# THE INTERETHNIC NATIONALIST DIALOG IN THE OLD MUREŞ PRESS

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*Abstract: In the history of intercultural communication in Romania, Târgu-Mureş represents an illustrative case of study for the evolution of the Romanian-Hungarian relationships, due to the significant variation suffered in time by the majority-minority ratio according to the change of the political and social context in different periods, especially during the 20th century.*

*Among the various historical phases that mark the interethnic communication in this timeframe, the interwar period can be considered a good example for what the present of Romanian-Hungarian dialog should not be. Thus, the main threats to be avoided today in the intercultural communication come from the town's former communicational profile, built around nationalism and controversy, as shown by the public message carried out by the local press between 1920-1940. It is a time marked by the profound changes of 1918 – the threshold of the Romanian contemporary history – that reversed the social balance by replacing the Hungarian population from its position as the leading ethnical group in Transylvania.*

*The analysis on the Romanian-Hungarian relationships, as described by the press of the Mureş county, reveals three levels of reflection: the political level – a tensioned but very visible frequency because of the demagogy and the media, the social level – in which the controversy and the nationalism diminish when confronted to the every-day common realities and the cultural level – the area of the real equilibrium and tolerance.*

*Keywords: Romanian-Hungarian communication, nationalism, controversy, tolerance, Mures.*

The interethnic Romanian-Hungarian dialog, with its variation along history, remains the most important challenge for the Transylvanian community, with increased chances of finding an answer in the present European context, set for the discover of an identity wholeness instead of the former separatist ethnical search. More hurried in finding this equilibrium, the society illustrates better the search for the new, constructive, means of communication than the political area, still interested in the perpetuation of emotional patterns related to the national and ethnic issues.

The evolution of the Romanian-Hungarian communication in the Transylvanian area finds in the interwar period its most productive case of study, due to the major changes induced by the creation of the Whole Romania in 1918 and also to the similarities with the present. Although the lesson of the past might not guarantee the success for the present's tests, knowing the interethnic communication precedents contribute to a faster finding of the natural rhythm of this communication, after half of century of imposed harmony during the communist regime.



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In this honest reevaluation of the past and present of the interethnic relationships in Transylvania, the case of Târgu Mureş – the old "Szecklers' capital"[1] – represents the most illustrative example for the evolution of the Romanian-Hungarian communication as seen by the press, due to the major changes determined in the interwar period in the town's population structure. This process determined a reverse of the interethnic relations and enforced the finding of a pragmatic pattern for handling this changes.

The analysis on the Romanian-Hungarian relationships, as described by the press of the Mureş county, reveals three levels of reflection: the political level – a tensioned but very visible frequency because of the demagogy and the media, the social level – in which the controversy and the nationalism diminish when confronted to the every-day common realities and the cultural level – the area of the real equilibrium and tolerance.

The general perception regarding the minorities' statute in the interwar Romania also reveals various interpretations according to the reference area: at *central level*, the perception is in concordance to the European tendencies which emphasized the protection of the minorities' rights after the First World War, whereas at *regional-local level*, the theory faced the inherent difficulties when put into practice.

In an arch over time, the present of the Romanian-Hungarian dialog reflects all of these levels, despite the contrasts attenuation along with the shift of generations that brought more subtle ways of action and argumentation.

**Local vs. national**

There is a considerable speech difference between Transylvania and Bucharest after the Great Union, despite the obligations internationally assumed by the Romanian state regarding the minorities' protection.

