The same accusation was leveled against the Nagy brothers!) Actually the cause was totally different. She was taking

care for the wounded officer and he gave her the ring for gratitude till the time he would come back for it. By the time the officer's letter thanks arrived, it was too late. *The truth we prove by the handwriting of that very officer, is that Mrs. Albert Szép née Regina Málnási was given (more precisely: got) the ring as a sign of his gratitude. The letter of this officer about the ring is deposited in the police headquarters of Sepsiszentgyörgy.*⁴⁰ (my italics) Presumably, the letter has disappeared forever. Although it was mentioned at the Brassó trial, but it was not seen even at that time.⁴¹

After they executed Albert Szép couple, the crowd roared and Olteanu made fired at them. A gypsy man, László Tamás was seriously wounded and he died later on that day. He was **the seventh victim** of the massacre.⁴² The accused were then shot one after the other: *Uncle Lajos Elekes who, according to my mother, was shot several times and he was shouting all along: 'who did I hurt? what's my crime? I do not ask much, I have two daughters, I have two little daughters, please let me live', died only after the seventh shot. Then he was followed by the others...* (S. I.) (Elekes Lajos was not even in the village at the time of the fights in early September.) József D. Nagy was the luckiest. Although they fired at him several times, only one hit him and had blown his upper row of teeth out. When Olteanu heard about him surviving the execution, he only said: *Well, if he survived, he must be innocent.*⁴³ The man who miraculously survived the events, outlived the tribulations by ten years and died at the age of 50... Three men fired at **Béla Szép**, yet he was only wounded. With no medicines and proper medical aid, he died ten days later. (Like Lajos Elekes, he was not at home at the time of the September battle either.) The oldest victims, **Benjámín Szabó** and **Gyula Németh**, were 63 and 61, respectively. Gyula Németh and his two sons, **Ákos** and **Bertalan** were accused of hacking wounded Romanian soldiers by spades and hoes. The two brothers were not even at home at that time. Viktor Bogdán and Tódor Bardoc testified before Olteanu that they served together with the two Némeths in the army. Their father could not escape. He was shot to dead together with Benjámín Szabó by several shots. Tódor Bardoc, who had just testified the innocence of Bertalan Németh, spoke again, this time in the defense of **Gyula Nagy** and **Gyula Nagy Jr.**, saying that *this men [Gyula Nagy Sr.] could not be at home because he served together with me in the Székely Frontier Guard in the valley of River Úz.*⁴⁴ János Berszán and Domokos Berszán cleared Nagy Gyula Jr. **Imre Máthé** escaped by telling Olteanu: Ask the soldier behind the

machine-gun, on the roof of the building! Ask him whether he was he with me at Sepsiszentgyörgy in the army, or not?⁴⁵ By the testimony of Vasile Surdu, the soldier in question, Imre Máthé got away.⁴⁶ Then the volunteers killed **Izsák Németh** was executed then. He was the eleventh victim.

At this moment something happened that has not been clarified to the present. Shots were heard from the cemetery. (According to Viktor Szép, son of Albert Szép, magistrate Viktor Berszán managed elude the guardsmen vigilance and alerted the Soviet soldiers stationing in the neighboring area (in Nagybacon perhaps). According to another hypothesis the son of the Protestant minister, Géza Kolumbán Jr. was the one to informed the Soviets on the massacre.)⁴⁷ Whoever was firing at the village confines, he managed to make Olteanu to stop the massacre. He ordered the villagers to bury the corpses immediately. We were forced to bury them on the spot. (B. N.) Lajos Elekes, Béla Gecse, József Málnási, András Nagy, Sándor Nagy, Gyula Németh, Izsák Németh, Benjámín Szabó , Mrs. Albert Szép née Regina Málnási and Albert Szép were buried without priest and tolls – as well as Béla Szép, who died of his wounds on October 7,. (Orthodox László Tamás was presumably buried on the 26th as well.)⁴⁸

Olteanu and his men pillaged Szárazajta after the massacre. The wagons were soon full with stolen goods. The carts escorted by a couple of volunteers left for Közéapajta, while Olteanu was having a feast of the pillages cattle in Viktor Berszán's yard. However, there were Romanians in the village who were terrified by what had happened: *Then Rudi Berszán's parents came. They were wailing: Oh, what have you done? Oh, you have not stopped them!*⁴⁹

Finally, Olteanu and his guardsmen departed, but there was no peace left for the villagers. Some of the Romanian lads, intoxicated with the victory, continued to molest Hungarian inhabitants. *They were shooting into our homes in the nights We didn't dare to sleep at home.* (B. N.) Peace was finally restored by the entering Soviet troops. There would have been serious consequences had the Soviets not arrived in these villages. (S. I.) Inhabitants still keep speaking about the Soviet misses who maintained peace and order. But some of the villagers had to face bad luck even after this sad event was over. *Sándor Groza was their (the Soviets) interpreter. He gave me a sheet of paper with five names on it. The names of András Incze, Károly Szép, Pisti Nagy, Lajos Koncza were written on it... As the gendarme didn't speak Hungarian, he told me to ask them to check in at the station with two days' provisions. At that time altogether **some 72 lads**, who had*

just returned from the war, were taken away from here to Földvár. Three or four of them came back, the rest died there. (B. N.)

Summing up the Szárazajta horrible events, we can state the following:

1) The Maniu-guardsmen were invited by several local Romanians who had personal scores to settle with Hungarians.

2) The appearance of the volunteers took the inhabitants by surprise.

3) As local intelligentsia had fled, there was no leader to advise and unite the villagers. (*I would say the better and braver people were the ones they executed...*) (S. I.)

4) Victims had no possibility to prove their cause. There was no actual trial implied.

5) Like in other places, the returned Romanian gendarme assisted the illegal murders.

6) Magistrate Viktor Berszán bears the severe responsibility for not trying to stop the massacre, unlike the Magistrate, György M. Vánca of Közéapajta did.

Ferenc Imreh

Notes

¹The letter by István Kovács addressed to Minister of Foreign Affairs János Gyöngyösi. MOL KÜM BÉO, XIX-J-1-a, 61. d., IV-138, 2077/Bé.-1946.

²Report by official delegate Béla Demeter on EMGE survey in Counties Szolnok-Doboka, Beszterce-Naszód, Maros-Torda, Udvarhely, Háromszék and Csík on December 1, 1944–January 2, 1945, pp 17-21. PIL. 937 f., 11 o.é. (Gyula Simó's heritage) see data Csíkszereda and Zsögöd in 1941: Erdély településeinek nemzetiségi (anyanyelvi) megoszlása (The breakdown of Transylvanian settlements by nationality (mother language) 1850-1941., Bp., KSH (Central Statistical Office), 1991. pp 248, 289.

³August 23, 1944. Documente 1944-1945. Bucharest, 1985., Vol. III., Doc. Nr.986, pp 203-208.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Universul, October 1, 1944. publishes the scope authority of the government commissioner (Organizarea comisariatului pentru administrarea regiunilor eliberate.)

⁶About forced conversion practice between the two world wars, see: József György Oberding: Az erdélyi római katolikusok áttérése a görögkeleti egyházba (The conversion of Roman Catholics into Greek Catholic in

Transylvania). Kisebbségvédelem (Minority Protection), 1941/1-2. p 11-14. (After 1940, the ones who had been forced to convert naturally returned to the religion of their ancestors, an event presented by the present Romanian nationalistic bibliography as a conversion forced by the Horthysts. See: Mihai Fatu: Biserica românească din nord-vestul României sub ocupația horthystă. 1940-1944. Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1985. p 137) See the Komolló-case later.

⁷Source: MOL KÜM BÉO, XIX-J-1-a, 61.d., IV-145., 40.005/Küm.

⁸The above place.

⁹See, for example, the Szárazajta-case. People who had not even been present were accused of armed resistance or of murdering wounded Romanian soldiers.

¹⁰The estates of people **enlisted in** the Székely Frontier Guard were confiscated on these grounds during the realization of the land reform. See: Gábor Vincze: Az 1945-ös erdélyi földreform – a román kisebbségpolitika harci eszköze (The 1945 Land Reform in Transylvania – Means of Combat of Romanian Minority Policy . Századok (Centuries), 1995. megjelenés előtt (to be published).

¹¹Interviews with Mihály Bunika, August 7, 1994 Sepsiszentgyörgy, and with Albert Vaszi, August 6, 1994 Sepsibükszád. Audio tape in author's possession.

¹²Desrobirea, September 20, 1944.

¹³Where there are no specific notes, we quote from the grievance-list compiled for the Peace Preparation Department of Budapest Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *Az Erdélyi magyarág ellen 1944. VIII. 23. óta [Románia katonai átállása óta] elkövetett atrocitások (Atrocities committed against Transylvanian Hungarians since August 23, 1944 [since Romania's military breakaway])*. Findspot: MOL, Román TÜK, XIX-J-1-j, 18. d., 16/ b cs. (Hereinafter: Record.)

¹⁴Interview with Vilmos Kisgyörgy, Árkos, April 1, 1995. Tape in author's possession.

¹⁵Desrobirea, September 23, 1944.

¹⁶Interview with Mrs. András Nagy and István Veress, Gidófalva, April 2, 1995. Tape in author's possession.

¹⁷Interview with survivors.

¹⁸Record, p 12.

¹⁹Erdély településeinek nemzetiségi (anyanyelvi) megoszlása (The breakdown of Transylvanian settlements by nationality (mother language) 1850-1941., Bp., KSH (Central Statistical Office), 1991. p 306.

²⁰Elemér Jakabffy: Erdély statisztikája (Statistical Figures on Transylvania). Lugos, Published by Magyar Kisebbség (Hungarian Minority), 1923, p 55.

²¹Gh Bodea-V Suci: Administratia militara horthysta in nord-vestul României septembrie–noiembrie 1940 (The Horthyist Military Administration in North-Western Romania in September-November, 1940) Kolozsvár, Published by Dacia, 1988., p 371.(The book is a typical product of the last years of Ceusescu's regime. It was designed to increase anti-Hungarian hysteria. Its scientific value is negligible.)

²²Codreanu's quoted work, p 129, *98 families, that is almost of the entire populace of Szárazajta were forced to join some of the Hungarian denominations.* (my italics. Codreanu's statement is absurd, as only ten percent of the 3,200 inhabitants were of Orthodox or Greek Catholic denomination in 1920.

²³Interview with Benjámín Nagy, Szárazajta, August 9, 1994. Tape in author's possession.

²⁴See the report by Albert Incze, president of the local Hungarian Popular Association, on May 28 1945 about the murders in September. MOL KÜM BÉO, XIX-J-1-a, 61. d., IV-145., 40.005/Küm (Hereinafter: Incze-report.) In his detailed study of 62-part (Szárazajta) published in paper Háromszék in Sepsiszentgyörgy, Levente Benko writes that Gyula Nagy Sr. and his son were also accused of firing at Romanian soldiers from a German tank. Szárazajta, part 24, October 29, 1994.(Hereinafter: Benko.)

²⁵Incze-report and Benko part 21. Albert Vaszi, marching with the Maniu-guards, stated in the interview that Olteanu and his men were actually invited to Szárazajta. (*Someone had come to Szentgyörgy and called them.*) About Vaszi see later.

²⁶Benko, part 19.

²⁷Bodea-Suciu, id., p 370. The magistrate's name is written in Hungarian orthography in the book.

²⁸Incze-report and Benko part 21, Desrobirea, September 28.

²⁹Ibid.(War accident is registered for the cause of death **in all cases** published by Benko.)

³⁰Népi Egység, April 18, 1945, p 3.

³¹Benko, part 24. According to Minister Sándor Nagy the territorial quarrel between Simon Berszán and Lajos Elekes rooted back to the 1930s.

³²Incze-report.

³³Record, p 13.

³⁴Ibid. and Benko, part 27. (November 3)

³⁵Benko, part 28. (November 5)

³⁶Zig-Zag (Zigzag), December 30, 1990.

³⁷Benko, part 29. (November 8.)

³⁸Quotes from the interview with Albert Vaszi on August 6, 1994.

³⁹See: András Süto: Istenem, Szárazajta! (My God, Szárazajta), May 7

1994, Háromszék. The quoted Zig-Zag article also says: Stana Traian, un soldat de numai un metru douzaeci a dus sentinta la indeplinire. Ucigasului i s-a taiat capul cu secura. (The sentence was executed by Stana Traian, a soldier no taller than 1.20 meters. The murderer's head was cut off with an axe). The reporter of the Népi Egység stated the same in connection with the guardsmen in Brassó (Népi Egység, April 18 and May 4, 1945.)

⁴⁰Incze-report.

⁴¹Answering our questions, Viktor Szép, son of the victims, states that **he handed the letter over to the local authorities, and it was sent to the authorities in Sepsiszentgyörgy.** (my italics) Népi Egység, April 18, 1945.

⁴²Benko" investigated and found out that the departed Gipsy man was called László Tamás. The Record states that his name was Lázár László. (As his cousin was wounded as well, they might have mixed up their names.) Benko", part 36.

⁴³Quote from Benko", part 39.

⁴⁴Quote from Benko", part 43.

⁴⁵Quote from Benko", part 44.

⁴⁶According to point 14 of the Record Mrs. Albert (Gizella) Gyó"ri and another 13 people were released. Benko" confirms it in part 48, however, he states that only 8-9 people escaped.

⁴⁷Benko", part 45.

⁴⁸Benko", part 47, quotes the note in the Calvinist Church death register: *Without funeral rites.*

⁴⁹Benko", part 49, quotes Mrs. Kisgyörgy née Erzsébet Fekete of Közéapajta.

A Lucky Village: Komolló

What happened at Szárazajta **could have easily happened** at Komolló, a small village near Réty (Reci), if not for two or three courageous villagers and for a more humane **Romanian officer**.

The situation in Komolló is the same as in other Székely villages. During two centuries of co-existence, the Székely locals had gradually assimilated Romanian settlers, who were mostly shepherds. Although they had given up their language, the Romanians preserved their Orthodox or Greek Catholic religion. (The 1850 Austrian census recorded 124 Romanian inhabitants [who were Romanian rather **by origin**, not by language]. In 1930, the Romanian census could only record 5 citizens of Romanian **mother language** in the village.¹) As one of the consequences of the re-Romanising policy of the Romanian governments, the authorities had the right to decide on citizen's nationality after 1918. Pope Iuon (Ioan) Rauca (the villagers used to call him Róka i.e. Fox) who appeared at Komolló At the beginning of the 1930s, decided to raise the number of his flock **by all means**. From surtaxes to molestation by the gendarme, he did everything in his power to increase the number of Orthodox believers. He focused his zeal mainly upon those Calvinists, whose names' analysis suggested Romanian origin. Consequently, out of interest or fear, many villagers joined the Orthodox Church before 1940. (Those who agreed to their conversion were relieved of certain taxes and or even rewarded by giving parcels of reserve lands.) The Church data of the 1930 census are unknown to us. Yet if we consider the 1910 census, the number inhabitants of Orthodox religion presumably did not surpass 160-180 in 1940. The pope increased this number by 60-80. (*Almost half of the villagers were Orthodox believers in 1940. S. D.*)

Some of the local Romanians, though they had assimilated in language, helped the pope in his conversion activity with neophyte zeal. He started the construction of the Orthodox church in 1937. (Up to that time, the flock attended masses at the Angyalos church, a few kilometers from the village.) He made use of the most cruel methods, customary in the area from the 1920s, to execute his

construction plans. Surtaxes, fees, and forced labor (villeinage) were applied at the building of the Komolló church as well. The ground-plot was given to the Orthodox Church during the 1921 land reform. Taxes for the construction were levied not only on the inhabitants of Komolló but also those of the neighboring settlements (as far as the villages of the Kászón region). *We were threshing just then. The gendarmes came. They stopped the thresher and sent the folks to public work. Lunch was ready but we had to leave. No matter what work you had, they took you away from it. We had no excuse. If you didn't go, you got yourself into trouble.* (S. D.) As witnesses say, whatever corrupt Greater Romania was, nobody could buy himself out from under public work.

The bulk of work was done in two years. In summer 1940 the building was almost complete. It was about to be consecrated, when the Vienna Verdict crossed every plan. The verdict passed on August 30, 1940 resulted in two important local events:

1) When the Romanian gendarme already left and Hungarian not yet arrived, some of the people celebrating the Vienna Verdict, drunk as they were (*some hooligan folks*), set the inner scaffolding on fire. It burnt down but no greater damage was made. (Komolló people condemn **the ones who set the fire** even today, saying that whoever they were, they **weren't among them**, they came from Réty.)

2) Those who converted out of interest or fear, returned to the Calvinist Church² after the Vienna Verdict came in force. As most local Orthodox people had been assimilated – *They were Hungarians. Nobody spoke Romanian here!* (S. D.) – some of the villagers, who were originally Orthodox before 1920, joined the Calvinist Church as well. The flock of the Orthodox Church diminished to almost nil.

At 2:40 am on the November 10, 1940, there was an earthquake in the Háromszék basin that caused severe damages the Calvinist churches Komolló, Maksa and other villages as well as the Orthodox church of the village. As the building was a potential danger to the passers-by, local authorities asked for an authorization to pull down the Komolló Orthodox church. The County administration did not dare to assume the risks of demolishing a Romanian church, so they asked for the consent of the **German-Italian military joint committee**. As there were few Orthodox believers in the village – eyewitnesses say – nobody protested. (The Orthodox Church auctioned off the building material!) Yet priest Rauca reported to the Bishopric Council of Szeben: *The local council – presided by Calvinist parson, Ferenc József – decided to demolish the church by public work. Their*

project failed because nobody took part in the work. But the Calvinist parson was in need of building material, as he wanted to complete the Calvinist vicarage. Ten Hungarians helped him demolish the church. They auctioned off the left-over material, which was bought by the Calvinist Church for 135 pengo's (Hungarian currency).³

The fact that there were some people who did not entirely agree to the demolition revealed in the autumn of 1944. Soviets arrived in the village first around September 10. Romanians, including the gendarme and Orthodox pope Iuon Rauca, followed them. János Dombora, Romanian by birth, the former (before 1940) magistrate was re-installed in his office.⁴ The magistrate and the pope **compiled a list** of guilty villagers. (K. b. Nem B. K.???!!!: *Uncle János Tódor, an Orthodox man, told me how this list was set up. Well, the revered father, the Romanian, you know, returned and called a meeting. Then they started from the lower end of the village and categorized every person according to his/her rate of guilt. They examined the whole village... perhaps the ones they had private matters to settle* . It clearly indicated personal revenge that – although they emphasized that those should be punished who had set fire to and demolished the church – **those were also included among the accused who had not even been in the village** at the time of the respective events. Aided by gendarmes, the notary of Uzon (Ozun), the magistrate and the pope made **62 people gathered** and closed up into the hall of the local school **during the first days of October**. Magistrate Dombora went to Brassó and brought a platoon of soldiers with him, telling them they had to execute **four to five people** who had set the Komolló church on fire. (S. D.: *A firing squad arrived. They surrounded the building while women were screaming outside...*) But when the commander of the squad, a first lieutenant saw all those people locked up, not understanding the situation (you told about **four to five people**) he asked: *Aici sunt multi oameni, si pot fi cu totii vinovati! Cine raspunde pentru acesti oameni?* (There are too many people here, they are **too many to be all guilty**. Who is in charge of them?) **The officer was honest**. *When he saw we were so many, he said we couldn't be all guilty. Nothing of the kind was told me!* The Romanian officer did presumably not dare to assume the risk of executing 62 people without a legal sentence. He and his men got into the lorry and returned to Brassó. We can appreciate the significance of his choice if we take into consideration that **the news on Szárzajta had already been heard in Brassó and Komolló by that time**. (S. N.: *The two*

or three locals, who were ready to make their fellow villagers execute at an instant, had the conviction they were allowed to do anything. They knew what had happened there [i.e. at Szárazajta] and they thought... or at least felt that such actions were perfectly legal from that moment on... If the officer were a bad sort, they would have done it... The same would have happened here as well as at Szárazajta...)

It is said that two elderly men, who learnt Russian in the First World War, went to the Soviet garrison in the neighboring Angyalos and reported the events of the previous day. Next day the Soviet officer went to the County center and menaced Prefect Cerghi Pop with decimating the Romanian inhabitants if a hair of the Hungarians was hurt.

But the villagers had still to bear more tribulations. The 62 Hungarians were rounded up again the following morning. The chief constable of Uzon, ordered the gendarme commander to take them to the church, forced them to kneel down and after long curses, he said in conclusion: *A machine gun would be of great help now to shoot everybody!* They started questioning and cruelly beaten a few people. They wanted to know who had set the church on fire. The matter was never cleared up. (They might have not to look for the guilty among the villagers...) Everybody was released that day, but the next morning they all had to report to chief constable of Uzon and, escorted by two gendarmes, to go to Szentivánlaborfalva for picking carrots. After the daytime public work, they had to spent their nights in the prison of Sepsiszentgyörgy for three weeks... (Not only the Komolló people were imprisoned there at that time. More than twenty from Réty 32 villagers from Maksa were also kept there. Many villagers in County Háromszék were dragged there at that time. The Romanian authorities saw that prison cells were crowded.) The Orthodox pope could help the villagers who deserved it... *The commander of the camp said: the ones the priest called, were free...* However, it turned out only **those were set free, who would convert/return to the Orthodox denomination.** (S. D.: *His only aim was to convert everyone to Orthodox... every family. He did not want any other remuneration...*) But there were a lot of people, who refused to pay such a high price for their freedom. *There's no bell that sounds forever!*, they said.

The ones who remained in the prison, soon found it out where they were heading. A Soviet major showed up and asked the chief warden: *Ce fel de oameni sînt astia?* (What kind of people are they?) The chief warden replied: *Cu totii sînt partizani! La Feldioara cu ei!* (They are all partisans! Take them to Földvár!) S. D.: Then

we got really frightened. The pope still not wanted to free everyone. *He told me that you are going to rot here, you bastard! I'll talk to the [Soviet] major and you'll never see the light of day! You'll die here! He told others that he would not receive them into the church, because **their families did not convert.*** Those who were not taken to Földvár managed to survive, and released when the Romanian public administration was turned out of Northern-Transylvania on November 12.

The village also escaped further tribulation. The ones who were taken to Földvár finally escaped, either by bribing the camp commander, or in exchange of conversion, pope Fox took them out of the camp. After the retirement of the administration the people's militia called the pope to account. He was bullied to destroy the conversion documents. Then he thought it would be better to leave the village where he gave the villagers so much trouble.

Summing up the events, we may state that the village escaped local vengeance and revenge. **Not the Maniuguardsmen but the members of the returning public administration were the ones wanted to 'tidy up' the village.** However, according to some of the villagers' memories, the guardsmen planned to come here, too, but one of their mates of Komolló origin, talked them out of it.

It was done out of mere revenge, we knew it exactly... this was a repeated attempt here, but it failed. We were lucky... (S. D.)

Ferenc Imreh

Notes

¹Erdély településeinek nemzetiségi (anyanyelvi) megoszlása (The breakdown of Transylvanian settlements by nationality (mother language) 1850-1941., Bp., KSH (Central Statistical Office), 1991. p 306.

²A document of nationalistic, flagrant faking and distortions, *Teoraera horthysto-fascista în nord-vestul României septembrie 1940–octombrie 1944 (Horthyist-Fascist Terror in Northwestern Romania, September 1940–October 1944)*, Bucharest, 1986, p 238, Meridiane Publishing, states that the Horthyist authorities forced 212 Orthodox persons to convert after 1940.

³The letter was published by Dr. Nicolae Codreanu (Metropolitan of the Bánát): *Biserica românească din nord-vestul țării în timpul prigoanei horthyste. (The Romanian Orthodox Church in the North-West of the Country Under the Horthyist Suppression)*. Editura Institutului Biblic și Misiune a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1986, p.227. "Teroarea....", p. 240, quotes the letter as well.

⁴János Dombora also had some grudge to pay off: He was arrested by the Hungarian authorities in March 1941 and was accused of capturing and torturing almost to death Márton Cóssz of Réty in the 1930s. (Székely Nép, March 2, 1941, Hungarophobe Ex-magistrate of Komolló in Custody.)

County Csík

The Maniu-guards, led by “Captain” Olteanu, left Sepsiszentgyörgy in the last days of September 1944¹. They started off northwards along River Olt. According to records they first stopped for a longer time, half a day, at Csíkkozmás. (This does not mean there were no minor incidents or robberies in the villages they went through.) **They arrived at Csíkkozmás on September 29, 1944.**² Guardsmen looking for firearms found an old military trumpet in the attic of Jakab Bálint’s house. It provided sufficient grounds for them to decide upon his execution for “hiding military material”. He was taken to the quarters of the guardsmen, the magistrate's house. They beaten him and then they gathered some of the villagers to perform the execution in front of them. At that moment – as eyewitnesses say³ – a Soviet soldier appeared with a submachine gun in his hand. He had been wounded and was left in the village to recover. As a result of his determined behavior, the guardsmen gave up their intention to execute the villager but they continued to pillage the village. The house of Jakab Bálint was practically ransacked. “They had taken everything they could. They were searching for food above all.” (F. M.) After they robbed her house, they beat Ms. Anna András hollow. The records say they ransacked ten houses, yet villagers claim the robbery was of greater proportions. Few people had the courage of reporting the truth. The neighboring villages, Csatószeg and Szentsimon are far from the Sepsiszentgyörgy–Csíkszereda main road so these settlements survived the “visit” of the guardsmen. András Simon, the magistrate of the village for a short period in the 1930s, informed the neighboring villages: “*Watch out, the Maniu-guards are approaching. That’s what he said: Maniu-guards. The villagers fled then, so they found nobody there.*” (F. M.)

After this short rest, the guardsmen continued on their way northward. It is most probable that **they arrived at Csíkszereda on September 29 or 30.**⁴ Although the Soviets headquarters was at Szereda, the guardsmen were allowed to pillage freely under the pretext of looking for “partisans and firearms”. “My father said a ragged company visited them. They might have been soldiers, we don't know. One wore a military shirt, another one a cap. Well, what did they do, I asked. They robbed us, they took our clothes,

shoes, everything. They left my mother with the one dress she had on. What could I do? I went to the garrison at Somlya, told them what they did. I was told to look for the guardsmen at the town hotel. I went there. A civilian stopped me. They called him captain and I told him what happened. Didn't I know the Romanian army needed clothes and shoes to chase Germans out even of Berlin, he asked back and sentenced me 25 strokes. Seven or eight of them grabbed me, thrown me across a bed. Two were holding my arms, one hit my behind with a long plank. I shouted and then one of them said: leave him alone, a Soviet officer approaches.”⁵ There were many similar abuses in the city. The records registered at the Csíkszereda town hall reveals that first lieutenant Emil Netobean of the guard beat several victims. Gyula Hajdú, who was later arrested for 4 days, was among them. They beat Lajos Domokos and Lajos Derzsi hollow with a pizzle.⁶ “As usual”, the guardsmen pillaged homes under the pretext of searching for firearms and ammunition. (They were looking for jewels instead of food at that time.) The Hungarian leadership established after the expulsion of Romanian administration in mid-November, recorded several cases. However, we have good reasons to assume that these cases, unfortunately, represent only the tip of the iceberg. The presence of the Soviets did not hinder Olteanu's guardsmen from robbing and beating, but from committing murders. (Sándor Szmuk, assistant magistrate of Gyergyószentmiklós stated that Mihály Boros, Sándor Bányász, and priests Orbán and Madarász, were captured and taken to Csíktapolca by the guardsmen. When Szmuk reported it to the Soviets, they ordered Olteanu, under the penalty of death, to release the prisoners.⁷)

The guard set off **northward around October 4**. We have insufficient knowledge on what happened next. One thing is certain: on November 6, the guardsmen, led by Olteanu and Netobean, were on the rampage in Gyergyószentmiklós, and stayed there for six more days.⁸ According to sporadic testimonies, they only marched through or even avoided the villages along River Olt.⁹ Nevertheless pillaging was nothing compared to what happened at Csíkszentdomokos (Sîndominic) on October 8.

Csíkszentdomokos: The Highlanders' Revenge?

Greek Catholic Romanians lived among the Székely majority at Szentdomokos as well. By the turn of the 20th century they used

to call themselves Greek Catholic Székelys.¹⁰ Between the two world wars Romanian authorities tried to “re-Romanize Székelyized” Romanians. There was no conflict between Hungarian and Romanian villagers. Nevertheless the settlers from Békás who lived at the village periphery caused continuous trouble to the villagers. Part of the huge village territory was alpine pasture, rented by highlanders from Békás and Tölgyes before 1944. After the Romanian take-over, the tenants simply took possession of the debated lands, obviously, by the full support of the Romanian authorities.

The two nationalities of the village lived in peace even after the Vienna Verdict. No church demolition took place either here. But the argument with the inhabitants of Békás was far from settled. The Hungarian authorities forced them by court decision to compensate the damages caused to the common properties of Gyergyószentmiklós, Csíkszentdomokos and Tekeroőpatak under Romanian rule.¹¹ “...there around Háromkút, at the Muhos, the land was an ancient property of Szentdomokos. After the Romanians came in, there was quarrel all the time because the highlanders kept occupying the Domokos mountains. After the arrival of the Hungarians the villagers re-occupied their property and took some of the Romanian cattle, for sure...” (M. Sz.)¹²

According to recollections, the front-line crossed the village in the first half of September. Hungarian and German troops tried to hold up the Romanian and Soviet units along the line of the Carpathians, which burst into the valley of the Olt through the straits of Tölgyes and Gyimes, across the valley of Uz. “When they started to retreat countless Hungarian and German soldiers marched from the straits and went through Tarko and Sötétpatak....There were fights in the villages as well, and we were even bombed several times.”¹³ The Szentdomokos authority and the gendarmes fled, just as the Háromszék ones did. The village was left without leaders because the Catholic priest, the cantor and even the bell-ringer fled. There was nobody to keep villagers together. The Soviets were, as in most Csík villages, the first to come. They appointed Dániel Szabó for a commander of the people’s militia.¹⁴ When Romanian administration arrived with the Romanian army, the gendarme dissolved the people’s militia. Romanian “law and order” was installed. There was an order for all firearms to be handed over. Gavril Olteanu’s “pacification” guardsmen also appeared here a few days after the return of the Romanian notary and gendarme. As one of the witnesses claims, people were not assembled by chance. There was a list that had been composed before their arrival. “There

were about two hundred guardsmen. They were neither soldiers, nor civilians. They had a red-yellow-blue ribbon on their arms. This was their insignia. They said they were the Maniu's, Iuliu Maniu's gang." (A. T.) Several eyewitnesses claim that the guardsmen arrived **from the direction Csíkszenttamás on October 7**. By the time they reached County Csík and the Gyergyó Basin, Olteanu's guard grew in number. The villagers recognized Romanians from Békás, Damuk, Rakottyás, Bükkloka and Tarko, the neighboring mountain villages, joined the guardsmen. Why did the highlanders join guardsmen? They joined them to revenge the real and imaginary decade-long offences they had suffered under the Horthy regime. That they intended to do much more than stealing Szentdomokos cattle, it became clear on September 8...

Eyewitnesses reported a weird fact: "there were a lot of women among them".¹⁵ (One or two women were spotted among the guardsmen when they were at Kozmás. According to the report of Népi Egység, no women were accused during the Brassó trial.)

Olteanu and his men began "to restore law and order" that very day. As usual, they pillaged the houses one after the other, under the pretext of looking for military material and firearms. Actually they were after clothes and food. They mercilessly beat Péter Albert, and broke his arm. "They must have beaten Péter several times. When he fainted, they splashed him with water and started it all over. He looked like Christ..." (A. V.) Lajos Zsóka was also beaten, he was sentenced the 25 strokes, customary in the Romanian army. József Búzás was also whipped. The next day's were yet released victims on Saturday. They thought they had gotten away with beatings and robbery...

The chosen ones were collected again **Sunday morning, on October 8**. They were taken to the garden of Ferenc Dobos. The guardsmen once more raided the village in search for military uniforms and fire-arms. There were many old or thrown-away guns, military uniforms and empty munitions boxes left all over the yards from the fights in September. For the guardsmen it made no difference whether they found an oiled and hidden fire arm or an empty grenade box.

Three men were taken away and executed from the district called Dános of Szentdomokos. **József Kurkó** had some arms. They found his soldier's gun and his hidden rifle as well. (It was not announced at Dános that arms should be handed in.) **Sándor Tímár** ran away, but he returned when they wanted to execute his aunt instead. ("...then the young man with that big hat said: if there is no boy, I'll kill you".) (A. A.) **Ferenc Kedves** was executed instead of Ferenc Bojti Kedves. The villager said that Ferenc Bojti

Kedves served in the mountains with the Székely Frontier Guard Forces and together with some villagers, he stole cattle from the Romanian shepherds. Others claim that Bojti took part in the murder of a spying shepherd boy. Highlanders came with Olteanu to get back at him for this, among other things. "Then when the volunteers came, looking for them, and as they couldn't find them, they took innocent people whose names were the same." (J. Sz.) Péter Albert was executed for another villager with the same name. ("...the volunteers only looked the names, regardless of age or anything else. The name had to match.") (A. A.)

Lajos Zsók had not even been a soldier, yet they took him to the garden of Ferenc Dobos, because they had found the wheel of a military truck and a rifle thrown away by a run-away soldier in the end of his yard.¹⁶ **Lajos Bíró** wasn't a soldier either. There were some military uniforms scattered around his garden, a fact that constituted enough proof for his "guilt".

Innocent **Mrs. Sándor Bodó** was taken away for her son, Sándor Bodó. They could not find him, only his hidden gun. **Mrs. József György** was sentenced for hiding her grandson rifles used in paramilitary [levente] training. (These guns were useless in a real fight.) According to Ferenczes, the guardsmen came there because one of the quarrelling neighbors told them about the rifles.¹⁷

They wanted to execute **Péter László** instead of his brother-in-law, **János Kósa**. Guardsmen found the hidden gun and uniform but Péter had no idea his brother-in-law had hidden his military material in his house. When Kósa heard about his innocent brother-in-law was to be executed for him, he gave himself up immediately. **Antal Szakács and his son, Imre** were heavily beaten by the time they got into Dobos' garden.

Mihály Kurkó luckily escaped execution. When he was taken to Dobos' garden *"he got away and ran across streets and gardens, they couldn't even fire at him... thus he escaped, otherwise he would have been the twelfth to be executed."*(B. K.) **András Bójthe** escaped as well. They found two empty grenade boxes in his household. *"Two volunteers hung the boxes around my neck and were just driving me out the yard. My mother started to beg them not to take his son. She promised to cook chicken stew dinner for them. She also offered them some spirits. This is how I escaped. Else I would have been the thirteenth."*¹⁸ More eyewitnesses state that the others had the possibility to escape as well. But not knowing what was in store for them, they did not dare to go for it.

Early in the afternoon Olteanu announced: those who did not serve in the army, should assemble at the village hall. Some three

hundred people gathered together of the main square and they all were driven towards the Gábor Garden to watch the execution. The poor twelve, with the found objects hung around their necks were taken in front of the village hall and then to the Gábor Garden.

The execution presumably took place late in the afternoon, around four. **Lajos Bíró**, aged 54, was the first victim. Then **József Kurkó**, 27, **Sándor Tímár**, 19, **János Kósa**, 31, and **Ferenc Kedves**, 29, were shot. The next three victims were **Antal Szakács**, 54, his son **Imre Szakács**, 18 and **Lajos Zsók**, 32,. They were followed by **Péter Albert**, 31. Just as at Szárazajta, three-strong firing squads gave death. Two women were the last: **Mrs. József György née Ágnes Kedves**, 82, and **Mrs. Sándor Bodó née Anna Bács**, 39.¹⁹ Finally they executed 11 “only” persons as Olteanu condescendingly set Péter László free. *“When they shot that 11 persons, Olteanu turned to us, and told us in Hungarian – he spoke as good Hungarian as you or me – this has been Romanian land and it is going to stay that way. Two hundred Hungarians, young or old, child, woman or baby, no matter what they are, will be executed for every Romanian. We will exterminate everybody.”* (M. J.)

Olteanu made the victims be buried immediately after the execution. (Although with no priest and no tolls, it can hardly be named a burial) Then the guardsmen made a great feast to celebrate “the good work”. As one witness said, they were occupied with more than robbery in the village. “Oh, they raped many women, but everybody is too ashamed to speak about it.” (M. Sz.)

The final, systematic pillage of the village took place on Monday, **October 9**. Most of the village animals were driven into Dobos’ garden²⁰ then guardsmen collected clothes and furniture as well. “These brigands, like a host of locusts, swarmed the village, robbing, eating, drinking and beating us...” (J. Sz.) **In the afternoon** they took the three hundred ex-servicemen dragged together the previous day to Csíkszereda. But Prefect Tetu let them go. He was presumably not driven by his humane feelings but by the attitude of the Soviet garrison...

ABBREVIATIONS

A. A.: Anna Albert; B. K.: Béla Karda; . J. Sz: János Szakács; M. Sz.: Mrs. Károly Karda née Margit Szócs; M. T.: Mihály Tímár; A. V.: Mrs. Péter Albert née Anna Veress

After Csíkszentdomokos

The further actions of Olteanu's volunteers got chronologically entangled. The events of the following days indicate the fact that the volunteer group split after the events in Csíkszentdomokos. (Some of the villagers say the guards left for Gyergyószentmiklós and were scattered by a smaller Soviet unit at Ditró (Ditrařu).)²¹

The ones that went for Csíkszereda arrived at **Csíkkarcfalva in the morning of October 9, 1944.**²² As the majority of the troops was still pillaging at Csíkszentdomokos, presumably only a few of them, led by Olteanu, started off for Csíkszereda.²³ They stopped at Csíkszentkamarás, but highly respected Romanian Magistrate Adam Iamandi stood for the people of the village and did not let them harm them. According to József Kató of Karcfalva, gendarme Moldoveanu, who returned after the Romanian army, already knew of the guardsmen' arrival. The volunteers ransacked the village pretending to search for hidden firearms. "Olteanu, the commander, was walking up and down, with a whip in his hand." (J. K.) There was one victim at Karcfalva, **István Bálint**. They found his gun and uniform and executed him at the church door. (According to Ágoston Karda of Karcfalva, István Bálint returned a few days earlier and had no time to hand his military material over to the authorities.²⁴) Mihály Szabó, one of the wealthiest farmers in the village, was close to be the second victim, but he managed to escape. Villagers say he was mistaken for somebody else with the same name, who "had much to do with firearms".²⁵

According to the records, the guardsmen, led by Olteanu, appeared at **Csíkdánfalva** only on **October 10**. (I presume they had spent the night at Karcfalva, although there are no proofs for it.) The news of the massacre at Csíkszentdomokos had already reached the village. At Dánfalva, according to the usual script, they were searching for not only for arms and looted the entire village. Guardsmen taken Károly Kató. His daughter, Margit Kató claims that one of their neighbors informed the guards he had a hidden gun. "We had a spiteful neighbor, he betrayed my father when the Maniuguardsmen came".²⁶ They tied up Károly Kató with his son and took them on a cart to the neighboring Csíkmadaras (Mařdařas), as

there was a gendarme post there. By that time, Pál József, Antal János, Bálint B. Péter and Hajdú Lázár were arrested and brutally beaten there.²⁷ They executed **Lázár Hajdú** and **Károly Kató** on the church hill, the others were released. Margit Kató claims that they quickly disappeared towards Lóvész and Csíkszentmihály (Mihaíleni) when they heard a Soviet patrol was approaching the village....

The Last Act: Gyergyószentmiklós

Gyergyószentmiklós (Gheorgheni) was the last station of Olteanu and his bloodthirsty guardsmen. They had been staying in and looting the nearly deserted town for days. (Many citizens fled as there were frequent fights in the area in mid-September.) Looking for arms they searched many houses, then they took everything they could move.

There is no clear connection between the murders of Csíkmadaras, Csíkkarcfalva and Gyergyószentmiklós. An eyewitness, József Kató Jr., saw Olteanu at Csíkkarcfalva on October 9. Consequently, he did not go to Dánfalva (nobody had seen him there), but went back to Gyergyószentmiklós, to his men left there.

As widow Anna Kedves confessed the Romanian Magistrate of the pre-war years made those, who had served in the Hungarian army and left their corps, rounded up. *“The former Romanian Magistrate knew who had served in the war. They came and gathered them from house to house. They arrested thirty people this way.”*²⁸ According to the testimony given by János Demeter²⁹ in the Brassó trial of the Maniu-guard, the murder happened on **October 14**. Anna Kedves, nevertheless, claims that her husband was killed on Sunday, **October 15**. Sándor Szmuk also remembers the 15th as the day of the crime.³⁰ Anna Kedves recalls that as it was Sunday, Olteanu and his men decided to demonstrate their true religious spirit and thus killed only three people.