*The Transylvanian perception*, profoundly implicated and subjective, was being dominated by a revenge spirit, reflected in a Romanian attitude according to which the way to the minorities' integration set in their acceptance of the done deed. In this local mentality, protecting the minorities meant providing them with "some" rights, as shown by a declaration made in 1935 by the mayor of Târgu Mureş, Emil Dandea, that makes a good synthesis of the local vision: "In the favour of nationalities we must remove, *when possible*, the restraints. But we must limit any disposition that might weaken our national solidarity. […] For instance, no one can pretend from us to give a minority the right to use its language in a public service, without providing also for the Romanians the possibility of using their language, the official language od the state. Tolerance, yes! But not the tolerance practiced for the loss of the Romanian interests and against the present laws, and not tolerance without reciprocity! […] The administration cannot float in generous collocations or abstract spheres."[2]

[1] This name of the town, persisting in the present, dates from the XIVth century when Târgu-Mureş became *Székelyvásárhely*, the capital of Szecklers. The name is kept between 1370 and 1616, when Gabriel Bethlen gives the town the city rights, changing its name into *Marosvásárhely* (Târgu Mureş) according to Traian Popa (1932) *Monografia Oraşului Tîrgu-Mureş*. *(Monography of the City of Târgu-Mureş)*, Târgu-Mureş, 1932, anastatic edition, Ed. Ansid, Târgu-Mureş, 2005, pp. 16-17.

[2] Dandea, E. (1935). Administraţia şi antirevizionismul (Administration and Antirevisionsim). *Glasul Mureşului*. Târgu-Mureş, II, 43, 30 nov. 1935, p. 3.



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The Bucharest perception on the other hand, closer to the international policy, embraced more easily the democratic principles, as proven by an article of the newspaper *Timpul* (*The Time*) from 1923, in which, treating the subject of consultations between the central authorities and the minorities' representatives, the author pleaded for the elimination of the precaution "when possible" from any stipulations related to the minorities' rights, arguing that by doing so, the Romanian government would have done nothing but repeat the abuses committed in the past by the Austro-Hungarian authorities: "Us, Romanians, lived through the hardest times, but we never tried to oppress the others. And we won't do so now, after getting stronger, thus forgetting about our parents teaches and becoming one to those who once oppressed us."[3]

The central newspaper *Ideea europeană* (*The European Idea*) considered the Romanian-Hungarian relationships a very important element for the destiny of the new Romanian state created in 1918, through an argumentation that can be considered relevant for the period's general mentality, especially that it didn't suffer from the subjective interpretation of the Transylvanian press. Furthermore, the newspaper also underlines the difference between the national and the state ethnic identity: "It is a difference between the nationality and citizenship. This difference, natural for the time being, due to the recent past of the majority and minority, can become a threat for the existence of the national state, because it shows the existence of the emotional boundaries within the state, real obstacles for the normal evolution of life."[4]

In practice, this theoretical differentiation meant that after 1918, the Hungarians in Romania felt rather European that Romanian, considering that their reference group (as the one to which the individual relates as present or future member, and to which he identifies himself) continued to be the Hungarian ethical group in Hungary.

**The political nationalism and controversy**

The necessity of finding a constructive scale for the interethnic communication was a target assumed theoretically by the entire interwar press of the Mureş county, but contradicted practically by most of the social, economical and political attitudes. Instead, we find some constants of the political speech of the period, such as the Romanization, the nationalism, the revisionism and anti-revisionism.

These dominant themes start to dominate the Romanian and Hungarian newspaper articles after 1920, when the first Romanian newspaper appears in Târgu Mureş, *Ogorul* (*The Land*), opening a long press controversy characteristic for the entire period. Thus, the Romanian press of Târgu Mureş can be considered the last conquest of the Transylvanian Romanian press, considering that it appears almost a century after the born of the press in the Romanian space, in a time when all the other important centers of the region managed to

[3] Guvernul şi minorităţile (The Government and The Minorities). *Timpul*. Bucureşti, XXIII, 1, 2 March 1923, p. 1.
[4] Bayer, S. Naţionalism de stat (State nationalism). (1927) *Ideea europeană*. Bucureşti, IX, 206, 1 Dec. 1927, pp. 2-3.