They shot **Imre Kedves**, **Gyula Kovács** and **József Sajgó** on the yard of the brick factory in Gyergyószentmiklós. The other 27 who were dragged there could thank for their survival to the intervention of the Soviet garrison troops.

*

I have to conclude by saying that due to scarce archivalia there are no answers to several questions.

1) We know where and when the guardsmen/volunteers were organized. However, we have little knowledge about the

geographical and social origins of the members the guard.

Eyewitnesses often claim that beside Olteanu there were many who spoke Hungarian well among them. As to their origin, first of all, they presumably came from the Upper Maros area. There are two facts to justify it: first, Olteanu came from Szászrégen. Second, the so-called “Muresenii”³¹ platoon was frequently mentioned in Brassó trials guardsmen. The name stands for people of the Upper Maros area –Szászrégen–Maroshévíz (Toplita) – where the influence of the legionary movements of the 1930s was extremely strong. (Of course many from Szárazajta, Békás, Rakottyás and other Székely villages joined the “core” in time.) We have little data on the social composition of the guard. Olteanu was a lawyer. From scattered sources we know of others lawyers, doctors, priests, merchants and journalists had joined the guard. In its reports on the Brassó trials of guards, the Népi Egység writes about “Romanian Fascists”. These people were possibly members of the Iron Guard. In its reports of 1945, the Hungarian Political Mission in Bucharest stated that the majority of the guardsmen were those Romanians who were expelled from Northern Transylvania in September 1940.

2) We also know little of the everyday life of the guardsmen.³² Unfortunately, there are no data on where they stopped for the nights and what they did on their “bloodstained march” (except for Szárazajta, Csíkszentdomokos and Gyergyószentmiklós.)

3) The relations of the guard and the Red Army is still unclear as well. The witness for the defense during the Brassó trial of Olteanu claimed: “*Before even establishing the unit, Olteanu asked him in the Korona (Crown) Café to translate the text of their petition forwarded to the Soviet headquarters into Romanian. A group of patriots were asking for the right to keep law and order and to fight against partisans behind the front-line.*”³³ Unlike Levente Benko³⁴, I still am of the opinion that the Soviet commanders would never grant such a permit. There are two strong arguments against the guardsmen’s claim:

– if they had a permit in Russian, they would have freely continued the execution even when a Soviet patrol or a single soldier appeared, (but the events at Páké and Csíkkozmás prove the opposite.);

– the Soviet -Romanian armistice treaty of September 12, 1944, states: “*Romanian civil public administration is restored on the whole Romanian territory, at 50-100 kilometers behind the frontline*”. Romanian authority yet closely followed the Soviet army.

They invaded the “liberated” territory when the front-line was no farther than River Maros. The guard was quick to follow the returning administration. (It was one of the arguments of Colonel-general Vinogradov for the expulsion of Romanian administration from Northern Transylvania on behalf of the ACC, on November 12.)

We, unfortunately, do not know what orders the Soviet garrison commanders got. It is, however, a fact that Soviet intervention hindered mass massacre, for example, in Gyergyószentmiklós.

4) There is yet little information on the connection between the returning administration and Olteanu's people. It seems that in most cases they closely co-operated (e.g. Szárazajta). Nevertheless there were instances when the local Romanian magistrate rescued villagers. (e.g. Közéapajta, Sepsibükszád).

5) Last but not least, there's no record on where the guardsmen “made themselves scare” after they left Gyergyószentmiklós. Although sources mention the Maniu-guard in Counties Maros-Torda and Kolozs as well (see next chapter), there is no information concerning personal continuity. The Soviet troops might have liquidated smaller, dispersed parts of the guards. (Witnesses mentioned several places from Maroshévíz to Csíkszereda where guards were dispersed.)

Ferenc Imreh

Notes

¹Albert Vaszi, who stayed with the guardsmen to Csíkszereda, stated that they were in Sepsiszentgyörgy for more than a week.

²Record, p 14 (The record was taken on January 12, 1945, in the presence of György Boros and 9 witnesses).

³Interview with Ferenc Máté (Csíkkozmás), it was made by Gábor Vincze, August 7, 1944. Cassette in the possession of the author.

⁴Record, p 16, taken in the City Hall of Csíkszereda.

⁵Interview with András Pál (Taploca), it was made by Gábor Vincze, August 7, 1944. Cassette in the possession of the author.

⁶Record, p 17, taken in the City Hall of Csíkszereda.

⁷According to HPA, Record, p 24.

⁸Lajos Bagi, Mayor of Gyergyószentmiklós, January 11, 1945. Record, p 20.

⁹Margit Kató (Csíkdánfalva) also stated in the interview of August 9, 1994, that the guardsmen appeared in the village twice. Once just passed through. Cassette in the possession of the author.

According to HPA, Record, p 20.

¹⁰In 1910 310 Greek Catholics lived in the village. Only 3 of them were Romanian. Jakabffy, *ibid.* p 51.

¹¹Székely Nép, November 16, 1940.

¹²The quote published by István Ferenczes: *Székely apokalipszis.* (Székely Apocalypse), Csíkszereda, Kájoni Publishers, 1994., 59. (From now on: Ferenczes. See abbreviations at the end of the chapter.)

¹³Interview with Mrs. Lajos Zsók née Julianna Bara, by Gábor Vincze. Cassette in the possession of the author.

¹⁴Népi Egység, November 14, 1944.

¹⁵Interview with Mrs. Károly Karda née Margit Szócs. by Gábor Vincze. Cassette in the possession of the author.

¹⁶Interview with widow Mrs. Lajos Zsók née Julianna Bartha.

¹⁷István Ferenczes *ibid.* 101.

¹⁸Interview with András Bőjthe. Cassette in the possession of the author.

¹⁹The list of the executed was published on the basis of the Record (p. 20-22) taken by the HPA.

²⁰According to Népi Egység (November 14, 1944) some 960 sheep, and more than 200 cattle were taken by the Romanians from Békás and Piatra Neamt.

²¹It was stated by Bőjthe András, Mrs. Lajos Zsók and Margit Karda, too.

²²István Ferenczes *ibid.* 23.

²³The testimonies made by the people of Szentdomokos did not confirm that Olteanu personally commanded the sacking of the village on October 9. The citizens of Karcfalva and Dánfalva reported that the guardsmen numbered less than 200.

²⁴On the basis of the HPA Record taken in Csíkszereda, p 22.

²⁵István Ferenczes *ibid.* 28.

²⁶Interview with Margit Kató.

²⁷On the basis of the HPA Record taken in Csíkszereda, p 22.

²⁸Interview with Anna Kedves by Gábor Vincze Cassette in the possession of the author.

²⁹Népi Egység, May 1, 1945.

³⁰Record, p.24.

³¹Népi Egység, May 4, 1945.

³²Due to scarce Romania archivalia, the little we know, we have learned from Albert Vaszi, who marched with the Maniu guardsmen from Brassó to Csíkszereda.

³³Népi Egység, April 22, 1945.

³⁴Levente Benkó: Szárazajta, part 53., Háromszék, December 21, 1994.

In Their Tracks Came the Black Hundreds

County Maros-Torda)

After Counties Háromszék, Csík and Udvarhely, Romanian administration was installed in County Maros-Torda on September 28. Several battles occurred at the gates of Marosvásárhely in the valleys of Rivers Küküllo" and Maros (Ludas–Radnót (Iernut)–Marosorbó) and Nyárád, between September 1 and 28. German defense pressed Soviet-Romanian troops from Vácmány and Backa Hills into the valley of River Nyárád between September 4 and 27. Romanian and Soviet soldiers respected the laws of war, they did not offend the inhabitants of the entirely Hungarian populated valley. There are no unpleasant memories of the two weeks military presence among the Hungarian inhabitants.

"They protected us from the Russians. They were not cruel though, but rather childish, they were always looking for watches, vine, spirits, food and girl. When the Russians wanted to steal and butcher our cattle, the Romanian officer stopped them. Everyone turned to the Romanians for help. They were nice and polite. They never took anything without asking first. The Russians were strolling about in the village waiting for bread to be baked. When it was ready, they took it out of the oven and ate it while it was still warm. I never saw so many hungry people. Some of the Romanians spoke Hungarian. We understood each-other. One Romanian officer gave us white linen sheets. Compared to our sewn hemp bedclothes, that was of high value and real luxury." (Rozália Nagy, Szentgerince, Nyárádmente (on River Nyárád))

"The Soviets already arrived, when the German soldiers were still patrolling the village from house to house. They shot every horse, and all the cattle. They did not harm us. The entering Romanian-Soviet soldiers were well-meaning." (Ilona Szkridon, Nyomát, Nyárádmente (on River Nyárád)).

War damages were greater in the Maros valley. The front took many victims there. An entire Romanian division was destroyed at Marosorbó. Many soldiers died. The victorious but decimated army that marched into this area was not amicable at all. There were

conflicts between ethnic groups along River Maros of mixed population, at Ludas and the neighboring villages of Romanian majority, even before the front reached the region. Most of the Hungarians fled for fear of the Romanian army. Retreating Hungarian-German troops also called civilians to leave. Soldiers, however, committed no atrocities.

Romanian public administration settled in Marosvásárhely on September 28. Ionel Pop appointed Dr. Bozdog to the post of Prefect of the County, Ștefan Pantea to Lord Mayor of Marosvásárhely E. Truta to Mayor of Szászrégen. Peasant Party politician Dr. Bozdog was the senior official of the county before the Vienna Verdict as well. After his return, he wanted to continue his work where he left it, in the spirit of *restitutio in integrum*.

The officials immediately started to set up gendarme posts. During the first days of October they ordered all who had deserted the Hungarian army to report to the closest post. They took them to internment camps¹ as enemies. Most of the people from County Maros-Torda ended up at Földvár, Hídvég and Focsani. The ones interned at the Focsani transit camp were soon taken to forced labor to the Soviet Union.

We have no exact data on the number of the interned. But it is a fact that few returned of those who had been taken by the gendarmerie or the volunteers to any of the internment camps. Many of the victims died and their relatives never heard the fate of the departed beloved ones.

Two documents give account on the activity of the Bozdog-administration. On November 7, the high command of the Romanian army in charge of organizing and controlling military administration forwarded a confidential report on the state county administration in Northern Transylvania to the presidium of the council of ministers.² Counties Maros-Torda, Csík and Háromszék were described as areas of properly organized and functioning administration. After enlisting the administration staff by name, the document focused upon the shortcomings of the system. *“Units of financial, agricultural, health, educational and industrial, trade and cooperative authorities governed by the various ministries are still missing.*

Merchants have unofficially fixed the pengó-lei exchange rate at 1:30. Schools are closed, organs of the Ministry of Justice have not yet shown up.

The mood of the Romanian inhabitants in the villages is very favorable. Towns are still under exclusive Hungarian and Communist influence.

Local authorities do everything in their power to normalize life.

While refusing to obey the orders of the Romanian authorities, the Hungarian populace keep contacting the Soviet headquarters for satisfying their needs.”

The Soviet headquarters were the only authority Hungarians could actually trust. Consequently, they turned to the Soviets when in need. The Soviets acknowledged most of the Hungarian claims as rightful. Despite the objection of local authorities, the Soviet headquarters gave license to the publication of Hungarian newspaper Szabad Szó (Free Word) on November 4.³ The paper published an Appeal of the Unions’ Council on November 7. The Appeal throws some light upon the “normalizing activity” of the authorities. “*We have gathered nearly 2,000 persons to clear the ruins away. They have promised to reconstruct blown up bridges as well; arbitrarily appointed leaders are only concerned with forbidding the use of Hungarian language at working sites... Although the police have a list of persons liable to public work, they keep rounding up people from the streets, and all this causes confusion and disorder.*”

The other document on administration activities is the joint Memorandum of the Hungarian Democratic Alliance (HDA – the independently established faction of HPA in County Maros) and the Communist Party (CP). József Soós, Chairman of the CP County Committee and HDA President dr. Endre Antalffy, forwarded the Memorandum to Prefect Bozdog on November 12. Szabad Szó published the text of the Memorandum that very day:

“The majority of the organizers of public administration have arrived here driven by the lust for vengeance. They intend to take their revenge on us for everything the Hungarian "Fascist" state once committed against them. On grounds of our innocence and democratic conviction, we protest against the following injurious measures:

I. on the basis of an extremely subjective interpretation of the second paragraph of the armistice treaty, Romanian authorities arrest and force into internment camps all men (often with their wives and children as well) who:

- a) have thrown away their guns pointed at the Soviet Union and deserted the Hungarian or the Romanian armies;*
- b) have been evacuated by German or Hungarian troops and have returned from Northern Transylvania by now;*
- c) have fled or were expelled from Southern Transylvania because*

- of their political activity under Antonescu's rule;*
- d) have not managed to obtain Romanian citizenship;*
- e) those students who, under the mutual agreement of the two countries, have been studying in Northern Transylvania;*
- f) came to Northern Transylvania from other parts of Greater Hungary before 1940 and stayed here because of their political convictions; and finally*
- g) anybody who has been justly or unjustly reported to the police...*

With no legal grounds or judgments-at-law, but supported by the authorities, settlers confiscate the properties (estate, house, store, workshop) of permanent residents in Northern Transylvania, who are either away or present. Though gendarmes are in duty, Hungarian villagers are insulted and molested day by day. Romanian villagers are organized in armed civil militia. The unarmed, unorganized Hungarians are at the mercy of these militias. The Maniu-guards led their vengeance campaign in the villages, leaving several fatal victims behind.”

We have no precise data on the activity of the volunteers in County Maros. I have not found persons who would recall memories of any volunteer groups of the Maniu-guards in the area of Rivers Nyárád and Küküllő. The inhabitants of the region were victimized by the gendarmes.

The situation described in the Memorandum was characteristic for the areas with mixed inhabitants like the Mezőség and the Görgény Valley. Civil militia armed by the gendarme started to dispossess landowners.⁴ As most Hungarian men were still on the front, or in internment camps or just hiding from the returning Romanian administration – women, elderly people and children were unable to defend their properties. Between December 1, 1944 and January 2, 1945, the Union of Transylvanian Hungarian Farmers (UTHF – EMGE in Hungarian) sent Béla Demeter to survey Northern Transylvanian villages. We know the autumn economic situation of the region from his report.

As soon as the front moved away, some Romanian farmers (mainly wealthy ones) ransacked the UTHF stocks of wheat in

many villages. In some villages authorities leased unclaimed lands out. In other places, wealthy Romanian farmers simply misappropriated unclaimed properties. They actually considered every estate, the owner of which was missing due to the above mentioned reasons, unclaimed property. As they could only expect help from the Soviet headquarters against the misappropriating militias, Hungarians turned to the Soviets. The Soviet headquarters ordered militias to give the Hungarian property back. The authorities nevertheless not executed the order of the Red Army.⁵

There are no records of volunteer crimes in County Maros. Passing along the villages of the Görgény Valley and the Mezőség, the Maniu-guards left the spirit of hatred and vengeance but not corpses. Continuous prosecution of Hungarians stopped during the time of the "autonomous Northern Transylvanian Republic", i.e. after Romanian administration had been expelled. But terror in areas that suffered abuses during the autumn of 1944 returned again with the re-annexation in March 1945.

During the summer of 1945 the HPA reports were full of grievances coming from the Hungarian inhabitants of the villages in Szászrégen's neighborhood and the Mezőség.

"At **Teke** (Teaca), Zoltan Aron threatened Hungarians that he would send them all to internment camps within two weeks. Iuon Sulea, Iuon Nosle and Fentea Tudor torn the clothes off the Hungarian girls who were walking by the HPA office. Later, the instigated Romanian mass broke into its yard. Soon after a group of Romanians attacked and insulted Hungarians.

Lajos Köllő and seven others from **Dedrászéplak** reported they were continuously attacked and assaulted by local Romanians. The latest incident took place when 15 unknown persons entered Köllő's house and beat and kicked his two sons. Romanian men burst into Lajos György's house. They severely beaten and kicked him without any reason and mistreated his wife and daughter. Hungarian people were attacked and beaten to pulp every day.

Romanian locals at **Vajola** launched a war of extermination against Hungarians. They almost beat János Bajor hollow in his vineyard. Hungarians turned to the Soviet headquarters for help.

Romanian men beat **Ádám Balázs** and six other Hungarians to jelly at the village hall of **Petele** (Petelea).

Gheorghe Moldovan threatened the Hungarian inhabitants of **Alsóbölkény** (Beica de Jos) with an axe in his hand. He said he would exterminate all Hungarian villagers. Iron Guard members Vasile Zsellér (ez most a neve, vagy a társadalmi helyzete), Notar (mert úgye itt meg a jegyző't vélem felfedezni a notar szóban) Mihai

and Maria Curcan tortured five Hungarian ex-soldiers in the yard of Moldovan for any real reason.

Hungarian youth was attacked because of singing Hungarian songs at a dancing party in **Görgényüvegcsu**r. The intruders broke Albert Benko's head. Several people were seriously beaten.

At **Kisnyulas** David Belean and Gavrilă Belean broken into Gergely Pápai's house around midnight. They started to beat up his family, telling them to go to Budapest, because it was not Hungary but Greater Romania. They beaten Pápai's father until he fell to the ground. Then they kept stabbing him with pitchforks. Next day the old man had died of his wounds. Pápai's mother suffered for a few days then she died, too. The attackers stole Pápai's cart and horses.

The **Székelyfalva** (sic!) Hungarians were ordered to speak Romanian. A gendarme sergeant beat 17 year old Hungarian János Nagy because he did not understand what he told was told in Romanian.

Non-commissioned Gendarme officer Nan gathered 50 Hungarian men at **Nyárádszereda** (Miercurea Nirăjului) and drove them to an unknown destination.”⁶

We may give further details on atrocities, but the basic situation was actually the same everywhere. With or without gendarme's support, local majority took advantage of their superiority. They acted in the spirit of the anti-Hungarian propaganda of 1944 autumn which was successfully planted into the hearts and heads by the “Volunteers for Transylvania” all over Transylvania. Similar anti-Hungarian atrocities occurred at Szászrégen, Mezőbánd (Band), Lúdvég, Holtmaros, Mezőerked, Tancs, Mezőszokol, Marosfalu, Görgényszentimre and Nyáradmagyaró.

(It is worth mentioning that the inhabitants of the Romanian villages in the Görgény Valley were easy to persuade by the instigators of the Vatra of the ethnic conflict on March 20, 1990, in Marosvásárhely, too. Most of the people taken to Marosvásárhely came from Hodák and Libánfalva.)

According to available data, 4,000 persons were taken to Romanian internment camps or forced labor camps in the Soviet Union from County Maros-Torda⁷. The November census indicates the loss in Hungarian population in the autumn of 1944. Marosvásárhely had 44,932 inhabitants in 1941, 29,962 in 1944, 12,628 were men, and 17,064 were women. 94,5 % of the inhabitants were Hungarian (42,435 in 1941 and 27,778 in 1944), 6,07 % were Romanian (1,726 in 1941 and 1,802 in 1944). The cause of the decrease in inhabitants: 8,326 people (5,294 men, 3,032 women); 7,922 (95,24 %) Hungarians, 161 (1,93%)

Romanians 77 (0,93%) Germans)⁸ “had gone”, 5,402 Jews were deported. Due to the war situation, 4,036 men left their family for military service.

It is obvious that these persons left their homes because they were forced to. Jews were deported, many fled for fear of the approaching front, others had not returned home yet. Many were taken to internment camps after the city had been “liberated”.

Counties Kolozs and Szolnok-Doboka

Meeting no resistance, the soldiers of the Red Army – the 27th army and the 18th infantry division – entered the Transylvanian capital, Kolozsvár, on October 11, 1944.

“A motorcycle came from the direction of the National Theatre. László Nagy waved his hand. Somebody unfolded a long white flag, hanging down almost to the pavement, from the window of the city hall. We couldn’t get over our surprise as the flag was not mentioned during our preparations. The Soviet officer stopped in front of us and started to point to the flag. He objected to the white flag, as the interpreter explained it anxiously. It was the symbol of surrender, while they... At that moment everybody started to speak simultaneously. Nagy László ran away to remove the flag. The officer listened while we told him who we were and what we wanted. He liked the hospital and the leather factory, he waved to us, turned around his bike and raced off road running to Torda.