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surpass the obstacles imposed by the former Austro-Hungarian authorities to the development of the Romanian press.[5]

In the moment of *Ogorul*'s appearance, there were 22 Hungarian periodicals in Târgu-Mureş. Still, at the beginning, the Hungarian press of the town was also confronted to the reticence of the local authorities regarding the press. As a result, the first local Hungarian periodical, *Marosvásárhely Füzetek* (*Notebooks of Târgu-Mureş*), a scientifical and literary publication initiated by appears Mentovich Ferenc appears only in 1858, seven decades after the appearance of the first Hungarian newspaper in Transylvania, *Erdély Magyar Hirvivö (The Hungarian Transylvanian Messanger)* in Sibiu and Cluj (1789-1791).[6]

Major theme of the period, The Romanization of Târgu Mureş meant increasing the Romanian population, the replacement of the old Hungarian administration with a Romanian one, the development of the Romanian system of education and of the Romanian local economy, and the consolidation of the Romanian press. These objectives can be found also in the projects of the mayor Emil Dandea, the most important personality of the town's administration in the interwar period, which he assumed in 1922, at the beginning at his first mandate. And the authority transfer was a constant source of tension between Romanians and Hungarians after 1918. For the Romanians, it had a compensatory function, looking back at the privations suffered during the Austro-Hungarian regime. For the Hungarians, each action of the process meant the gradual loss of their former dominant statute, considered justified „on a territory that belonged to them for a thousand years", as underlined by Claude Karnoouh, in his study on the typologies and mentalities of Romania.[7]

Although around The Union the Hungarians formed 90 percent of the population in Târgu-Mureş, the modification of the ethnic balance was relatively fast, and the Romanian population percentage increased in just eight years from 1% in 1918 to 29% in 1926.[8] But the time proves the failure of such nationality "implants". In Mureş, despite the Romanization began in the interwar period and continued during the communist regime, the present still shows an area dominated by the Hungarian segment, as proven by the UDMR political dominance in the county at the last elections. The causes are basically the same to the ones indicated by the historian Lucian Boia in the case of the previous Austro-Hungarian assimilation policy: the large segment of the targeted population, its resistance, the relative short period of time and the radicalism of the project.[9]

Another objective of the period, the Romanization of the administration, was considered al the early '20 a major priority, since the local press wrote that the first Romanian employee was hired by the Târgu-Mureş town hall only in 1923, a moment followed by the elaboration of the institution's first Romanian report and the hiring of another 150 Romanian

[5] In 1922, the ratio in Transylvania was about one Romanian newspaper to 1,5 Hungarian newspaper, according to *Telegraful român* (LXXI, 77-78, 22 Sept 1923, p. 7) which mentioned a total of 657 publications existing in Romania in 1922, of which 237 appeared in Transylvania, 140 of them in Hungarian.

[6] Damian, H. (2007) Începuturile presei din Transilvania (The press beginnings in Transylvania). In I. Rad (coord.). *Secvenţe din istoria presei româneşti*. Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Tribuna, p. 117.

[7] Karnoouh C. (1994) *Românii. Tipologie şi mentalităţi (The Romanians. Typology and mentalities)* translation by Carmen Stoean). Buc: Humanitas, p. 151.

[8] Popa, T. (1932) *op. cit*, 2005, p.28.

[9] Boia L. (2011), *Două secole de mitologie naţională*. Buc.: Ed. Humanitas, p. 79-80.



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office workers.[10] It is the time when these changes incite the controversy within the local press, with an intense change of accusations and responses between the Romanian newspapers (*Ogorul, Mureşul, Oraşul, Înainte*) and the Hungarian ones (*Székely Napló*, *Az Ellenzék*).

A special situation had the official newspaper of the town, *Oraşul* (*The Town*), created by Emil Dandea in 1923 as a bilingual publication addressed to all the inhabitants, but which promoted a bias attitude, politically imposed by the mayor - editor Emil Dandea. Although he declared he serves the interests of all citizens, he gained an authoritative and nationalist image. His efforts made later to diminish this image didn't help very much, although in the middle '30s, by his decisive action and modern vision, the town reached an obvious progress, in a tradition set at the beginning of the XXth century by the Hungarian mayor Bernády György.

The other important objectives – the setting of the Romanian educational system, the consolidation of the Romanian press and the development of the Romanian economy – were also accomplished in the '20s along with the arrival in town of a prolific generation of intellectuals, involved in the general progress on multiple levels, from the press to education and culture.