*It was Wednesday, October 11, 1944.”*⁹ This is how Edgár Balogh recalls the “liberation” of the town.

At the request of Transylvanian politicians, the Hungarian Crown Council at its meeting on September 10, declared Kolozsvár an open city. The Hungarian army acted accordingly. For the sake of the city and its inhabitants, they surrendered Kolozsvár without a gunshot. The last German soldiers retreated on October 10. Except for several bridges they had blown up, there were no war damages in the Transylvanian capital. The Soviet army arrived in a safe city with organized administration and economy. A Soviet major in charge of political organization arrived when the Soviet headquarters was already set up. He visited communist leader Sándor Jakab.¹⁰ Through his mediation he held discussions with several local communist leaders, and exchanged views on the appointment of the senior officials of public administration. Teofil Vescan Sr. became a Prefect, Lajos Csógor his assistant, Tudor Bugnariu was named mayor, and János Demeter vice-mayor. The Soviet headquarters did not let the Romanian administration appointed by government

commissioner Ionel Pop to enter Kolozsvár. They cited paragraph 17 of the armistice treaty (stating that Romanian public administration would be re-installed **with the exception of a 5-100 kilometers zone** behind the frontline) as a reason, but they actually had political reasons for doing so.

On October 13, two days after the Soviet marching in, two horrible news spread in the city. Lawyer Elemér Óváry and his family of 6 persons were murdered in their home.¹¹ It was also spread that the Soviet officers, invited for dinner the previous evening, were the guilty ones. Another version, namely the family was murdered by Romanian volunteers disguised in Soviet uniforms, was also rumored. Mrs. Óváry was a relative of Count Ciano (the Italian foreign minister), thus they took their revenge on her for his contribution to the Vienna Verdict. Both the Soviet headquarters and the HPA started inquiries in the matter. Neither the Soviets nor the volunteers were proved guilty.¹²

On the basis of Romanian reports on partisan activity, the Soviets arrested 3,000-5,000¹³ Hungarian men the same day. Most of them were taken to the Focsani internment camps. There really were many persons of military age hiding in the city and waiting for "liberation". Due to the anti-war policy of the previous (Hungarian) city leadership these men were not persecuted. Edgár Balogh explains the double data by the fact that the Soviets actually rounded up 5,000 on October 13, yet they released some of them later. The HPA forwarded its protest to the Bucharest ACC office. Although they replied that according to the martial law, every man liable to military service could be declared a prisoner-of-war, they released people under 18 and over 50 years, and the disabled.

Roman Catholic vicar **Ferenc Lestyán** of Gyulafehérvár recalls October 13 as follows. *"I was an assistant priest at Torda, Southern Transylvania, after the Vienna Verdict. Bishop Áron called me to Gyulafehérvár in 1942. I was accused of spying, they arrested me and took me to Brassó. One night as they were transporting me from Szeben to Brassó, I jumped off the train and fled to Kolozsvár. After the Romanian breakaway in August the bishop advised me to leave Kolozsvár, as my previous arrest would make my position insecure if the Romanians returned. I decided to stay. The Russians came in on the 11th, and nothing happened. We heard that somebody had murdered Óváry in the morning of the 13th. As he used to work for our Church, too, accompanied by parson Béla Baráth, I went to see what had happened. We found the place as murderers had left it. Óváry was lying on the ground, his wife and the other women were left fell on chairs and the table. They hit the*

poor housekeeper on the head with an axe. She died in the hospital. She told us the murderers were people dressed in Russian uniforms who spoke a different language.

We went to make arrangements for the burial. On Jókai Street a Russian soldier stopped us asking “Mágyárszki (Hungarians)?”. “Mágyárszki”, we replied. He drove us into a line and they took us to the yard of Hotel New York, where a great number of men were assembled. Their Romanian interpreter recognized us and told them we were Romanian priests. They let us go immediately. More and more people appeared in the meantime. On our way out, we saw one of our priest colleague, Lajos Eröss, and a student of theology. We asked for them to be released. They let them go.

They rounded up many people then, most of them were collected in the streets, like us. But in many cases they showed up at their homes as well, if it was necessary. They took Lajos Zsigmond, my aunt's husband, from his job. They were especially looking for him. MP Imre Mikó was caught in his own yard. Then we heard they took József Faragó, István Szász, Andor Járosi, István Decsy and Jenő Kis. Almost none of them came back.”¹⁴

Life in Kolozsvár returned to the old, pre-war track during the following weeks. Production, supply and healthcare operated as usual. Left-wing parties and organizations gradually took over control. As early as on October 12, the Communist Party, the National Union of Hungarian Workers, the Ekésfront (Plough Front), the Romanian Social Democratic Party, the Patriots' Alliance and the United Syndicates formed the Council of the National Democratic Front (NDF, ODA in Hungarian).

Ilie Lazar, the liaison officer between operational HQ of the army military and the Romanian Council of Ministers, appointed lawyer Aurel Milea to political commissioner of the Kolozsvár clinics. Milea tried to enforce the anti-Hungarian policy of the historical parties in the areas under his control. He called Rector Miskolc to hand the keys of the University over to him. Miskolc refused to submit to his orders.¹⁵ As a result of the intervention of the Soviet headquarters, the Romanian staff of the university had to leave the city within 24 hours. Világosság, the Hungarian newspaper, with Edgár Balogh as editor in chief, was published on the 18th. Later, it became the official paper of the HPA. On October 21, left-wing forces established the Democratic Committee of North Transylvania which joined the NDF on the 28th and thus created the NDF North Transylvanian Provincial Executive Committee.

The Hungarian and Romanian left-wing leaders of Kolozsvár were thinking of the entire Northern Transylvania from the very

beginning. Their plans and actions crossed the city and county limits. All their actions were designed to establish a social (national) system of self-government.

Despite the self-organizing potential of the local powers and the benevolence of the Soviet headquarters, the situation in Counties Kolozs and Szolnok-Doboka was rather ambiguous. The Romanian gendarmes terrorized Hungarian inhabitants in villages. They took revenge for their expulsion from Kolozsvár on the innocent villagers.

The above-mentioned report of the military administration surveying committee of the Romanian army of November 7 describes the situation quite objectively. Both counties were categorized as regions where the government commissioner unable to enforce his power properly.

They following was reported to Bucharest on County Kolozs: *“No military authorities were allowed to enter Kolozsvár. The HQ of the division is stationing at Apahida. A local committee control administration, with the consent of the Soviet HQ. A 40-strong group of the Kolozsvár police force is still waiting at Felek (Avrig) for a permit to enter the town. The gendarme, having its HQ at Szamosfalva with a 380-strong force, have established posts in the entire territory of the county. University hospitals and clinics are operating properly with their remaining Hungarian staff. Educational personnel should individually return before Romanian authorities will be installed. There are no Romanian textbooks available.*

County Szamos (Szolnok-Doboka): *The 1,400 men of the 91st infantry regiment have been quartered in the garrison of Dés (Dej). Local administration have been resumed under the control of the Prefect appointed by the government. Three out of 7 district administrators and 8 out of 71 village notaries have taken their offices. The gendarmes of Dés of 400-strong staff have organized police posts in the entire territory of the county.”*

In its general conclusions, the report states the fact that life is returning to normal in the counties controlled by the governmental committees. The other parts of liberated Northern Transylvania, except for Kolozsvár, Szatmár, Nagykároly (Carei) and County Bihar (Bihar), are controlled by the gendarme.

The attempts of the gendarme “to maintain law and order” and to take up the daily round again in Counties Kolozs and Szolnok-Doboka were first of all “supported” by the volunteers in the autumn of 1944. They followed the army and the administration. They appeared at Sepsiszentgyörgy on September 19, and entered County Csík on the 30th. During the first weeks of October they were seen in County Maros, then after October 11 they showed up

in villages, where Hungarians were in the minority, in County Szolnok-Doboka. In co-operation with local gendarmes, they began “to restore law and order, to punish war criminals and to destroy Hungarian partisan nests”.

Collective memory recalls with great confusion the presence volunteers in these two counties. People call them Maniu-guards in Szolnok-Doboka while in County Kolozs they are simply called volunteers. Unlike in the Székelyland, they appeared here in smaller groups. They were usually led by Romanian teachers, magistrates, gendarmes or other authority personnel who fled in 1940, and not by a well-known soldier, like Gavril Olteanu was. These small groups of volunteers were presumably not in contact with the unit known as the Maniu-guard, which was organized in Brassó. In Székely villages, which Olteanu passed, there are still vivid memories of the commander organizing spectacular and exemplary execution. They justified their deeds as “anti-partisan activity”, blaming the villagers for the death of Romanian soldiers who had been killed in the war.¹⁶

Murders committed in Counties Kolozs and Szolnok-Doboka always happened secretly, usually during the night or in the dawn, and with the assistance of the gendarme and the strange volunteers in all cases. Driven by revenge or attracted simply by the chance of pillage and easy money-making, the instigated Romanian inhabitants quite often joined the anti-Hungarian vengeance campaigns. In most cases they took their victims for no particular reason to the gendarmerie post or to the village hall. Several months later their dead bodies were found on village peripheries. In cases we know of – Egeres (Aghires,u), Páncélcseh, (Panticeu) Bánffyhunyd (Huedin), Magyarzsombor (Zimbor) – the division of labor was usually as it follows: Romanians, mesmerized by various promises, reported the nationalistic, communist or the richer Hungarians. Authorities captured and locked them up, the volunteers did the dirty work.

The main reason for these acts was usually personal revenge. Victims were either former magistrates, teachers or priests of the village between 1940-44, or persons, who the planners of the scheme, or the Romanian inhabitants were enemies. According to HPA-records, Világosság-reports and survivors’ memories, 58 murders were committed in Counties Kolozs and Szolnok-Doboka during autumn 1944. Four at Kendilóna on October 14, 4 at Páncélcseh on the 17th, 1 at Ördögkeresztúr on the 19th, 3 at Magyarzsombor and 16 at Egeres on the 21st, 1 at Ördögfüzes and 3 at Fejérd on the 23rd, 2 at Kispetri and 2 at Magyarpalatka (Paľatca)

on the 24th, 2 at Bethlen, 2 at Szilágypanit, 2 at Magyarderzs and 1 at Almás (Almas,) on the 25th, 11 at Bánffyhunad and 2 at Kalotaszentkirály on the 30th and 2 at Kajántó (Chinteni) in December, just before Christmas.

Robbery, pillage, threats and abuses were perhaps the most frequent in the villages of Counties Kolozs and Szolnok-Doboka. **The October 27 issue of Világosság** published the grievances told by Hungarians from Szászfenes (Floresti), Györgyfalva, Kajántó, Magyarléta, Magyarlóna and Válaszút. They reported that gendarmes confiscated the properties of farmers, beat up men and took the majority of them to unknown destinations. Arbitrary actions had gone so far that people tore off official posters while wording unprintable curses. The most characteristic element of all these dastard events was that these bullying persons were assisted by the former prominent local members of the ill-famed Iron Guard.

The November 6 issue of Romania Libera published a lengthy article under the title: *Stop Transylvanian Terror!* It demanded the dissolution of the volunteer guards and made the government responsible for their actions. *“Stop Transylvanian terror. The liberating Soviet army and the Romanian army are advancing rapidly and they are dealing the Fascist enemy powerful blows. And in the tracks of the relief troops came the black hundreds. Olteanu and his bandits do the same here what their friends have done to the Jews and Ukrainians, etc. Barbarian chauvinism, which has nothing to do with true national spirit, advances on its shameful way leaving the broken bodies of murdered children and disgraced women behind. We know the facts and we have the proofs. Crimes must come to an end. Criminals have to be punished. Terrorist bands should be dissolved. Does Maniu know about all these? We think he doesn’t. Or else he should not call himself democrat and anti-Nazi. We hear the news about hideous sins and crimes committed under his name day by day. Does he have nothing to say? Anyway: what is the Peasant Party’s opinion about the national issue? Especially about the Transylvanian issue. Why hasn’t the Party made it clear? These horrors, we speak about, could only happen in the shade of this silence. The government is responsible for the bloodshed and destruction in Transylvania, because everything that happened has happened under its protection. Stop the tragedy in Transylvania. The guards rallying volunteer murderers should disappear.”*

On the grounds of reports by Prefect Vescan Teofil, the Bucharest-based Tribuna Poporului published several¹⁷ indignant reports on the situation in the villages of County Kolozs. Articles

reported that Romanian gendarmes were instigating Romanian inhabitants to terrorize the Hungarian minority. Scared Hungarians did not dare to raise their voice. *“Using the records of the Kolozs County prefect’s office, we are going to expose some cases – and only some of them –, not without sense of shame, though.*

Gendarme sergeant D. at Nagyeskülla “forced us to leave the village immediately. We were not allowed to take any luggage...

Neither life nor property are in safety in village Bogara. Theft and robbery committed every day by 16-18 years old armed lads...

They warned us to leave Nagyzombor or they would shoot us...

We are farmers from Kolozs... The legionaries have instigated them. They have robbed us. Without our cattle it is impossible for us to earn our living.

On the morning of October 15, after the Soviet troops moved out of the village of Krisztürel, a Romanian patrol of seven, led by a gendarme sergeant, arrived. Their guide was Simion Delca, a village lad. They entered the parish, my home. The sergeant took me to the village square to hand me over to the people to pass a sentence on me. He said: “I’ve brought this Hungarian bandit who tortured you. Should I shoot him, or should I let him go?” The villagers replied: “He is a good man, let him go”. He took me back to the parish, then he beat me with his rifle. Simion Delca and György Dobokán also beaten me, then they distributed my furniture among the villagers.

Girls in Bodonkút have to hide as some young men dressed in uniforms terrorize the village...

Gendarmes have ordered to burn all Hungarian books, irrespective of their subject.”

“Will it suffice? – the Romanian journalist asked. *Or the outcry of pain and disgust is more urgent [than asking]: Enough!*

Our villager people have no sugar, no salt, no oil in County Kolozs either. To make them forget it, they are entertained with tragic show. Incited by the gendarmes they are dragged into a circus, in a circus where savages are raging.

It is an unfortunate, unfit, shameful and chauvinistic distraction. Are we going to go along your dangerous way for long?”

The question of the journalist of Romania Libera was right. Will it suffice? It would be enough, but the record of the prefects’ office and the HPA-reports recorded further horrifying facts¹⁸. The inhabitants of Néma, Szászfenes, Vista, Bács (Ba’c), Apahida, Gyalu (Gila’u), Magyarlóna, Kide, Magyarzombor, Ördöngösfüzes, Fejérd, Kispetri, Magyarpalatka, Bethlen, Doboka (Da’bica), Magyarderzse, Almás, Válaszút, Alsójára (Iara), Bádok,

Nagydevecser, Kalotaszentkirály and Kendilóna all experienced the pains of robbery, abuses, beatings and persecution.

I would like to point to a few characteristic cases. On October 15, the members of the Maniu-guard robbed every Hungarian's house at **Kide**. They took money, crop and all valuables. They stole 22 horses and 14 cattle from Hungarian farmers. On October 17, the Calvinist minister and 25 Székely settlers had to leave **Néma** because of threats by the Romanian villagers. On October 21, gendarme sergeant Vintila, of **Magyarzsombor** made notary János Albert and mine officials Árpád Szilágyi and Sándor Fazekas taken to the nearby forest and shot there by the guardsmen. Next day the gendarme sergeant ordered the families of thresher-owner József Nyitrai and József Lengyel, who rented the mill, to leave the village within 3 hours. Their homes were ransacked. On October 23, the Romanian gendarme sergeant of **Fejérd** called farmer János Kalló and 19 years old Dezső Rác to the village hall. Their corpses were found on the village outskirts a day later. Guardsmen beat Ferenc Nagy and his wife hollow at **Magyarpalatka**, on October 24. Several Hungarian women were raped. They burnt the books of the library in the Calvinist elementary school and destroyed the fittings. **Almás**: "Widow Mrs. Ferenc Kapcsos, homemaker, resident in Bikal at present, reported on October 25 the following: Accompanied by a gendarme, Simion Tap, the Romanian ex-magistrate of the village, arrested her husband, Ferenc Kapcsos, on October 22. After they heavily beat him they took him to a cellar where they had already locked up and tortured 12 Hungarian men from Széplak. Gendarmes tied up and took Ferenc Kapcsos to an unknown place on October 25. It was told his wife that he had been taken to Zilah (Zalaŷu). Children playing in the forest found the half buried body of Ferenc Kapcsos on January 14, 1945. She took the body to Hunyad and buried there. Although the victim's head was crushed and there were signs of severe torture on his body, the authorities did not declare the case a murder. This is how Romanian authorities cover chauvinistic sins of Romanians. After the death of her husband, Magistrate Simion Tap ordered the widow out of the village. She had to leave all her property behind". (*Taken from the records of the office of the vice-prefect of County Kolozs, Nr. 1035/1945.*)

Between 1940-1953, there were 140 HPA-members at Páncélcseh, 40 kilometers off Kolozsvár, which once belonged to County Szolnok-Doboka. This meant 140 grownups, that is approximately 60-70 families. When I visited the village in March 1955, I have found an old ruined Calvinist church and 11 elderly

Hungarians there. Hungarians have always been in minority in the Szamos Valley, but the continuous decrease in their number from 1944 on, constitutes actual fade-out. There are very few Hungarians left at Magyarderzse, Nagydevecser, Doboka, Bethlen, Válaszút, Néma, Ördögösfüzes, Kecseháta, Kisesküllő nowadays. They are just enough to prove that grievances reported by the HPA-records and ruined Hungarian church are now only sad memories of a painful past.

I have reconstructed the story of the murder of four at Páncélcseh with the help of 5 interviewees and the official records of the office of the vice-prefect of County Kolozs.¹⁹

On October 17, a few days after their arrival, Romanian gendarmes started to persecute Hungarian villagers. Hungarians had to perform all public works, while gendarmes encouraged Romanian inhabitants to rob the Hungarian villagers.

Ioan Pop released Magistrate István Dénes from his post. Sergeant Georghe Petrascu, who returned from Southern Transylvania, became the gendarme commander. Teacher Gheorghe Tanase, who ran away in 1940, also returned from Southern Transylvania, taking David Vlaic, a stranger to the villagers, with him. Men dressed in military uniforms appeared on the 15th or the 17th, saying they were the Maniu-guardsmen. They entered every house where Hungarians lived. They knew where to go, although none of them lived in the village or the neighborhood. They stole things and terrorized people, but committed no murders. They did not beat the villagers, actually nobody dared to face or to oppose them, though. The frightened villagers rather denied their Hungarian origin, as they spoke perfect Romanian. Most of guardsmen left the village next day, but a few of them made a stay at the gendarme post or in the magistrate's office.

During the night of the 21st, sergeant Petrascu ordered two gendarmes to take former magistrate István Dénes, tailor Sándor Papp (60), miller Ferenc Máté (42) and farmer Sándor Nagy (62) to the village square. A guard officer and several strangers were waiting for them by a car. The four men, when they realized they were going to be taken away, cried out for help, but nobody dared to interfere. They disappeared, their family got no response for their questions, the gendarme sergeant denied to answer them. Their bodies were found buried on the rivulet bank in spring 1945. Aunt Ilonka, an old woman who lived on the confines of the village, had seen the execution and heard the shots, but she was too scared to speak. Both Hungarian and Romanian villagers are of the opinion that, beside the strange volunteers, gendarme sergeant Petrascu, gendarme Dumitru Pop and five Romanian villagers took active part

in the killing. None of the five villagers died a natural death, they all “finished in a filthy end”. One of them died of cancer, another committed suicide. And one of them was shot by a drunk gendarme.

Beside the victims, they were looking for the Calvinist minister, cantor-teacher Ferenc Török and György Sebestyén. The minister and the teacher had fled before the Romanians came, Sebestyén had hidden in the forest and later returned to the village.

Why did they chose these seven people?

One autumn day after the Vienna Verdict, the Calvinist minister had preached: “I haven't seen the sun for 22 years. You have stuck thorns in our hearts”. His sermon was dripping with patriotism, and it severely hurt the Romanians of the village. There was no conflict between the two nationalities before that time, and there were no anti-Romanian atrocities during the war. The villagers were angry with István Dénes because he was determined fulfilled his duties as a magistrate, and demanded compulsory delivery on time. The reasons for the search and murder of the others are not known.