In this context, the hope of the Hungarian elites looked over the state's borders, as written in 1924 by the Hungarian newspaper *Glasul minorităţilor* (*The Minorities' Voice*), while explaining the states of mind within the Hungarian population after the creation of The league of Nations, responsible also for the minorities' rights protection: "On the ruins of our lost world, we welcome the creation of this organ of peace. Psychologically speaking, our intensive desire of peace can be understood since, through our national sacrifices, we deeply feel the insufficiency of the national ideal."[11]

*Viitorul Mureşului* (*Mureş's Future*), one of the equilibrated publications of the period, answered: "We are convinced of the necessity to respect the minorities' rights not because we signed a document, but because we are aware of the need to respect them, since we belong to a nation that knows too well the effects of denationalization. […] But the minorities should not forget that they have not only rights, but also obligations to this state. They should also not allow the transformation of their rights into manipulative means."[12] Although a political newspaper, representing the Liberal party on the local level between 1925-1926, *Viitorul Mureşului* proved from the very beginning its moderate attitude, by a discourse that prioritized the interethnic dialog: "There is no another place with such a need for a friendly approach between the Romanians and the foreigners, called to play their role in the state's development."[13] At its turn, *Glasul minorităţilor* described itself as a publication "created by a few Hungarian politicians in order to open a policy of collaboration between the Romanian and the Hungarian democracy."[14]

This attitude of the opened dialog was not the one dominating the informative and political press of the time, but the controversial, aggressive one, reflected for instance, by the newspaper *Mureşul (The Mureş*), the longest local publication in the first interwar decade,

[10] Târgu-Mureşul sub stăpânirea românească (Târgu Mureş under the Romanian rule). *Glasul Mureşului*. Târgu-Mureş, III, 74, 13 Sept. 1936, p. 1.
[11] *Glasul minorităţilor. Organ minoritar maghiar*. Lugoj, II, 5, May 1924, p. 5.
[12] O guvernare rodnică (A Prolific Government). *Viitorul Mureşului*. Târgu-Mureş, I, 11, 15 Nov. 1925, p. 3.
[13] Cuvânt înainte (Opening Words). *Viitorul Mureşului*. Târgu-Mureş, I, 1, 5 Sept. 1925, p. 1.
[14] Apariţii şi învăţăminte (Releases and Teachings). *Telegraful roman*. Sibiu, LXXI, 91, 7, 20 Nov. 1923, p. 1.



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which incriminated the bias attitude of the Hungarian press and the lack of unity among Romanians: "While foreigners throw dirt on us, encouraging the belief in the old Hungary, we dangerously fight, caught in our selfish interests. We do not want to be chauvinist, nor to stop a people's cultural development, but we also cannot accept the abuse of our tolerance."[15]

The generalized fear of the Romanian public opinion after the Great Union was the Hungarian revisionism, a political and diplomatic attitude, manifested internationally by the ehny's representatives, aiming the revision of the peace agreements after the World War I and the restoration of the old entity of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. As a reaction to this current, the Romanian anti-revisionism pleaded for keeping the political configuration set in 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles, by which Romania almost doubled its population and territory, after the inclusion of Transylvania, Bessarabia and Bukovina. Both currents dominated the public and political debate in the interwar period, especially in Transylvania, through an argumentation disseminated by the press and by "specialized" institutions such as the Anti-revisionist League, which held in November 1935 an Anti-revisionist Congress in Târgu Mureş. Such events, as well as other journalistic initiatives like the anti-revisionist manifest *România Mare* (*Whole Romania*) edited on the 1st of December 1935, prove that the inconstant evolution in the political area influenced also the dynamic of the revisionist and anti- revisionist actions.