Anti-Hungarian persecution did not cease after the murder of the four men. Their windows were broken at nights for weeks, there were open robberies in the streets. People used to fire at Hungarian houses and to threaten the owners.²⁰ Gendarme sergeant Petrascu had to leave the village after the Romanian administration was expelled. But the teacher, the magistrate of Páncélcseh and Vlaic, the “stranger”, stayed. Magistrate Pop pleased the gendarmes sent by the country authorities with “food and drinks”, so they did not interfere in the protection of Hungarians. Retired sergeant Ioan Rusu, their commander, fought windmills against the petty monarchs of the village. As a result of his humane conduct, no further crimes were committed. He was still not able to calm down loose temper.

The memory of constant terror and fright they had endured and new living conditions drove the Hungarian inhabitants of Páncélcseh towards the city as early as the end of the 1940s. The present ethnic composition of the village and of the Szamos area were determined during those times.

Mária Gál

Notes

¹Testimonies by the displaced persons and their relatives. The cassette

is in the possession of the editor.

Memorandum of the Communist Party and the MPA. Szabad Szó, November 12, 1944.

²August 23, 1944. Documente 1944-45., Bucharest, 1985., Document Nr. 986., vol. III, pp. 202-235.

³Note on the first issue of Szabad Szó, November 4, 1944: “With the permission of the Soviet HQ”

⁴Gábor Vincze: Az 1945-ös erdélyi földreform – a román kisebbségpolitika harci eszköze (The 1945 Land Reform in Transylvania – Means of Combat of Romanian Minority Policy), JATE Társadalomtudományi és Kortörténeti Gyűjteménye. Szeged.

⁵Archives of the Politikátörténeti Intézet (Institute of Political History) Gyula Simó’ heritage, 937 f., 11 . öe.

⁶Quotes are from the HPA-record on grievances compiled for the Peace Preparation Department of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Title: “Az erdélyi magyarság ellen 1944. VIII. 23. óta (Románia katonai átállása óta) elkövetett atrocitások”. (Atrocities committed against Transylvanian Hungarians since August 23, 1944 [since Romania’s military breakaway]). Findspot: MOL, ROM.TŰK.XIX-J-1-j, 18.d.,16/b. cs., pp 54-57.

⁷Gábor Vincze: A romániai magyar kisebbség történeti kronológiája (The History of Hungarian Minority in Romania) 1944-53. Published by the László Teleki Foundation Library and Documentation Service, the Social Scientific and History collection of the JATE Central Library and by the Modern and Recent History Department of JATE, Szeged-Budapest, 1994. 19.

⁸Local census of November, published in Szabad Szó, January 15, 1945, Used in Gusztáv Molnár: Önrendelkezési törekvések az “Észak-Erdélyi Köztársaság” idején. 1944. október 11-1945. március 13. (Attempts for Self-government in the time of the “Republic of North-Transylvania”. October 11, 1944 – March 13, 1945). and Gábor Vincze: A romániai magyar kisebbség történeti kronológiája (The History of Hungarian Minority in Romania) 1944-53, Szeged-Budapest, 1994.

⁹Edgár Balogh: Szolgálatban. (On Duty) Kriterion Publisher, Bucharest, 1978, p 374.

¹⁰ibid. Molnár Gusztáv.

¹¹István Katona Szabó: A nagy remények kora. (Erdélyi demokrácia. 1944-1948). (The Age of Great Expectations [Democracy in Transylvania, 1944-1948]) Magvető Publisher, Budapest, 1990, pp 42-58.

¹²Testimony by Béla Csákány (secretary-general of the HPA, 1944-1947). Lawyer János Demeter represented the HPA.

¹³Ildikó Lipcsey: Erdélyi autonómiák (Autonomies in Transylvania) Történeti Tanulmányok (Historical Studies). Budapest, 1990. She mentions 3,000 on page 52. Vincze Gábor, referring to various sources in A romániai

magyar kisebbség történeti kronológiája (The History of Hungarian Minority in Romania) 1944-53, writes about 3,000 or 5,000. Both figures can be found in memories of the inhabitants of Kolozsvár.

¹⁴The original testimony is on a cassette, in the possession of the editor.

¹⁵Gábor Vincze: A romániai magyar kisebbség történeti kronológiája (The History of Hungarian Minority in Romania) 1944-53...

¹⁶See Szárazajta, Páké etc.

¹⁷Tribuna Poporului, November 5 and November 8, 1944.

¹⁸Új Magyar Központi Levéltár (New Hungarian Central Archives), ROM. TÜK. XIX-J-1-j, 18.d.,16/b.cs., pp 26-38.

¹⁹The original testimonies are on a cassette, in the possession of the editor. MOL. ROM. TÜK. XIX-J-1-j, 18.d.,16/b.cs., p 26.

²⁰See Appendices.

Egeres

Egeres is situated near Sztána (Stana), West of Kolozsvár, on the banks of Stream Nádas. Suggested by the new, Romanian gendarme commander and aided by a few Romanians from Egeres and the neighboring villages, gendarmes and volunteers murdered 16 people during the autumn of 1944. The crimes of the organizers, participants and co-operators have become forfeited, and most of them have long passed away, too. Very few Egeres inhabitants know of the events of that terrifying autumn day. Time has also healed all wounds. Only the silence of Hungarian bells at certain burials account for the fact that one of the murderers is being buried.

The Romanian inhabitants of Egeres have always expected Hungarian bells to toll at their burials, too. Authorities pardoned the guilty ones, thus nobody has been held responsible for the loss of 16 lives. All the attempts of making unknown persons accountable for the murders have failed. Both Romanians and Hungarians knew who the murderers were. The Romanians of Egeres were never interested in the fate of the volunteers, gendarmes and people recruited from the neighboring villages. They have followed the lives of those among them. “Gilcosii” (“djilkoshi” – murderers) – this is how Romanian villagers called them. Hungarian bells did not toll at their burials.

The organization and execution of murders in the autumn 1944 in Egeres bear all the characteristic features of the inter-ethnic atmosphere of County Kolozs, Northern Transylvania, of the time. The representatives of Romanian administration and extreme nationalists who had to flee after the Vienna Verdict, returned with thirst for revenge after four years.

Helped by incited people, gendarmes and volunteers started a series of anti-Hungarian atrocities. Besides outer stimulation, private revenge and the armed settling of trifle matters also played their part in the psychology of the events. The tragedy of the 16 victims in Egeres goes back to the autumn of 1918.

By the end of 1918, Gheorghe Boc shot his superior, a Hungarian officer. The Hungarian soldiers arriving twenty two years later already been looking for Boc. As they were on bad terms, his son-in-law, Rosescu, reported Boc for hiding firearms.

Rosescu tried to instigate Hungarian soldiers to kill Boc. Villagers soon found Boc dead, with two bullet wounds, near Creek Inaktelek. This was the epilogue of the Hungarian rule in Egeres. There were no other anti-Romanian atrocities later. Villagers blamed Hungarian soldiers for the crime. Vonyica, Boc's widow, vowed to take revenge on "the Hungarians". She played an important part in instigations and in the composing of the vengeance list in 1944. Her second husband tried to persuade Calvinists to let the bells toll at her burial. When he was refused, he forwarded a petition to higher Church authorities as well. Vonyica Boc was the first "victim" of the tolling of bells ban. By the death of the others everybody knew: petitions were useless. Many relatives did not even try to ask the Hungarians for ringing the bells. Thereby they recognized the guilt of the dead. According to public belief every deed will be somehow punished. Although the authorities let the murderers of Egeres escape, fate did not excuse them. Most of them died from cancer, the "spiteful death", or committed suicide.

Gendarme commander Herta was one of the supporters of Vonyica's vengeance campaign. He served at the neighboring Ferencbánya before 1940. After the Vienna Verdict he had to flee to Romania, and returned to Egeres as the omnipotent administer of justice by autumn 1944. He left Northern Transylvanian with very bitter memories on the autumn of 1940. He went to his neighbor, the Juhász family, to say goodbye. They were in the middle of preparations for the celebration of the take-over. Hungarian clothes, flags and ornaments were scattered all around the place. Herta could never forgive them for being happy at the moment of his greatest despair. Zsigmond Juhász Sr. mourned all his life the death of his son of the same name. He might have been strangled for that very moment of happiness.

Herta did not personally take part in the executions. Nevertheless he was the one to order people to be gathered and executed. He also let pillage and robbery loose in the village.

The role of the Romanian village priest is quite ambiguous. He claimed the murderers were strangers, and unknown to everybody, and he seemed to never heard about the ban on ringing church bells. Survivors have nevertheless confessed differently. Everyone says Herta lodged at the priest's house and they gathered there to work out and organize the extermination of the Hungarians. The priest remembers nothing but the pillage, and how he tried to talk Herta out of taking his recruits to rob the neighboring village. The wives of many arrested Hungarians turned to him for help as they trusted the representative of the Church, no matter what nationality he belonged. They also knew he was the only person

who could influence Herta, as the priest is the utmost authority to Romanian believers. Hungarians helped the priest when he got into trouble during summer 1944; despite official interdiction, Postmaster Zoltán let him contact the Romanian consulate of Kolozsvár. Two months later Mrs. Zoltán was threatened at the parish while the priest did not even try to defend her. He was unwilling to help anybody, he failed to stand for the lives of the 16 victims, as he never supported the requests of their widows either.

György Nyilas (HPA's appointee), commander of the people's militia, and Soviet soldiers arriving in the village in mid-November, started inquiries. They found the previously hidden corpses. The trial of village murderers began at the Kolozsvár court. Herta and his men fled from Egeres, and later nobody tried even to find them. Presumably persuaded by the criminals' money, authorities moved the trial to the Craiova court. Nobody was found guilty there and all accused were acquitted.

Authorities tried to transfer the Egeres events into an anti-Communist revolt at first. They based their "hypothesis" on the fact that seven victims were miners and had been involved in working-class movement. To increase the class-struggle and to decrease the ethnic characteristic features of the matter, they simply changed the orthography of the name of a Hungarian victim – János Gille into Romanian: Ioan Ghile. The name appears in its Romanian version even on the tombstone in the Hungarian Catholic cemetery. The tombstone was erected on November 7, 1945, the anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution, with the inscription on it saying: *Here lie the working-class heroes Ferencbánya and Egeres, the victims of Fascists on October 24, 1944.*

INTERVIEWS:

"I AM NOT RUNNING AWAY,
THEY WON'T KILL ME JUST LIKE THAT"

Mrs. János Kovács, October 27, 1981

The Russians came in on October 14, 1944. On the 21st, a volunteer came with Petru Sarca and they took my husband with them. I did not know the volunteer, he was not a villager. He had a gun, he wore a military jacket and an armband: *Voluntar pentru Ardeal* (Volunteer for Transylvania)¹. They told my husband to

follow them to the gendarme station. János went with them without saying a word. He did not come back. It was Saturday, I took him lunch in the afternoon. He was cutting wood with another man, a German soldier carried the logs. My husband sent me to the Romanian priest, as he was afraid of them keeping him there for the night. I went to see the priest. He told me he was going to try, but he had already protested to Herta once when he went to pillage Jegenye. He told Herta not to go, gendarmes would leave eventually, whereas the villagers remain. Herta replied he did not want to hear such words. Though the priest promised to try. I waited, but my husband did not return.

I remember our neighbor, Aunt Anuta warned us in advance. She advised János to hide. She had heard them saying whom they were going to take away, and my husband name was also mentioned. She told him to go away, not to be at home. My husband replied: *"I'm not running away, I have done nothing wrong to them. They won't kill me just like that. They'd beat me, perhaps. I can take that."* Thus he stayed home.

Vasile Botoi also came over and told him: *"Come, János, just go and hide in my stable's attic, you won't be hurt, nobody will know you're there. Just wait there until this confusion is over. They are all mad. I don't know what they want..."* But they could not persuade János to leave the house. He said he would sit tight anywhere else. He stayed. Who could think they would kill him?

On Sunday I took his breakfast to the post. The cellar was empty, nobody was there. People were talking in groups in the street. Three here, six there. They were whispering. I don't know when they were taken away. Some said it happened at dawn.

- Did commander Herta join them?

- I don't know. He gave the order, but I don't know for sure whether he was there. They took them away so early, the neighbors saw nothing, they were all asleep. Then in the morning I went to the Romanian priest again. I was looking for Herta. He wasn't there, the Domnit family invited him for lunch. Emma Kovács visited me in the afternoon. She told me what had happened. They killed Józsi Vincze, her son. She knew what happened from the village shepherd, Adam Jula. Józsi run away, but the shepherd's dogs caught him. The murderers were too tired to take him back. Adam told her everything, he went with them. They sat by the road for a rest. Józsi said: *"Don't kill me! What have I done to you?"* *"We won't kill you"*, they said, *"here, have yourself a cigarette"*, they lit their cigarettes, then one of them knocked him down. They executed him on the spot.

- Did they shoot him?

- Shoot or beaten him to death... I don't know. They were armed.

- Do you know who killed your son?

- I do not. There were many people there... there were two. That afternoon Emma Kovács went to Herta, asking him to let her bury her son. He chased her out. The poor woman went out, what else could she do? They ruled the world then. Then she came to me. Finally she buried Józsi. His body wasn't there where the other corpses were. We did not dare to go there. They took the bodies away in a week, with the bodies of the victims from Ferencbánya. When we finally went there, all we found were their traces. The grass was flattened, we could see where they had dragged the bodies.

- What did you think when you saw the bodies were gone? What did you want to do?

- We asked permission of the village hall to look for them. They sent people's gendarmes (i.e. people militias) with us. They had replaced Herta and his men in the meantime. The Soviets ordered them out a few days after the murder. Herta and his loitering gang cleared out. The volunteers too. Nothing happened until January. Though they tried to take my pigs. I was lucky my neighbor was there, because there were six. All villagers. Everything was allowed for them. They did what they wanted. Some of them went to Romania. They came home and went to the neighboring villages, including Bogárlelke, with carts. They took boots and clothes, whatever they wanted. Humane, decent people would never act like that. Only those loitering bastards dared to do it. There was no way one could go to see the corpses. When the loiterers disappeared, I was at the village hall. Nyilas asked me if I had seen the dead. I told him my brother, György Szálkai, had seen them every evening on his way back from the mine. I can still hear his voice asking him: - "Have you seen the bodies?" - "Yes, I have." - "What did they look like? Were they shot, were they beaten to death?" - "Both shot and beaten." - "Did you recognize all of them?" - "Yes, all."

Someone advised us to go to the County Hall. I couldn't go, I had two little children. My daughter was 6, and my son 12. My father said I'd better stay home, they would have killed me too if they had found it out. They threatened Mózsi Gombos. He was looking for his goats Saturday evening. They told him to get lost or they would shoot him... He took us there with two women and showed us where they were laying and all. He lived at Muncel, near Körtvélyes. The murderers swore to kill him. He already fled in early 1945.

There was a woman, Géza Czégeni's wife, who had to hide as well. They killed his husband and son, and they were looking for her too. Her son, Géza, was 16, he was a six-grade student at a school in Kolozsvár. He came home on holidays. His father was an innkeeper, a true gentleman. He was cultured. They buried them at Kolozsvár. Mrs. Czégeni got a tobacco-shop there. Then she committed suicide. She took some poison. She was quite depressed, always telling me there was no point for her to live on. Even if they had killed my husband, I still had my two children, whereas she had lost both her husband and son. She had nothing to live for... I always visited her when I went to Kolozsvár. We spoke about the past, about our pain. We used to cry and find our comfort in it.

When they told me my husband was murdered somewhere out there, I thought my days were numbered. But God gave me strength to live on. Then they found the bodies in January. They captured a volunteer who was there when they hid the bodies. I cannot imagine how they could hide them so deep. We took them out in sheets and put them on carts. They did not expect anybody to find the dead. A physician came from Kolozsvár to hold a post-mortem. It was horrible, he said. My husband's knee was missing. There was a big nail kicked in another victim's skull. Their hands were tied up with wires. Teacher Ms. Ilona Kádas was witnessing the post-mortem. She went there with Attila Zoltán's mother. The old woman had to identify her son. Four gypsies were boiling water to defrost the bodies. Four Soviet soldiers were on guard around them. The bodies were carried one by one from the fire hall. Világosság January 28, 1945, wrote about the case.

They captured ten murderers and took them in detention under remand to Kolozsvár. We were summoned twice but the trial was always postponed. Then, I don't quite remember exactly when, they summoned us to Craiova,. Three women, Mrs. György József Székely, Mrs. Debreczeni and me, went there. There were ten defendants: Traian Ghine, Ioan Matei, Petru Sarca and... there also were three men from Stobor and three from Forgácskút. Then there were some witnesses of the defense, including road-mender Kincse and Suteu. According to their testimony the defendants were decent, ordinary people who had never committed crimes or murders. We had not even a lawyer, we traveled together with those witnesses. We were waiting in the city park, their lawyer came and instructed them what to say. He insisted them to tell that the Hungarians had done this and that. and murdered Romanians as well here and there. But they hardly asked neither me not them in the end.

- **What did they ask you?**

- They asked my name and age, and if I knew the person

who had come for my husband. I pointed to a man who was there in the corner, behind bars, and said that he and a volunteer took my husband. Then they asked me if I had anything else to say. I told them to ask me questions and I would answer. There was no point for me to speak. It was all pointless. A military officer or something came out and pat the murderers on their shoulders and told them not to worry, because they were secure. They were released indeed, they traveled together with us home. They had witnesses and a lawyer. We had no witnesses, they did not summon our star witness, Mózsi Gombos, either to Kolozsvár or to Craiova.

Gendarme commander Herta wasn't even accused. We spent one day at Craiova, and that was all. They had never officially settled the case.

WE HAVE ALL BEEN SENTENCED

József Kovács, Egeres, February 13, 1983

- I was born at Egeres. I was 18 in 1944. Years later, as I came home from the factory by cart, I took Traian Ghine. He was drunk. He told me he was sorry for the part he played in the murders of 1944. It was him who started to speak admitting he took part in the murder. He said he was there when the large farmers passed judgment on the Hungarians at the Romanian priest's house.

- **Did he mention any names?**

- He didn't say names and I didn't ask him either, yet I already knew whom he meant.

- **Whom?**

- Well, Todor Crisan was among them.

- **Was he a large farmer?**

- A large farmer, yes, he bribed in Craiova... He bribed them. There was then Ioan Chifor, and Süto".

- **Was Süto" a Hungarian?**

- No, he wasn't. He was Vasile Suteu. The Romanian priest, Ion Chicinas, was also there. The trial was held at his house. Herta, the gendarme commander, lived at his house.

- **Did he really?**

- Yes, he did, this is for sure. They held a trial there to decide whom and when they were going to execute.

- **Whom were they going to execute?**

- All Hungarians. They say they had a list of one hundred names. They were ready to move into our house, saying that we were about to be executed. Some people from Ticu – Forgácskút – were supposed to move in. Traian Ghine said he wanted to come

there in the first place. We have all been sentenced. They planned to kill the elder ones first, including János Kovács, but they killed József Vincze, too . He was a postman, merely 22. He did no harm to anybody. Then they killed Czégeni and his son.

- **What did they have against him?**

- Nothing that I know of. He was an innkeeper. What could he have done? They killed Márton Debreczeni , a member of the jury, who never hurt a fly. Then Mihály Mikla, he was some sort of a boss.² They were angry with him because he had used them for public work during the war. Exactly as they do it now.

- **Were these people members of the 1940-44 local administration?**

- Yes, you could put it that way. Yet János Kovács had never been in the leadership. He had some forest business with one of his Romanian relatives. He got his share under his name during the Hungarian rule. They went to court and he got it but not everything, only the part his wife was entitled to. The mother or another relative of his wife was Romanian.

- **What else did Ghine tell you?**

- He told me that Domnit shot Józsi Vincze.³ The boy somehow managed to escape... They were tied up with wires. He ran down a ditch. Had he hidden there, he would have escaped, he would have not been hurt. But he emerged from it and the shepherd sent his dogs caught him.

- **Where did they have their firearms from?**

- From Herta. From gendarmes and the volunteers. They took them out in the field and beaten them brutally for fear they would escape. The sentence said they should be rather beaten to death and not shot.

- **What did they promise the villagers?**

- They promised that they would get the Hungarians' houses. And they were drinking all the time.