On this background, the nationalism of the interwar press in the Mureş area, both Romanian and Hungarian, proves to be a dominant feature of the public speech, borrowed both from the every-day realities and the national tendencies of the press. *Mureşul* described this nationalism looking only to the other: "We see people fighting for nothing, without knowing exactly why. They just feel that the others are different and that they must be punished for it." This nationalist dominant, logical up to a certain point as a psychological reflex to the time's changes, does not have a xenophobic dimension, against the other ethnic group itself, but it is the expression and effect of the inversion of the social, political and economical ratio after 1918. Still, this nationalism reveals a powerful ethnocentrism, as defined by M. J. Herskovits – an attitude of those considering that their way of life is preferable to all the others, based on a powerful identification with the group and on the certainty of their ideals and values superiority."[16] We find such an example in the previously mentioned article that ends in a suggestion of the idea that "our nationalism is better than theirs": "Nationalism? But which Romanian with a whole soul and mind is not profoundly nationalist?"[17] Through this perception, Mihai Ralea adds an important shade to the nationalism of the time, as an authentic attitude, not to praise and not to blame, but a natural reaction, only exaggerated during times of confusion when it is speculated by the "nationalist professionals" and transformed into "a profitable career".[18]

The speculation of the ethical feeling for personal or group interests was a reality incriminated also by the press, as shown by the liberal newspaper *Glasul Mureşului* which criticized in 1937 the lead of the minorities' parties, setting a synonymy between the ethnical

[15] Cum scriu gazetele ungureşti din Târgu-Mureş (The Writing of the Hungarian Newspapers in Târgu Mureş). *Mureşul*. Târgu-Mureş, II, 40, 21 Oct. 1923, p. 2.
[16] Herskovits, M. J. (1967). *Les Bases de l'antropologie culturelle*. Paris: Payot. *apud* Gilles Ferréol (coord.) (1998) *Dicţionar de sociologie*. Iaşi: Ed. Polirom, p. 69.
[17] Naţionalismul nostru (Our Nationalism). *Mureşul*. Târgu-Mureş, VII, 6, 15 May 1936, p. 1.
[18] Ralea M. (1997), *Fenomenul românesc (The Romanian Phenomenon)*. Buc.: Ed. Albatros, p. 108.



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and nationalist political organizations: "The so-called nationalist parties in Romania, converted to nationalism because of political interests, do not bring any program to this fight over the national idea, nor a sincerity proven by the behavior of their leaders."[19]

The central newspaper *Ideea Europeană* also underlined that in the interethnic relationships in Transylvania "the animosity exists only for those interested in perpetuating it."[20] The local publication *Credinţa* (*The Faith*) also wrote in 1933 about "the politicians fighting over power by exploiting the differences among brothers"[21], while in a response addressed to the local Hungarian Party leaders in 1935, *Glasul Mureşului* stressed that it clearly separated the category of the leaders from the one of the citizens.[22] We find the argumentation for this separation in one of the newspaper's future articles: "There are among these leaders some reactionary, feudal, examples, good for a museum, but not for the real life. On one side, they play the great Hungarians, and on the other, they exploit the poor Hungarian peasant through their banks, properties and politics. In Bucharest, they pretend to be inoffensive in order to get favors from the governments, and in Budapest they pass as martyrs also for moral and material benefits, obtained to sustain artificial complains, especially through the press".[23]

The image of the political elites of the period is completed by a relevant declaration of Bernády György, the first Hungarian politician that recognized in 1919 the act of Union, who said in a speech for the Parliament: "I ask of you, Gentlemen, not to generalize the thoughtless action of a few youngsters, not to put the blame of the dreamers on the entire Hungarian nation, but to judge us according to the majority of the Hungarian in Romania who are calm, hardworking, serious and do not ask for anything else than to be judged as so."[24]

The atypical attitude of Bernády György did not pass unnoticed by the press, although it couldn't determine a change in the general behavior. Furthermore, *Ogorul* wrote in 1921, about the former mayor's "hand of reconciliation" by asking for "a temple of understanding among all the people in this country. […] True, his face is firm, the forehead is wrinkled, but he offers his hand." [25]

Unlike the perception on the political negotiation in Bucharest, in the localities of Transylvania the population of both ethnic groups started to realize the risk of political manipulation, as shown by an article of *Viitorul Mureşului,*published before the 1926 elections: "In the local councils we do not need political lists, but good managers' lists, in which the political parties –