- **When did he say all these? And why to you? Did he ever deny it later?**

- He told it to me because we always were on good terms. He was a servant at Aschelean, our neighbor. They brought their cattle to our well. He spent many years there, then he was a shepherd and everything. He was poor, and came from Pányik, he married a girl of Egeres. He never spoke to others and nobody else spoke to me of those things either. But it all came out during the years. Everyone has to confide in somebody. Ghine told me for the first time about 15 years ago, around 1968. He was drunk. Then he spoke once more, 8 years ago. He was coming from the pub again. He said their trial was quite an expense for the large farmers. First they were

in imprisonment under remand at Kolozsvár. They could arrange nothing there, but they had contacts at Craiova. Had they told the truth at Craiova, even the court would have been in trouble.

- **You have been at Craiova too, as far as I know.**

How did you get there?

- I was called up and I got there on October 5, 1948. In three months I was transferred to work in the army corps supply service. I handed out uniforms to officers too. Once, an first lieutenant, who heard that I came from Egeres, told me he was there at the trial. I asked him how did they escape so easily? They had a lot of money, the officer replied.

- **Did they harm you in 1944?**

- They had sent me to Jegenye, to call the carpenters. When we were back, Bogya (Stefan Bodea) caught me and took me to his cycle repair workshop. He is dead now. He was one the murderers. He would have killed me if I had not seen Ioan Sarca. I called him. We were on good terms, he knew me well. Luckily Sarca knew a sergeant who lived nearby. They set me free.

- **What did Bodea want from you?**

- He said he would kill me. I asked him what for, there was nothing I had done. He said they would kill all Hungarians, anyway. This was one o'clock in the night. They ordered us for work at the gendarmerie post. We went there day after day, fed their horses and kept the place clean for them. They wanted more of us to go. Sarca freed us, but Bodea came and took our pig. A pig of three hundred pounds and some sheets. There was nothing we could do. My father was away, a Romanian woman told him not to come back or they would kill him. My father sent the cart back and hid somewhere. He was a magistrate, and never harmed them. On the contrary, he had helped them. They had still beaten my mother. Socea hit her. Then they stole. They toured the region stealing: they went to Bogártelke and Daróc, to Hungarian villages and took whatever they could.

- **When did Herta come to Egeres? What was his rank?**

- He was the commander of the gendarme station. He was a sergeant. He came with the volunteers and lived at the priest's.

- **Did the priest try to talk them out of the murder?**

- I did not hear about it. The judgment was passed at his house, wasn't it? Then the Russians came from Kolozsvár and chased the gendarmes away. Investigations started. The Jula brothers took the bodies to the Tóttelek forest and hid them in a deep chasm.

- **Did they kill the miners at the same time?**

- As I remember, they did. There was a young German soldier

who was left behind. They killed him for his good clothes.

- **I have heard they killed them in two rounds.**

- Well, there was only one as I recall.

- **Uncle Jóska Kalló says so.**

- Uncle Jóska Kalló and Gombos saw something. Gombos lived out at Körtvélyes, the murders happened there. There was a mine there.

THEY WERE CALLED: "GILCOSII" (MURDERERS)

Silvia Morar, March 6, 1983

- I was born at Pausa, County Kolozs. We moved to Egeres in 1931 when my mother married her second husband. I was 8 years old. Hungarians and Romanians understood each-other well before 1940. There lived a highlander, Gheorghe Boc, in the middle of the village. One day the news that Hungarians had killed him spread all over the village. Everyone had his/her version about the case.

- **What Hungarians, villagers or those who came in?**

- Those who came in. No villager's name was mentioned. I remember they found Boc buried by Creek Inaktelek. They said the Hungarians killed him.

- **What was the reason for that murder?**

- He was one of those who could not stand the Hungarians. Something like that.

- **Did he say or do something?**

- I don't know. There were some family problems...⁴

- **What serious event occurred in the village during the Hungarian rule?**

- I recall nothing serious. We did our work.

- **When 14 people were killed along the Petri-Szentferencbánya road and later two more during the autumn of 1944, did the villagers speak about it? How much did the Romanians know about it?**

- There were some rumors what and how it happened, how bold act it was and some names were mentioned, too. My father was a shoemaker, there were always many people at our house. As they waited, they were talking about lots of things, about Hungarians and Romanians, too. Everybody was curious, after all. They argued a lot and explained their theories. They mentioned names as well. They were talking about the Julas, about Sicsai and Blaje.

- **Blaje was Traian Ghine, wasn't he? Was Sicsai a Hungarian?**

- No, he was not. Sicsai was a Romanian. Blaje was Traian Ghine.⁵ One of the Julas later hung himself.

- **Why did they kill these people? Who organized all this?**

- They killed because of ethnic hatred. One was Hungarian, the other Romanian. I haven't heard of other reasons. I have no idea on who the organizer was. I was very young then, I didn't even grasp the importance of the events. We spoke openly about it in our family. People knew who the guilty ones were. There might have been strangers and volunteers, too, but the ones we knew and spoke about were all villagers. People were keeping away from them.

- **Romanians too?**

- Yes, Romanians too. It was horrible. They were called "gilcosii" ("djilkoshi" – murderers).

- **Why, this is a Hungarian word? Why not "ucigasii", the Romanian word?**

- Everyone called them this way: gilcosii.

- **Would you say there were people who didn't know who the murderers were?**

- It's not that. Everyone knew, who they were. But their relatives and friends stood up for them. Others were afraid of their revenge. They knew about the ringing ban, too. People said these men deserved neither Catholic nor Calvinist bell-toll. This is something both Hungarians and Romanians agreed upon.

- **Do you recall a case when the Hungarian bells did not toll?**

- Ioan Matei died some five years ago. Hungarian bells were silent at his burial. I think his family didn't even ask for the Hungarian bells to ring. They knew it would have been pointless. All the village knew he was a murderer. My parents told me.⁶

- **Did the murderers stay or flee after the crime?**

- I do not know. I was too young to notice such things.⁷ Adults were afraid of revenge, so they kept their mouths shut.

EYEWITNESSES

Károly Vincze, member of the people's militia

- When I returned home from the front in the autumn of 1944, I heard that György József Székely had been murdered on Kishegy. Mother said "*be careful, look what has happened. They have killed so many people here*". Who? "*The volunteers, the villagers and*"... Herta and his men were still here when I arrived. I never saw him, they just said he was here. He disappeared when the order came for Romanian gendarmes to leave. They said Hungarians were coming. The guilty ones had vanished.

- Do you remember any names?

- Domnit, the roadworker (Suteu), Sarca, the Julas, Traian Ghine, Bodea – they all went away. Nicolae Nut and Matei did not leave. When the Russians arrived, they and Gyuri Nyilas, caught Matei and Nicolae Nut. They brought them to the village hall and handed them over to the people's gendarme. In the meantime they were looking for the others, but there was no way to find them. They fled to Torda, we were told. They took the prisoners to Kolozsvár that very evening. Next day they returned and took us with them, too. Me too. Armed as we were we went with them to the Tóttelek woods. Nut and Matei guided us, they took the corpses out of the chasm and put them on carts. There were some soil and tares thrown upon the bodies, but not very much. They did not rot, it was cold in January, the soil was not enough to warm them up. We guarded them, I saw everything. I recognized all of them except for that young German soldier. He was about 18-20. They had stolen his clothes, he was all naked just like the others.

József Kalló:

- I was on duty as a militia man in the village that night. Herta was not there with the murderers, he just gave orders. There were quite a lot of volunteers and civilians. They were quite a many. Herta went to Forgácskút, too and told there that. Hungarians had to be exterminated. He recruited his men by promising them the houses of the victims.

- They set off before dawn. I followed them, I heard the shots and the shouts. One boy, Mózsi Gombos went there. They chased him off telling him they would shoot him. He was at fifty

meters from them, I was at one hundred, so they couldn't spot me. I saw Józsi Vincze escaping. He was twenty, the poor thing. He ran the wrong way. Had he run towards the Petri-road, he would have escaped. He was heading towards the shepherd's place. The shepherd's dogs caught him. The shepherd was a Jula-boy, Adam Jula, he knew what was going on. When they brought Józsi back, Blaje and Matei, the latter has already died, offered him a cigar and they told him they would let him go, if he kept his mouth shut. The boy promised that he would not say a word to anybody. Then they told him to go away. When he just turned his back to leave, they shot him. He fell into a ditch, and they left him there.

- Who else did you see there?

- Well, they are all dead now, except for Ghine. There were Vasi Opra, Tanase Kincse (he changed his name for a Hungarian one during Hungarian time), Cornel Stereban, Vasi Mocan, Domnit and Gheorghe Cozac. I was lying in a ditch hundred meters from them, thus I recognized the villagers at once. I was shivering with fear. There were four men from Forgácskút. I had recognized Vasilie Vanciu, but I did not know the others.

- I reported the bodies were hidden here and there and asked them to bury the victims. It was a mine opening, where they used to bring earth out into the open. They hid the corpses in that chasm, but we still found them. Then they took them away to the Tóttelek woods into a mine air-shaft. We discovered this hiding place only in January, when a volunteer was captured and he led us there.

Attila Gajdos Balogh

Persons murdered at Egeres
on October 22, 1944

1. Kovács János
2. Géza Czégeni, 51
3. Géza Czégeni, 16
4. József Vincze, 21
5. Márton Debreczeni
6. Mihály Mikla, 65
7. Attila Zoltán, 33
8. Zsigmond Juhász, 21
9. András Dimény, 35
10. János Gille, 35
11. János Hajas, 30
12. József Hajas, 38
13. János Sipkó, 32

14. János Rilki
15. József György
16. Unidentified German soldier, about 18

Notes

¹Voluntar pentru Ardeal – Volunteer for Transylvania

²Mihály Mikla was the village drummer

³Kalló, another witness in the village stated that Blaje and Ion Matei shot Vincze. Blaje was the nickname of Traian Ghine. Ghine intended to blame Domnit for the crime.

⁴According to the Hungarian villagers, Boc was reported by his son-in-law to the authorities for hiding a rifle in the side of the well. It was also said that he shot at a Hungarian officer, whom he served as an orderly, in 1918 after the Romanians came in.

⁵József Kalló stated that he witnessed Ghine and Matei shooting Józsi Vincze. Ghine, however, accused somebody else.

⁶Silvia Morar's father, the shoemaker, refused to answer my questions.

⁷When the Soviets ordered the Romanian administrators out of Northern Transylvania, many villagers believed that the Hungarians were coming back. The guilty fled to Torda. They hid the corpses before their escape.

Note # 8 left out because the dialect word for air shaft was simply translated.

Counties Szilágy and Szatmár

Due to scarce data available, it is not possible for us to thoroughly analyze the counties of Northern Transylvania we have not mentioned yet. Yet it is highly probable that the front and the change in power led to similar consequences all over Transylvania. Minorities had to pay for the Vienna Verdict, for the blood-sacrifice of Romanian soldiers killed on the front and for the insecurity of Northern Transylvania's status. Neither the expulsion of Romanian administration from Northern Transylvania, nor the establishment of the Groza-government on March 6, 1945, did not put an end to anti-Hungarian atrocities. To prove this statement, we are going to present several atrocities committed in Counties Szilágy and Szatmár during the autumn of 1944 and January-July, 1945.

The Soviet troops had reached Zilah on October 15, 1944. A few days later 5,000 soldiers of the Romanian 4th army were quartered in the town. Local people took over administration in the town and the county. The Prefect and the mayor were Romanian, nevertheless many Hungarian clerks worked under their control. Towns with a Hungarian majority – Zilah, Szilágysomlyó (Simleu Silvaniei), Nagykároly – were surrounded by villages inhabited mainly by Romanians. Under the command of Major Suciu, gendarme posts were formed all over the counties. The County suffered insignificant war damages. The majority of inhabitants remained, except for a few intellectuals who had fled.¹

The inhabitants of Zilah recall no volunteer were present. Robbery and theft occurred rarely. In the hope of easy prey, some racketeers came over from the neighboring villages to take advantage of the confused post-war situation and assault some house with the intent to rob. But there were true mass-arrests at Szilágysomlyó and in its vicinity. After the arrival of the gendarmes, volunteers calling themselves Maniu guards – “local Manists” –, robbed the houses of Hungarian merchants and manufacturers. They took nine wealthy Hungarians to Zilah², but they were released after three days of “forced labor”.

As Badacsony, the birthplace of Iuliu Maniu is situated 5 kms from Szilágysomlyó, due to the popularity of the politician, most Romanians in County Szilágy were members or sympathizers of the National Peasant Party. So, they are mentioned “Manists” and not

the volunteers. We know from the testimonies (see Appendices) of women who visited the internment camp at Földvár and interviewed by Világosság, or men who returned from Soviet forced labor camps, that many Hungarian men, were reported to the gendarme and taken to various internment camps from the villages in the neighborhood of Szilágysomlyó these days.

In January 1945 they gathered several hundred men accusing them of being war-criminals. Their destination was either the Nagyenyed prison, or unknown. On January 10, 22 people, who had never meddled in politics, were arrested at Szilágysomlyó.³ They were first taken to Zilah, then, after several days of torture and questioning, to the Nagyenyed prison. Ten of them died during their imprisonment.

The HPA Record⁴ of January 22, 1945, reported that part of the Hungarian female inhabitants of Szilágysomlyó were taken away. Chief town-clerk Zoltán Balta, town-engineer István Kemencsei, high school principal Mihály Kózhalmi and merchants Iván Berecki, László Iván and László Cserne were among them. They had nothing to do with politics and they had not returned yet. The same Record in June complained about arrest of several hundred men in County Szilágy 5-6 months earlier, whose cases had yet not been cleared since.

The Record failed to mention but the inhabitants of Szilágysomlyó remember the de-Germanization campaign launched in early 1945. On January 3, all Hungarians of German-names, accused of collective guilt, were rounded up and deported to the Soviet Union.⁵

Anti-Hungarian atrocities were given a German bias in County Szatmár as well. There is no data on the volunteers' presence in the county. On its September 26 [1944] meeting, the Romanian Council of Ministries passed a decree on the dissolution of the German nationality⁶ (desfiintarea grupului etnic german). In the end of October, after the "liberation" of the county, local authorities issued orders for the deportation of war criminal Swabians. Another de-Germanization campaign was carried out between January 3 and 22, 1945, [in Szatmár], simultaneously with the events in County Szilágy. But, this time exclusively Hungarians were deported.

According to the records of the Roman Catholic diocese of County Szatmár and the HPA⁷, the following Catholic priests were deported from the area of the diocese: parish priest Ferenc Melan and prior Erno P. Gruber from Nagybánya (Baia Mare); parish priest Ferenc Monostori (he was seriously ill) from Nagymadarász

(Mađađras); parish priest László Lengyel from Érmindszent (Ady Endre) ; parish priest Gellért P. Semppei from Nagykároly; parish priest Károly Franzen from Aporháza; parish priest Elzear F. Simon from Székelyhíd; as well as theology students Lajos Láng and Ferenc Steibel.

- Even women, whose husbands had been deported, were gathered at Krasznasándorújfalu. But their children left alone made such a noise that the local Soviet commander interfered and let the women leave.

- They arrested 16 Hungarian men, accused of being partisans, and took to unknown destination from Bere. They wanted to deport the daughter of Calvinist minister Ernoó Orosz as a Swabian, to the Ukraine. Her father freed her at the last moment. Despite they were Hungarians, 59 persons were deported (fathers and mothers of three children) to the Ukraine. They shouted from the sealed wagons at railway-stations: "*we are Calvinist Hungarians yet they are take taking us...*"

- The chief-clerk and magistrate of Nagyszokond (Socond) lumped the Hungarian inhabitants together in with the Swabians due to be deported. The Hungarians were already deported. A part of the Hungarian inhabitants of Krasznabéltek (Beltiug) and Sándorfalva were also taken to the Ukraine as Swabians. 170 Calvinist Hungarians were taken to unknown locations from Erdoóđ (Ardud)...

Nobody has ever paid any attention to these grievances. After the signing the Romanian-Hungarian peace treaty, the issue of Transylvania and her Hungarian inhabitants has never been put again on the agenda of the Great Powers' international policy. The importance of the issue in Romanian home policy diminished as well. After March 13, 1945⁸, despite high-sounding minority policy, Hungarian organizations of interest representation still had to record the grievances of Hungarians in Transylvania day by day: threats, beatings, discriminatory laws⁹ and abuses of central and local authorities. On the bases of a new ideology, but at a quick pace, life has soon returned to the old track of pursuing the ideal of the pan nation-national state; Restitutio in integrum.

Mária Gál

Notes:

¹August 23, 1944. Documente 1944-1945., Bucharest, 1985., vol. III., pp. 202-235.

²Géza Lázár, Erno Papp, Sándor Nagy, Iván Túróczi, József Brandt, János Vida, Arnold Szuics, Gyula Madár. Interview with Gyula Madár. April 23, 1995, Szilágysomlyó. The cassette is in the possession of the editor.

³Géza Lázár, Sándor Nagy, János Vida, Gergely Páncs, Irén Duka, Arnold Szuics, József Kovács, János Ángya, János Molnár, Mihály Kovács, Béla Szabó, Gyula Madár, Péter Fügedi, dr. Béla Sámi, Mihály Kořhalmi, András Koszorús, János Fábíán, parish priest Hauler, Bimbi Duka, Géza Duka, Sándor Farmathi, Sándor Saskó. On the basis of the interview with Gyula Madár.

⁴MQL. ROM. TÖK. XIX-J-1-j., 18. d., 16/b.cs.

⁵Gyula Madár remembers the following names: György Smaltig, Miksa Sájter, Jani Sájter, József Sájter, Pál Major, [?] Szomer, Pál Sájter, József Gájger, István Pocsvájler, József Wagner, István Svájler, János Svájler, Lajos Hartman, [?] Kander, György Drozs, Sándor Shaitein, József Dull, Margit Barkó, [?] Vilistein. Only five of them returned from the Soviet Union.

⁶Curierul, September 27, 1944.

⁷MOL. ROM. TÖK. XIX-J-1-j., 18.d., 16/b.cs.

⁸March 13, 1945. The date of the Romanian administration returning into Northern Transylvania.

⁹See the Agricultural Act, CASBI, the Acts on Citizenship and on Action for Recovery of Property.

Southern Transylvania in Autumn 1944

We know very little about the fate of the Hungarians living in Southern Transylvania after the Vienna Decision. In lack of archive sources and Hungarian newspapers, we can only rely on oral history, according to which minorities were generally oppressed. Overall censorship was nearly unbearable. Hungarian men were taken to forced labor as untrustworthy elements. Hungarian villagers along the border were frequently accused of spying. Many of them were imprisoned with no valid proofs at all.¹

After the break-away of August 23, 1944, Romanian authorities gathered and interned hundreds of Hungarian leaders, intellectuals, priests and politicians in Southern Transylvania. They took them to internment camps at Tg. Jiu, Focsani, Lugos and Belényes. According to the record² of December 29, 1944, of the Calvinist congregation of Gyanta, its minister, Ferenc Boros, and four other men were taken to Belényes. Then in ten days, after they had spent three days at home, they dragged him to Kishalmagy, County Arad. They kept 84 priests and teachers there from Counties Bihar and Szilagy in shameful condition. As in other parts of Transylvania, arrests were mostly executed by the Romanian gendarmes.

Hungarian inhabitants had to pay for the two, ill-fated offensive of the Hungarian army at Torda and at Arad-Szalonta (Salonta). 1,000 Hungarian men were taken from County Torda-Aranyos (Aries)³ and seven people were executed at a nearby village, Szentmihaly. After re-capturing of Arad several Hungarian and German inhabitants were gathered and sent to internment camps⁴. Romanian soldiers committed mass killings in the valley of River Black Körös.

One day after the second assault into Southern Transylvania was launched, Hungarian troops reached Gyanta on September 14, 1944. They held the village for ten days. According to the above mentioned records of the Calvinist diocese, the Hungarians, as they were advanced towards Laskoh, found themselves against Soviet troops superior in number when they reached Lunca, and were forced to retreat. The Hungarian rear-guard, one company, took its positions in the streets of Gyanta on September 24, Sunday, and

managed to hold up the 3rd Romanian mountaineer division for a couple of hours. The Hungarians retreated at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and the invading Romanian soldiers took their revenge on the innocent villagers. They killed 47 people, beat men, raped women and girls, set gardens on fire, pillaged and ravaged the houses. Together with civilian Romanians from nearby villages, they had taken the goods, carts and cattle of the Gyanta inhabitants. They set the church, built in 1800, on fire that day.