Including the minorities – are represented by their most capable members." [26]

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[19] Bordan, T. Imperativul naţional (The National Goal). *Glasul Mureşului*. Târgu-Mureş, IV, 91, 29 Jan. 1937, p. 1.
[20] G. Lecca O., Confederaţia Dunării. România - Ungaria – Austria (The Danube Confederation. Romania - Hungary - Austria). *Ideea europeană*. Buc., VIII, 200, 15 April 1927, pp. 1-2.
[21] S. Ionescu, N. Cu prilejul revizionismului maghiar (On the Hungarian revisionism). *Credinţa, număr special închinat campaniei antirevizioniste*. Târgu-Mureş, 28 May 1933, p. 2.
[22] Conducătorii partidului maghiar din Târgu-Mureş iar se fac de râs (The Leaders of the Hungarian Party in Târgu Mureş make a fool of themselves again). *Glasul Mureşului*. Târgu-Mureş, II, 43, 30 Nov. 1935, p. 8.
[23] Partidul Maghiar din România (The Hungarian party in Romania). *Glasul Mureşului*. Târgu-Mureş, III, 54, 15 March 1936, p. 1.
[24] Bota, S. (2010). *Poveştile oraşului (Stories of the City)*. Târgu-Mureş: Ed. Ardealul, pp. 36-37.
[25] Templul înţălegerii (The Temple of Understanding). *Ogorul*. Târgu-Mureş, II, 22, 1 June 1921, p. 1.
[26] Alegerile comunale (The Local Elections). *Viitorul Mureşului*. Târgu-Mureş, I, 11, 15 Nov. 1925, p. 1.



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The second interwar decade brought a diminishment of nationalism in the press, due to a more rational thinking of arguments on both sides, a change induced by the social realities in Târgu Mureş, a town forced by the history to search and find a lasting pattern for the interethnic cohabitation.

**The interethnic communication at social level**

Ever since the medieval times, says the literary historian Mircea Popa, the construction of nationalities in the Transylvania area went along with the development of a local pattern of cohabitation and reciprocal motivation, because "the long neighborhood to the Hungarian people, the living of different nationalities on the same territory, the attendance of the same schools and the social-cultural development in a common space determined a reciprocal exchange of values and ideas, which went along during several centuries." [27]

*Ideea europeană* also admitted that the nature of the Romanian-Hungarian relationships was fundamentally influenced rather by the social area than the ideology: "In our young constitutional life the politics reflect more the every-day life, practical and temperamental, and less an ideology."[28]

For certain, the nationalist political discourse and the controversial aspect of the press had a grain of truth in them. But in the human relationships, this approach was being modulated by the constant interaction between the two ethnic groups, by the common daily problems and by a perception focused on the pragmatic aspects rather than the ideological ones. This explains the common initiatives, the active participation in the community's life, the bilingualism reflected by the press and even the conflict, with no ethnical connotations, when it appears.

This level of peaceful, pragmatic, social interaction is less visible in the press, where the dominant discourse was the political one, which explains the apparent predominance of the nationalist argumentation in the interethnic relationships of the time. In fact, the coordinates of the social interaction between the ethnic groups were given not by the political nationalism, but by the daily needs, the economical problems or by the communication difficulties related to not knowing one another's language.

The issue of the Hungarian migration was often mentioned in the debate about the reaction of the Hungarian population majority after 1918. In 1922 for instance, according to the statistics of the Minister of Internal Affairs, the number of immigrants from Romania was, in the last trimester, of 6225 persons, of which 93% (5790 persons) were from Transylvania. On a more detailed analysis, the percentage of the Transylvanian immigrants show a relatively equal share of the Romanians and Hungarians living the country, and a more consistent segment of the Germans (20,5% Romanians, 24,6% Hungarians, 39% Germans and other nationalities for the rest ). [29] Therefore, the theory of the Transylvanian Hungarians immigrating after 1918 because of a general feeling of frustration is not consistent.

The natural interaction, as the general attitude of the region's population, is also illustrated by the continuous increase of the mixed marriages, a phenomenon illustrated by the authorities' reaction. In the late '30s for example, the officers were forbidden such marriages and the authorities made efforts to extend this interdiction over the state's employees too,

[27] Popa, M. (1998). *Apropieri literare şi culturale româno-maghiare*. Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Dacia, p. 9.
[28] Partidele politice. *Ideea europeană*. Bucureşti, VIII, 195, 15 Dec. 1926, p. 1.
[29] Emigrările din România. *Mureşul*. Târgu-Mureş, II, 20, 20 May 1923, p. 2.



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under an argumentation that the mixed marriages were "a plan conceived by the state's enemies in order to weaken the Romanian moral, by introducing in our families foreign women, strangers from our feeling and even spies against the Romanian state."[30]

The normality of the interethnic relationships at social level is also proven by the mutual respect in recognizing the value, despite any ethic belonging. Such an example was the respect given by the local community to the former Hungarian mayor of Târgu Mureş, Bernády György, the author of some fundamental urban projects between 1902-1913, which determined his image as the "founder of the modernized town", as described by Traian Popa, the author of the first monograph of Târgu Mureş in 1932. [31]

The unanimous recognition of his administrative merits did not spare Bernády György of the political critics, especially after his leaving the Hungarian Party to form a "democratic block" and after his candidacy on the list of the cartel formed in 1926[32] by The peoples' Party and The Hungarian Party, and which brought him a second mandate as mayor of Târgu-Mureş (1926-1929). But his image as a town-builder and as a realistic model was admitted even by the political competitors, as shown by *Glasul Mureşului* in 1938: "His political attitude was always criticized to be too variable. But we think his attitude before the Union aimed bringing to the town as many benefits as possible from the Hungarian authorities, and afterwards, to gain concessions for the Hungarians from the various Romanian governments. Anyhow, he was a loyal opponent to the Romanians, by his appreciation given to those who worked honestly." [33]

On these fundaments left by Bernády György, Emil Dandea took the challenge of finishing the establishment of the modern Târgu Mureş during his two mandates he held in the interwar period (1922-1926, 1934-1937), giving the town its most representative institutions and architectural symbols that set the town's image to the present. By their founding role and by their continuity n vision and action, Bernády György and Emil Dandea marked the town's destiny ]n the first half of the XXth century, proving that the way towards unity could have been shorter.

In the every-day life, the Romanian-Hungarian relationships were also encouraged by the bilingualism that characterized the local press and commerce, especially in the '20s – an adapting period for both sides. Technically, the town's first bilingual publication was an official bulletin of the Mureş county, with an juridical content, *Mureş-Turda* (1919-1949), which followed after the former Hungarian publication *Maros-Torda Vármegyei hivatalos lap* (*Official journal of the Mureş-Turda county*).[34] The townhall official newspaper, *Oraşul* (1923-1940), the longest local publication in the inter-war period, also appeared in a bilingual format. In 1925, *Gazeta cinematografului* (*The Cinema Magazine*) was equally edited in Romanian and Hungarian, and in 1933, for a short time, there is even a newspaper appearing

[30] Căsătoriile cu unguroici. *Glasul Mureşului*. Târgu-Mureş, V, 134, 24 April 1938, p. 4.
[31] Popa, T. (1932) *op. cit.*, p. 36.
[32] Bosoancă, T. & Opriş, I. Gh. (2004). *Alegerile parlamentare din judeţul Mureş 1919-1939 (Parlament Elections in Mures County 1919-1939)*, Târgu-Mureş: Ed. Ardealul, pp. 64-65. See also Rezultatul alegerilor din judeţul Mureş (The Results of the Elections in Mureş County). *Viitorul Mureşului*. Târgu-Mureş, II, 5, 7 March 1926.
[33] Gheorghe Bernady. *Glasul Mureşului*. Târgu-Mureş, V, 155, 6 Nov. 1938, p. 4.
[34] Poptămaş, D. & Mózes, J. (2000). *Publicaţiile periodice mureşene 1795-1972 (Periodical Publications in Mures 1795-1972)*. Târgu-Mureş: Tipomur, p. 171.