However, the Gyanta-events had a prelude in the Bihar region. Soldiers of the Romanian army, arriving after the retreating Hungarians, arm in arm with Romanian inhabitants of the neighboring villages, pillaged Magyarremete and Kishalmágy, near Belényes, on September 23.⁵ Under the accusation of being partisans, they had executed 36 civilians, including children of 14 and men over 60, unable to resist or fight at all. Six villagers slipped away from Magyarremete to Kishalmágy were executed as well. The motivation was the same as at Gyanta. The citizens of Magyarremete had to pay with their lives for the resistance of the Hungarian army in their village.

Lieutenant Teodor Brindea, born at Belényes, commanded the massacre of Gyanta. He tried to clear himself in his diary⁶ by writing "I was ordered to do so". Nevertheless survivors claim he did his work with the possible greatest consciousness and bloodlust on that sad day of autumn thanksgiving, September 24. Brindea was arrested at Nagyvárad⁷ on May 9, 1947, and sentenced to 7-year imprisonment.⁸ Nevertheless, the ones he killed were not recorded as war victims, their children and widows never obtained the financial allowance entitled to war orphans and war-widows. The official discrimination of the victims-martyrs of anti-Hungarian atrocities proved it that a massacre of that scale could not be incited by purblind national hatred, that both soldiers and civilians would easily steal and pillage without order but even the greatest anger, chauvinism and blood thirst would never force a soldier to commit a mass killing, but superior orders.

The origins and composition of Brindea's troop is still unclear to us. The church record of Gyanta simply calls it the 3rd mountaineer unit of the Romanian army, without specifying whether it belonged to the 1st or the 4th Romanian Armies fighting in Transylvania. Despite the fact that the border guard troops that fought on the Soviet side in this region belonged to the 4th Army, the massacres were most probably committed by soldiers of the Belis (Jósikafalva) locally mobilized mountaineer unit, i.e. the

“battalion fix” named Szamos. They belonged to the 1st Army of Szeben, and together with similar units of Topánfalva and Abrudbánya, they fought against Hungarian-German troops in the valley of rivers Körös, along the Vienna-border.

It is a fact that villagers in the Körös and Aranyos valleys have a much blurred image of the soldiers who went by. Some call them volunteers, others guardsmen, or members of the locally mobilized battalions or simply soldiers. But in most cases witnesses point to the fact that they were not ordinary, disciplined military unit, rather a weird mob of suspicious figures dressed in military uniforms. Regular Soviet troops arrived after them. (They arrived at Gyanta on September 27 and stationed in the village for two weeks.) Villagers from the nearby settlements also took part in robberies at Gyanta, Magyarremete and Kishalmágy. Nevertheless, no civilians are mentioned in connection with the killings.

Mária Gál

GYANTA, SEPTEMBER 24, 1944

I have selected the following fragments of interviews from the documentary film, Gyanta, shot by Zoltán Boros, with the author's permission. (ed.)

THEY RISKED THEIR OWN LIVES TO RESCUE US

I can clearly recall it. It was in the autumn of 1944, we were sitting in Medrea's cellar when we heard shout from outside, I folded my hands and prayed for God's help. Some minutes later they fired at the very spot I had just stood up from. They broke the cellar door, my father shouted we were civilians and not to shoot. A lot of soldiers came and ordered us out. They searched the cellar for hiding Hungarian soldiers. They forced us to go down the street, but we had no idea where we were driven. When we passed by their house, Mihai Farcas and his daughter stood in the way of the soldiers. They said that we were civilians, we did not do any harm, and it was not us who had fired but the Hungarian soldiers. Farcas asked the Romanians not to take us away. He said he would assume the responsibility for us. My father and Farcas and his daughter had to walk around the street. They said they would shoot them if the Hungarians fired at them. But the Hungarians were already far away, nobody fired, so we finally got home.

There were shots all day long here and there in the village. People were executed, houses were set on fire. The soldiers that caught us listened to Mihai Farcas and believed him that the Hungarian soldiers and not the civilians shot at them. But there were many to whom not even Romanians could explain how the rear-guards fled in the last moment, leaving some of their machine guns behind. Soldiers thought all those arms were ours. My father tried to explain things, but his knowledge of Romanian was rather poor. Soldiers kept demanding to show them the Hungarians if they had really been there. We last saw Hungarian soldiers before the shooting started because we went down to the cellar. My father had served in the war, he saw the Hungarians had no chance, and told them not to fight. As a 16-year old child, I did not really understand of what my father tried to explain them tooth and nail. He kept

asking them not to fire, and reminding them of the civilians they would be left behind. But they listened to nobody. They went on firing to cover their retreating fellow-soldiers. There were many executions, many houses set on fire in revenge of it. All our gardens were ruined, and many of the villagers had to be helped to feed their cattle during the winter.

Many things happened then, we do not even like to recall it. We witnessed that some people were buried in coffins, some in sheets. The parish was in a very nice spot, up on the hill, it was all surrounded with flowers and lilac bushes. War did not spare it either. Neither Hungarians, nor Romanians asked for our permission to billet there. They both quartered in there where they wanted. The pastor was in deportation when the Hungarians came. Without asking for his wife's permission, the Hungarian officers moved in and set up their headquarters at the parish. Neither the pastor's wife nor the village people knew anything about they discussed and decided upon there. But the house was set on fire because they lived there.

- **How did Hungarians and Romanians live at Gyanta before the war? Did their relation change in wartime or after the massacre of September 24?**

- Most of the villagers are Hungarian.⁹ We always were on good terms with the few Romanian families living here. They stood up for us and protected us on September 24, too. When the Hungarian soldiers wanted to take their horses, my father did not allow them to do so. There were no problems between us, all troubles were due to the war. People talk at random and they don't really know what to believe. They think the civilians are to blame, whereas it's all politics. Soldiers perform orders and civilians have to accept the situation as it is. Whether they are beaten or cared for. There was no hatred among us after that events. Nobody cared you were Hungarian or Romanian. We tried to live our life as we could. It wasn't easy, but we managed somehow.

THE ARMY CHAPLAIN WAS TO ADMINISTER THE HOLY COMMUNION

It was Sunday. The army chaplain was preparing to administer the Holy Communion. I was a girl of 16, and I was waiting for the event. Suddenly there were gunshots. We all tried to hide in cellars, shelters, in the back of the gardens, wherever we could. Soldiers flooded the village in the afternoon. They were volunteers, looking for Hungarian soldiers. But luckily, the Hungarians had already disappeared. We knew nothing about who

had fired. The Romanians came in and started to look for Hungarian soldiers and as they were nowhere, the Romanians shot innocent people. They searched the cellars as they thought there were the Hungarian's headquarter and controlled shootings from there.

- Who set the parish on fire? Soldiers or civilians?

- Most probably the soldiers did it. They set many houses on fire. Whole streets had burnt down, haycocks and houses with people in them; all were done by the soldiers. They performed the executions, too. Medrea had a great cellar just opposite the mill, it could hold 20 people. They fired in there with a machine gun. Some of the hiding people were wounded, then the soldiers took them to the cemetery and shot them. Zsuzsa Boros, a relative of mine, managed to escape. She hid in a cornfield, sneaked into the village by night and was sheltered by a Romanian family in their attic. She saw the execution and heard the victims crying.

They told Mihai Todinca, a Romanian man, he was free to go. He did not want to leave without his Hungarian wife and two children, so they shot him, too.

They took 15-20 persons to the other edge of the village and shot them. Gyula Bere escaped, he was the sole survivor. There was a young boy of 17, István Bíró, he was shot in his face. He was found under the corpses, by the mill. He died of a disease while he was still a student.

GYULA BERE:

I SAW THE OTHERS HAD ALREADY BEEN SHOT

We have sad memories of that September 24. When we heard that not the Russians but the Romanians were coming, we went into hiding. When I heard them shouting in the back of my yard, and got so frightened I jumped over the fence trying to run the way Hungarian soldiers did. They shouted Stai! (Stop!) and I stopped for fear they would shoot me. They said nothing else, two soldiers caught me and took me away. At the fringe of the village I saw the others had already been shot down. Captain Brighea, if it was his true rank, was on his way back from the corpses. When he saw me – he was some 100 meters away – he called out to the soldiers: *Impuscati si pe el!* (*Shoot him too!*, without asking me anything. He wasn't interested whether I visited Hungary ever or had an ID or was guilty or not. Luckily, he did not come back with us, he just gave orders to the soldiers. At the fringe of the village, where they supposed to shoot me, a sergeant (corporal, really) leaned over the fence of a house and told the soldiers: *Nu impuscati*

pe asta, destui ceilati! (Don't kill him, it's enough of killings.) They let me go with him. He took me to the last house in the village and he did not let me stay in the yard but hid me under the bed. He was afraid they would shoot me if they found me there. I waited there and when he returned and told me to run because they caught someone who had escaped and executed him on the spot. I jumped out through the window on the opposite side of the house. I still don't have any idea how I got to the third neighbor. I was crawling I suppose, I jumped three fences God knows but I don't know how. I came only to my senses when I was already there. A sick old woman lived there, I told her what had happened. Soldiers had just searched her house looking for young people and Hungarians. She made me lie by the fence, she piled some vegetables over me. I wanted to go home at night, but they broke the fence, I couldn't. Till dawn I was hiding in her bed, that's how I escaped.

Péter Boros, one of the people executed at the village fringe, was shot in his loins. He lied there with the dead until night came then dragged himself home and died there. Pál Lacikó did not die on the spot either, he managed to get home.

MY LITTLE GIRL, YOU ARE BLEEDING!

Iluska and her parents were in the cellar by the time the soldiers came. She looked out of the window, the soldiers spotted her and fired into her face. Her mother, father and brother also died. I saw them being taken away while we were driven towards the bridge.

They caught me at home. They entered every house in our street. My parents were scared of what was going to happen. My father hid in the hay, my mother saw when I looked out the gate, while the soldiers were escorting our neighbors already. They caught me in an instant. I saw the wounded baby in her mother's arm. She kept saying: *My little girl, you are bleeding* . One of the soldiers told her: *it's not going to bleed for long* . When we reached the bridge, the soldiers started to beat one of the children on his back and drove us into the cornfield. I asked Sándor Szabó, one of our neighbors, if he would try to escape with me. He said he was afraid of being shot. I ran away by myself, because my mother was very sick, she needed my help. I managed to escape while the German fighter planes came. They fired at each other as crazy. The Romanian soldiers were on the bridge and the Hungarians were firing from somewhere above. They noticed that I disappeared after the shooting ceased. They started to look for me. I hid under the runner of a pumpkin, in the cornfield, I didn't stand otherwise they

would have seen me. I was listening. The soldiers were going around, and they left the cornfield only after the German planes had gone for good. Then they gave up the chase. I came by the mill, they took the others to the cemetery. I did not see but heard that they ordered them one by one to kneel in the ditch. I just hid behind the stable door next to the mill, the soldiers returned. They probably saw me, otherwise they wouldn't have come that way. The soldier with bayonet asked the Romanian miller whether he had seen a woman hiding there. I was at the door, around the corner when miller Medrea told them he did not see anybody and he guaranteed that no one was hiding there.

Then I went up to the attic. I heard the cries and the shots. As I peeped out through a glass shingle, I saw as Péter Bálint, the pastor's neighbor, was shot. Uncle Lajos was also taken out there, but he somehow survived, but I don't know how. Their hands were all tied and they were kneeling in line. I later heard then when they wanted to shoot him, [Uncle] Lajos Boros stepped out of the line and offered money for his life. "Please, don't shoot me, I have money" – he said and reached out for his pocket. But the soldier shot him in the back and then took his money. The soldiers told Togyinka to step out of the line as he was Romanian and free to leave. Togyinka asked them to let his wife and children go, but they didn't. Then he said: "If you shoot my wife and family then shoot me too". So they did. He was the only Romanian murdered at Gyanta.

I went home at dusk. The miller told me not to go, he said soldiers might still be patrolling the streets, but I got home without any difficulty. My parents were crying in the yard, they thought I was already dead.

The soldiers came with an officer next morning. They knew I had escaped. My aunt saw them and told me to hide. I ran out because I feared they would shoot my mother. The officer recognized me, asked me where I was the previous day. Where I had to be, I replied. They did not harm me. They said 24 hours had passed, so there was no need to kill me.

Two more women also escaped from the cemetery. After they shot the people driven there, they left two Romanian soldiers to make sure all of them were dead. They discovered the two women. They were wounded but alive. "Fugiti de aici" (Run away) – they told, and let them go. They left the bodies there. Villagers buried them the next day. Relatives, neighbors, who cared about them. They dug the common grave and buried them there. There were people who were impossible to identify, their faces were shattered by bullets.

A Romanian Woman:

WE SHELTERED A WOUNDED HUNGARIAN SOLDIER

We lived in peace before the war. My father was the mayor and everybody liked him. He was captured during the war, he returned home before the front, before the Romanian soldiers reached us, with the other prisoners-of-war.

The Romanian troops set the village on fire to take their revenge. They started with the Calvinist parish, because the German officers had their quarters there. They said soldiers fired from there and from the Calvinist church tower, too. Nobody knew it for sure, it was such a confusion in the village then. Everybody tried to hide in the cellars or anywhere safe, so we could not really see who and from where were shooting. But they were soldiers, not the villagers.

There were four families in our cellar when the Romanians came; Péter Birok and his family, the Boros family, Aunt Julcsa and Pista Samu and his daughter. The Samus fled because they thought they could rescue their cattle. Pista Samu climbed up to the attic in his barn . As he was coming down with a bundle of hay, a Romanian soldier shot him in the back. The others were taken away from the cellar, but first the soldiers fired in from the outside. I took care of Aunt Julcsa, because I had a first-aid kit, so I helped anybody I could. But István was helpless, he was shot in his stomach. When they took them away, it did not occur to me they would kill them. I got scared when one of the soldiers sat the barn and the haystack on fire. I stood in his way and tried to stop him, but he said he had an order to do that. Their officer just came by and he also said that the whole village was to be burnt down. In my despair, I started to shout that not only Hungarians but also Romanians lived there too, and it was the Romanians' street. The officer was surprised but ordered his men to extinguish the fire. My father sent people to the burning hay to stop the fire. Then he joined that officer and went with him around the village to prove that nobody would fire at them. This is how this part of the village escaped. People tried to rescue the parish, too, but the soldiers did not allow them. Then as the fire spread and everyone ran where he could. There was great confusion, people was afraid and ran for their lives.

The soldiers came from all directions. Miller Medrea tried to stop those who came from the direction of the mill, as there were people hiding in his cellar, too. But they took everybody away from there. There was a family with a 2-year old child. They shot the

child first. As far as I know, only one of them survived. That man was shot in the face, he collapsed but did not die. He dragged himself to the fence and lurked there till dusk and went home by night.

The Romanian soldiers were quick to leave, and the Soviets came after them. They stayed for about two weeks, they quartered themselves in every house. They confiscated our cattle, we had to cook for them. They, however, did no harm to us. There were no more fires, no more killings.

- How many Romanian families lived here during the war?

- About fifteen, but it was not the point. We wanted to rescue the village. National differences did not matter for us. We spoke Romanian to Romanians, Hungarian to Hungarians. There were no problems after the war either. The Hungarians were not angry with us. After the Russians left, a news spread that the Hungarians were to come back. The Hungarians went to the Romanian families to stay with them and defend them. Uncle Mihály stayed with us, encouraging us not be afraid. But there was no need for it, the Hungarians did not come back.

- Did Hungarian soldiers commit anti-Romanian atrocities while they were at Gyanta?

- No, they didn't. They stayed almost two weeks here. Once they gathered the Romanians and a few Jews in Feri Szabó's house and told them that they had to execute them. Their officer calmed them down. He said they had to send a petition to Budapest first, they could act only after that. They sent no petition, I think. No answer came and they did not persecute us. We never blamed the event on Hungarian villagers.

A few days after the front went away, I don't know exactly when, a wounded Hungarian soldier came into our garden. His name was Károly Halinka, and he was from Nagykároly. He said he deserted the army, he did not want to fight any longer. I sheltered him, took care of him. He was very ill. The militia came in two weeks and they came to pick him. They knew he was there. I have no idea who reported it. I denied everything but he came out and told them that he was a deserter. He promised to write wherever he got. He never wrote. I have never heard nothing of him again. They had surely shot him, or else he would have contacted me.

The List of Known Victims Killed in SOUTHERN TRANSYLVANIA

(Data from the dioceses death registers)

GYANTA:

1. **Lajos I. Bíró, 66**
2. **Widow Mrs. Lajos Bíró, 64**
3. **Erzsébet Bíró, 28**
4. **Mrs. István Bíró**
5. **Károly D. Fenesi, 60**
6. **József Vekerdi, 53**
7. **Mrs. József Vekerdi, 50**
8. **Ilona Vekerdi, 19**
9. **László Vekerdi, 11**
10. **Ludovic Todinca, 42**
11. **Mrs. Lajos Todinca, 38**
12. **Lajos Todinca, 17**
13. **Ferenc Todinca, 13**
14. **Erzsébet Kovács**
15. **Lajos K. Boros, 56**
16. **Mihály A. Boros, 40**
17. **Mrs. Mihály Boros, 38**
18. **Mrs. Mihály Antók, 21, pregnant**
19. **Julianna Antók, 2**
20. **Erzsébet A. Boros**
21. **Sándor Szolga, 40**
22. **István Ambrus, 50**
23. **Mrs. István Ambrus, 46**
24. **Gyula Ambrus, 16**
25. **Ferenc Halász**
26. **Mrs. Ferenc Halász**
27. **Rozália Bungya**
28. **József Bíró, 19**
29. **Lajos Boros, 56**
30. **János Boros, 56**
31. **Lajos Ábrahám, 35**
32. **István S. Köteles, 71**
33. **Károly B. Boros, 65**
34. **Imre Sz. Boros, 64**
35. **Péter R. Boros**
36. **János Cs. Boros, 21**
37. **Péter Boros, 25**
38. **Péter Ábrahám, 36**
39. **Károly Szabó, 49**
40. **Károly Szabó, 21**
41. **István Szabó, 13**
42. **Mihály P. Köteles, 20**

43. Mihály Laczikó
44. Mátyás Rozvány, 39
45. Ferenc Adorján, 33
46. István Köteles, 61
47. Rebeka Ábrahám, 65

MAGYARREMETE:

1. János Béldi, 48
2. Lajos Béldi, 44
3. András Béldi, 20
4. János Máté Bálint, 38
5. János Bálint, 14
6. Sámuel Bálint, 47
7. Mihály Bálint, 41
8. Péter Fenesi, 38
9. László Gergely, 42
10. András Géczi, 45
11. Imre Horváth, 78
12. István Tamás Kovács, 61
13. János Tamás Kovács, 64
14. Mihály Kurucz, 63
15. István Lukács, 24
16. László Lukács, 21
17. László Lőrincz, 74
18. János Kósa Molnár, 85
19. László Jámbor Molnár, 62
20. Ferenc Nagy, 53
21. András Birta Szabó, 38
22. Antal Szabó, 68
23. András Szabó, 41
24. István Szabó, 44
25. Sándor Szabó, 54
26. János Tamás, 73
27. Tamás Tamás, 47
28. Tamás Tamás, 12
29. Ferenc Tamás, 49
30. András Tamás, 17
31. István Tamás, 48
32. Sándor Tamás, 63
33. Ferenc Bura, 42
34. Mária Zsurkó, 34
35. József Lukács, 15

KISHALMÁGY:

- 1. Ferenc Tamás, 20**
- 2. István Bálint, 21**
- 3. András Izsa Szabó, 67**
- 4. József Szatmári, 62**
- 5. József Kurucz, 49**
- 6. Sándor Szabó, 64**

The six persons fled from Magyarremete were killed on the road leading to the place of massacre.

SZENTMIHÁLY:

- 1. Gyula Wolff**
- 2. Mózes Dézsi**
- 3. Tamás Kiss**
- 4. Miklós Bágyoni**
- 5. Miklós Fülöp**
- 6. József Mihályfalvi**

Notes:

¹Interview with Roman Catholic vicar Ferenc Lestyán, March 6, 1995, by Mária Gál. The cassette is in the possession of the editor.

²See Appendices.

³Ildikó Lipcsey: Erdélyi autonómiák (Történeti tanulmányok) (Autonomous Communities in Transylvania [Historical Studies]), Budapest, 1990, pp 53.

⁴Interview with Júlia Németh, April 25, 1995, by Gál Mária. The cassette is in the possession of the editor. We have no data on those who were interned from Arad and its vicinity.

⁵Gábor Vincze: A romániai magyar kisebbség történeti kronológiája (The History of Hungarian Minority in Romania) 1944-53. Published by the László Teleki Foundation Library and Documentation Service, the Social Scientific and History collection of the JATE Central Library and by the Modern and Recent History Department of JATE, Szeged-Budapest, 1994.

⁶The Diary is in the possession of the widow of Brindea. It will be published shortly.

⁷Gábor Vincze ib.id.

⁸According to Mrs. Brindea

⁹According to the (Romanian) Census of 1930, the number of inhabitants totaled to 2,011 (1,419 Hungarians and 508 Romanians) In 1941 out of the total of 1,688 Hungarians numbered 1,101 and Romanians 518.

Epilogue

Is it wise to rip up an old sore? Does it make any sense to recite old grievances? Does it serve our community to expose or re-expose the horrors? More than fifty years have passed since the Black Hundreds swept across Northern Transylvanian villages. Similarly, fifty-odd years have passed since they branded Transylvanian Hungarians as collective war criminals and Fascists. How could a nation live with a guilty conscience? Is a nation responsible for the actions of her individuals?

By our study, we try to prove with the power of documents and the truth of the spoken word: Hungarian policy might have made mistakes, nevertheless, we have paid them back hundredfold. We do not accuse a nation, but a sinful state authority. We accuse every political line that is ready to sacrifice even a whole nation in order to achieve its goals. This kind of power will always need scapegoats, it will always need a Jewish, a Hungarian, a Bosnian or a Kurdish problem. For how long they are going to carry the memory of the yellow stars and the executioners' axes, it is up to the scapegoats.

Due to missing Romanian and Soviet archivalia, we could reconstruct only parts and pieces of the series of anti-Hungarian atrocities of autumn 1944. Studying archivalia on these events has been for long the privilege of "trustworthy" persons in Romania. These researchers, party historians of the Communist regime, did not even bother to take materials on minorities into consideration (Mircea Musat, Ion Ardeleanu...). The chapter on the post-war history of national minorities in Romania is still missing both from Romanian historical literature and curriculum.

There are two sources in Hungary providing information on the anti-Hungarian atrocities committed in Romania of autumn 1944. There are copies of Northern Transylvanian records and eyewitness testimonies in the Contemporary Collection of the Hungarian National Archives, and among the materials of the Peace-preparation Department of the Foreign Affairs Ministry. (MOL. Rom. TÜK. XIX-J-1-a, boxes # 61., 63.). Original records drafted in the office of the prefect of County Kolozs are kept in Gyula Simó's heritage in the Archives of the Institute of Political History.

The Hungarian dailies of the time [in Romania] reported

about the events several months later, because there were no Hungarian newspapers in the Székely counties in September-October, 1944. Romanian administration did not authorize either traditional bourgeois newspapers or left-wing “democratic” press to be published. Népi Egység, the HPA’s paper issued in Brassó, was first published only on October 22, 1944, after the murders had been committed. Unfortunately, we were not able to find every issue of newspaper Desrobirea (published in Sepsiszentgyörgy), one of the most important Romanian sources of the time. The common characteristic feature of the Bucharest right-wing papers – like Dreptatea, Curierul, Romania Noua, Ardealul – was extreme anti-Hungarian instigation and presenting terror as “restoring law and order”. Left-wing papers – as Romania Libera and Scanteia – condemned anti-Hungarian atrocities, but they used them for political propaganda. In addition, like Hungarian papers they published reports rather late and only about the widely known heinous crimes committed in the Székelyland.

There are many question-marks left when we finished our search for reasons. This is why we have resorted to oral history. We were forced to chose this alternative not only because of the scarcity of written sources. The confessions of survivors or victims’ relatives inform upon the events much more faithfully than the press or the indisputable data of official records. Nevertheless, they bring the specific atmosphere and essence of the period closer to the reader.

We are not in a position to provide a complete documentation. However, we might find the instances responsible for all the blood and tears that flooded Hungarian homes in Northern Transylvania in the autumn and winter of 1944, out of political, ideological, economic and mass-psychological reasons.

Our second, but not secondary aim was to disclose and explain parts of our history that were being concealed. Every nation has a right to know her own history. Our history, just as our mother tongue, belongs us. We are responsible for it. Our school-aged children do not learn and in lack of sources in libraries cannot read about the history of Hungary and the Hungarian nation in Transylvania. We have discussed the minority policy of the Great Powers and the role Hungary played in the World War II, in order to help Hungarian children in Romania have an insight into matters like “Hitler’s last henchman”, the “Horthyist” stand of Transylvanian Hungarians and the “importance” of the minority issue in world politics.

Appendices

THE BRASS-BAND ACCOMPANIED THEM

Anna Kedves
Gyergyószentmiklós, August 1944

In 1944, when the war was over, the relation between the Hungarians and Romanians of Békás got worse. The Hungarian authorities left, but we stayed on, as well as the Romanians. Then they, local Romanians, began to insult Hungarians. Not one of the Hungarians who had fled dared to return to Békás and Damuk. This is why all refugees were settled down at Gyergyószentmiklós.

When they came to Gyergyó, guardsmen took everything they liked in the houses. The former Romanian magistrate helped them. He knew, who had served in the Hungarian army during the war. They went to their houses, one after the other, and took them all away. There were thirty of them They gathered thirty people. Then, they said they would decimate them on October 4, Sunday. They would execute every tenth on the spot. Then they would take the other twenty-seven to the cemetery order them to dig their graves before they shoot them.

They took them to the school-yard of Gyergyó. They tied them up and told them they were going to decimate them. The brass-band of Vasláb were there, they accompanied the guardsmen. Well, Vasláb is Romanian, it was Romanian then as well.

Those thirty men stayed at home and hid after the Hungarian army left. The troops went away, they stayed at home. But the Romanian man, the magistrate before 1940, knew everyone, he knew the soldiers who stayed at home. They had no arms at all, the magistrate still reported them. He went from house to house with the Maniu-guardsmen, looking for ex-soldiers. They were almost one hundred. They did not harm the ones they found, they just said ...this one served in the war... We did not know the guardsmen. They were all Romanians but they wore all kinds of uniforms: Hungarian, German, Russian, Romanian. Wherever they found dead soldiers, they undressed them and put their uniforms on. There was not one of them we knew, none of them...

They took my husband too, at 10 o'clock in the morning.

They came back by noon. They took only the three men they intended to kill that day. They asked me if I had a cow. I said I did. 'Where was it? It's out grazing. They sent me to drive it home. I did so. Harness it to the cart. I did so.' They entered the house, and brought everything they liked or needed and piled it on the cart. Then they said to my husband 'to say goodbye to your mother-in-law, your wife and your children, you were among those three, we'd shoot you'. He paid farewell to each of us. We had two children, a boy and a girl, and I was eight-month pregnant with the third one. They ordered me to go before the cart. When we reached the school-yard they pushed me away.

At 3 o'clock in the afternoon – the brass-band arrived then – they took those three men to the school-yard. First they tied them up, then they brought the other twenty-seven and led them to the brickyard. They covered the eyes of the three with white crêpe paper. The other 27 men had to watch the execution. After they had been shot, the Romanian magistrate went there and moved each of the three and fired five-five bullets into their heads respectively. The magistrate did it. Five bullets into each head.

There were some gypsies there. The magistrate told them they would get the clothes of the dead if they dug the grave for them. They dug a pit ten inches deep. They undressed the corpses, buried them there and covered with a thin layer of soil. By half past four, or at four o'clock, the Soviet commanders came around. Not all the guardsmen could run away. Some could escape, and the Soviets arrested the rest. They took the ones they caught with them and sent to trial in the court of Brassó.

A heavy rain came soon and washed the soil away from the corpses. We went to the Soviet headquarters and reported everything. They told us to bury them decently, with priest and bell-ringing and everything. But they had only their underwear on, as the gypsies had undressed them. We bought coffins, and a priest came by. The bodies were taken to the cemetery by cart. A big grave was dug, and they were buried in a common grave.

When they caught the Romanian magistrate, they questioned us on his deeds, too...

We went to Brassó as well [The guards trial was held at the Brassó military court in April-May, 1945. Editor's note]. There were people from Szentdomokos, Gyergyószentmiklós and Szárazajta there. The ones arrested by the Russians were taken to there, too. They brought them out and asked us, which of them we recognize and which of them fired. How could we recognize them? Their clothes were different then. We recognized none of them, of course. We have never heard of the case again. It was all over.

I WILL NEVER FORGET

Sándor Incze
Szárázajta, August 1994

They started to gather the ones they wanted to kill or beat during the night. It was all done in private revenge. Local Romanians gave the names, saying 'I am angry with this or that person, this has to be settled'. Conflicts were almost non-existent in most of the cases. If there were, they were of private and not of ethnic nature. There were personal conflicts. The sad story of Szárázajta was the outcome of personal conflicts and thirst for revenge. But Szárázajta people would never have committed such crimes, had the Maniu-guardsmen not been there. Szárázajta people did not realize the role the Maniu-guard or the Iron Guard had played. This is something for history to settle, and perhaps, later. Nevertheless, the main reason was private revenge; quarrels on ploughing and grazing, this is where it all started.

There were no partisans at all. It was mere fabrication. They said they were hunting for partisans in order to confuse the villagers. We were terrified to death, because we did not know what was going to happen after the war, after those four years. People lived in terror, they lived in the terror of war. Their fear can literally be documented. I know of three cases. They took Béla Gecse, my uncle, during the night. A local Romanian, who knew where those on the list lived, and two strangers went to his house. The strangers were dressed in half-military half civilian clothes. They were not professional soldiers, for sure. They were simply bandits. This gang could only be recruited by a chauvinistic and spiteful commander. Béla Gecse was a joiner, a smart young man. As the guards were knocking at his door, Béla braved them and then ran over to his neighbor Gábor Incze. There was a passage way between their houses. He was running there when he was shot. He died on the spot. József Málnási, a poor man in the new village, tried to escape as well. They fired at him with an explosive bullet and hit in his thigh as he was mounting a fence. He was wounded, he could not escape. The most horrible was that then this man who was shot and who was wounded, was taken to the schoolyard and exposed on a blanket in front of the other Hungarians there. Romanians were walking freely up and down. The Hungarians were driven in a corner. A machine-gun, a light machine-gun, was pointed at them. There was a pile of logs in the yard, a Romanian volunteer – a so-called soldier – sat on it at the machine-gun. It was

horrible how he was picking his teeth with great pleasure, while they executed people in the yard. They brought poor Jóska Málnási there dressed in a shirt and pants, the way he was shot. He shouted till he died for *God sake, give me a mouthful of water or shoot me*. It was beyond endurance. They gave him no water to diminish his wound-fever, neither any of the Hungarians, nor anybody else. He just died there.

And those who were dragged to the schoolyard, the volunteers made them lie on the ground. They did not let them dress up, they were taken away in shirts and pants. And they beat and trampled them hard, real hard. There were women there too: I recognized Gizella Gyo'ri and Margit Szabó and others as well.

First they were beaten up. They did not start the killing by just simply cutting off their heads either, but Olteanu pronounced the sentence first. They brought a big stump and an axe from György Józsa's house. First they beat Ferenc Kálnoky, a nice and smart white-haired, old man, with a wet rope. Then, uncle Zoltán Incze, Kálnoky's son-in-law, was beaten hardly. Beheadings were still to come. Sándor [Nagy] was first beheaded. He leaned over the stump without the faintest idea of what was going to happen. He hardly put his head there, it was already off. András, his brother, saw it. The poor one fell on his knees asking for their mercy. He leaned down there, his neck was wry from his birth... That cruel man [the executioner] hit him on the head with the eye of the axe to fell on the stump, and cut his head then. The most horrible thing of this all was that his parents had to watch it all. His mother fainted.

Then they fired at people. Uncle Lajos Elekes got very many bullets. My mother said he kept shouting that he was innocent and begged them to let him live because he did not hurt anybody and for he had two little daughters. He fell by the seventh bullet. Béni Szabó and uncle Gyula Németh followed him. They say uncle Gyula [Németh] turned to the others and said before dying: *well, see you, World*. They ordered people to face the wall of uncle Attila Nagy's stable. They shot them there. I think the traces can still be seen on that wall. Two men survived. Uncle Béla Szép was shot in his stomach, but later he died because there was no medicine to cure him. József D. Nagy was shot in his face though he collapsed, he survived. He died later because of his wounds and the terror he went through.

Then they stopped this action, and they might stop it, because somebody fired at the cemetery. They might be retreating German soldiers or whoever shot, I don't know, but some shots were fired there. The guardsmen started to prepare to leave and finished it then. But there was quite a robbery as well, I am telling

you. We, children were not at home, only our parents, they had just returned home. That certain Olteanu ordered all villagers who had uniforms at home – because many people fled home when they realized the war was over – to hand them over or they would shoot them. Every Hungarian had to take one pair of boots or a suit of clothes to the schoolyard.

We had some 150 sacks of oat, and my father's uniform was hidden under them in the barn. He was frightened so much, we had to call our neighbor to help us. Me and my mother took the uniform and an overcoat to the schoolyard. My father did not dare to come with us. I was a child, I went barefooted with my mother, on September 26. It was raining, there was mud all over the streets. We took the overcoat, it was the best we had, it was the holiday coat, we kept it in the front room. But we took it, and others did the same. And they stolen other clothes, shoes, whatever they wanted, piled up in a cart, beside what we had to give.

I will never forget Albert Szép as he came on the road driving two small cows harnessed in their cart. He was fifteen or sixteen. The bodies of his mother and father were on the cart. His tears were running down his face... He was going to bury his mother and father. It was an order, that everyone had to bury with no priest, no bell-ringing. We entered the schoolyard, it was splattered with blood. People were trying to take the dead away. They made coffins from rough lumber and buried them as they could.

The guardsmen left, but hatred remained. Then, finally, there were arrests and then accusations, who was guilty.

[After the sentence in the Brassó trial of the Maniuguardsmen, four Szárazajta Székelys were accused of torturing and killing Romanian soldiers. Editor's note] It is the story of the wolf and lamb. There were both Hungarians and Romanians imprisoned at Jilava. It is difficult to tell who is pure and true-born Hungarian, Romanian, Slovak, Jewish or French...

Recorded by Gábor Vincze

**DESROBIREA,
December 20, 1944**

OUR PRESENT AND PREVAILING WAY
A Manifesto of the "Iuliu Maniu" Regiment of Volunteers

The Transylvanian volunteers, commanded by Mr. Gavril Olteanu, issue the following proclamation:

Transylvanian Romanians!

The time to liberate the land stolen at Vienna has come. Our borders will soon be set along River Tisza, where our Dacian ancestors have marked it. We have conquered part of Transylvania. The Romanian flag waves again over this land devastated by strangers.

The fight goes on with fierce determination. The Romanian and the Allied armies advance victoriously in Transylvania's valleys and hills. Our brothers oppressed and tortured during these four year will see the dawn of liberty.

The volunteers of the "Iuliu Maniu" regiment have joined the army to bring the hour of final victory closer. Some of these volunteers have started for the final, determining battle. They stood in fire with clenched teeth and shivering flesh. The others co-operate with military authorities for maintaining the order.

Romanians of Transylvania!

We will win our freedom with fire and blood. We will crush Hungarian prisons and clear the towns of Hungarian and German hangmen. We will revenge the four years of sufferings under foreign occupation. Romanian firearms will voice the final sentence against the murderers from the Puszta.

Look with confidence into the future and defend your land with the vigor and bravery of your ancestors. Keep close to the land that gives you life and bread, the way your ancestors sacrificed on the country's altars have taught you. **Follow the commandments of Horea, Iancu and all our martyrs.** Priests, literates, merchants and peasants have equally fought to unite these lands. **Unite your souls, hearts and hopes to be strong and invincible whatever danger may occur. Unite your consciences and thoughts to face the events without ever being dismembered.**

Transylvanian brothers!

Gather under the flag of **Iuliu Maniu**, the brave freedom fighter of Transylvania. Through his determined intervention, he has saved our country and nation from an overall catastrophe. Follow his leadership, he is one of the fathers of the 1918 Union, one of our greatest politicians, he is a guide for Romanian destinies. You should join in his activities as a reward for his past and present fights, for a better future of Romania. Join the guards founded by Maniu. It is our responsibility to support his efforts. **This is the only way we can avoid the misfortunes of the past.**

For state power, for social, economic and cultural progress, for the preservation of our ancient land, for our and our children's future, we have to go forward on the straight line. This is the only way we will create a destiny worth of our children.

Letters About Internment Camps,

Recorded by the Hungarian People's Association

Letter # 1 "I first visited my son, István, on January 22. A woman came with me and we went to the death chamber of the camp because her husband laid there dead. There were 13 corpses beside him. I could personally talk to my son when I first visited him. They also let me give him the food I brought. I have tried to visit him many times since, but I could never meet him. They always took the food promising me that they would hand it over to him. Today, on February 18, we came with the same woman to visit my son. They let nobody talk to his relative. By chance I still could talk to him... I asked him if he got my packages I left with the guards, and he said he did not... While we were waiting at the camp gate, hundreds of women came with packages for the German prisoners. While they did not let us talk to Hungarians, the Swabian women were allowed to have talk with the German prisoners as long as they wished... I saw two Hungarian prisoners begging those women for a peace of bread. The prisoners were transporting excrement on a cart. Bread meant for the German prisoners stood in piles in front of the women. They gave the Hungarians nothing. The same day two other prisoners brought a sick man out of the camp. He was Albert Bara from Csíkszentdomokos. His both legs were frozen, his flesh hung in stripes on his bones. The two prisoners, weakened of hunger, could hardly lift the stretcher he was in. Guards were laughing loudly as they struggled with that stretcher... I saw desperately weakened prisoners digging grave for the others. They could never dig graves enough to bury all the dead. Some women said that 19 prisoners were freed the previous week because they agreed to convert to Romanian religion."

Letter # 2 "We arrived at Földvár in the afternoon of February 16... Prisoners begged us to do something for their sake, or else they would all die there. They buried 15 of their mates that morning. The husband of a woman who came with us was among the dead. He became insane under the pressure of the terror he had to bear and

he passed away. Prisoners said they could not dig graves enough to bury the dead. There were 30 people to be buried. The 5 graves they had dug that day could only host 15 corpses. They put 3-4 people in one grave but only one wooden cross above them. They told us two men from Szilágycseh went mad and could not dig as they were kept tied up all the time. Others were so weak they couldn't even open their mouths to eat from the spoon... They said that first they were given no food at all, then they got some beans, but it was burnt to an extent that nobody could eat it. In their deep depression, they said they would do anything, including giving up their faith, to get out of that hell."

Letter # 3 "I went to visit my brother and son with another woman from the Szilágyság in the camp of Földvár. They took them from home, just as they did the younger brother of that woman. They ordered every man to report, with three day's food and a fresh set of clothes. When they did, they were arrested, and taken to Zilah and then here. My son told me they gave him two dirty pieces potatoes for Christmas. When he picked two more to calm his hunger, the guards beat him. They beat two of his mates for the same reason."

List of newspaper pictures, documents, photos in the original book.

(Világosság, March 1, 1945)

131-139. Pages: Faximiles of Romanian newspapers, mostly
DESROBIREA

140-153. Pages: Hungarian language letters, testimonials and
official reports

154. Page, upper photo: Officials of the Romanian public
administration in the Székelyland, prepared to leave for
Székelyudvarhely
Curierul, October 13, 1944

154. Page, lower photo: Romanian soldiers departing to the front in
Transylvania
Curierul, October 4, 1944

155. Page, upper photo: Iuliu Maniu, President of the National
Peasant Party and Romania's most popular politician of the time

155. Page, lower photo: Iuliu Maniu, accompanied by
Transylvanian volunteers
Curierul, October 19, 1944

156. Page: Members of the 7th volunteer commando taking oath in
front of the statue of Mihai Vitezeu in Bucharest
Curierul, September 5, 1944

157. Page, upper photo: Women volunteers on patrol
Curierul, October 5, 1944

157. Page, lower photo: Women volunteers, commanded by
Smaranda Brașescu, on parade
Curierul, October 17, 1944

Reproduction by **FERENC CSOMAFAY**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword

On the Chess-Board of the Great Powers

Transylvania – or the Greater Part of It

Counties Csík and Háromszék in September-October 1944

A Lucky Village: Komolló

County Csík

In Their Tracks Came the Black Hundreds

Egeres

Counties Szilágy and Szatmár

Southern Transylvania in Autumn 1944

Epilogue

Appendices