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in two editions, *Mureşul – A Maros* (with no relation to the political *Mureşul*). *Gazeta Frizerilor* (1925), a Hungarian specialized publication, also included Romanian texts, and *Journal de Marriage* even counted on the bilingual form of address for the success of its business, in the same attitude that made the local merchants address his customers by bilingual commercials.

The perspective of the social area as the first level of manifestation for the interethnic relationships during the interwar period illustrates that the interpretation of the Transylvanian nationalism must be adjusted according to the two currents reflected by the political and social-cultural levels: the radical current, expressed by nationalism, and the moderate current, searching for intercultural dialog from both sides.

**The intercultural communication bridge**

The cultural interferences between Romanians and Hungarians probably date since the two ethnic groups coexist in a common space, special by the multiculturalism that confers its unmistakable specific, gained through the collective intuition of the fact that the mutual ignorance does nothing but enlarge the distances in all times.

The interwar period, marked by the development of the press, reveals an obvious contrast between the discourse of the informative and political press and the discourse of the cultural press. The cultural publications promoted the constructive interethnic dialog, for the purpose of setting a unitary system of cultural evaluation based on common criteria. The journalist Pamfil Şeicaru noticed that "As chauvinist was the Hungarian press on political issues, as understanding it was on cultural matters, promoted with an esthetic sense and with an elegancy that compensated for the aggressive intolerance with which it attacked the political problems."[35]

The stake of the common cultural action was the abandonment of the linguistic separatism and the development of the Romanian-Hungarian dialog, by the creation of a pattern for mutual tolerance and respect, worthy of being borrowed also in the other spheres of the political, social and economical life.

This Romanian-Hungarian "project", described by the press as a unitary way of cultural action, took two decades and influenced by its spirit the Transylvanian culture a long time after. Its success was due to an entire generation of cultural animators on both sides, visionary personalities who gave the regional literature this direction of dialog and interethnic communication – the "bridge-people" as called by Nicolae Balotă.[36] Among these personalities, the historian Nicolae Iorga, the critic Ion Chinezu or Count Kémény János were the initiators of important projects for the mutual knowledge between cultures.

The spirit of intercultural communication was set by an informal, opened university, set by Nicolae Iorga in Vălenii de Munte. Afterwards, in the capital of Transylvania, Ion Chinezu founded the publication *Gând românesc* (*Romanian Thought*) which fundamentally influenced the Romanian and Hungarian literature between 1933-1940. In less than a decade, the publication from Cluj succeeded to be a tribune for the Romanian-Hungarian dialog and to

[35] Şeicaru, P. (2010). *Istoria presei* (*History of the Press)*, edition by George Stanca. Piteşti: Ed. "Paralela 45", p. 102.
[36] Balotă, N. (1981). *Scriitori maghiari din România 1920-1980 (Hungarian Writers in Romania 1920-1980)*. Buc.: Ed. Kriterion, pp. 490, 508.



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project the image of the Transylvanian literature as a whole. A similar contribution had the powerful group *Helikon*, together with its publication *Erdélyi Helikon (1928-1944).* The annual gatherings organized in Brâncoveneşti (in the Mureş county) by Count Kémény János were of great importance for the group's debates.

On both sides, the cultural publications of the time had an evolution influenced by a few common characteristics such as *the programmatic character of the initiatives*, *the inter-editorial collaboration*, *the dialog spirit* and a remarkable editorial dynamic.

The evolution of the intercultural dialog depended on the stage of the cultural press in different periods. The first interwar decade was a period of evaluation and regrouping of the cultural forces, marked by financial problems that set the short life of many publications. The following decade was the period of real development for the cultural exchanges, enforced by a "mutual conquest"[37] according to the writer Victor Eftimiu. Another motivating factor the intercultural ambiance was the "cultural concurrency" between the two sides, as explained by the philosopher and publicist Nae Ionescu.[38]

Ideologically, the Transylvanian literature developed after 1918 on a direction more and more distanced from Budapest, suffering from the early '20s the influence of a new current, the transylvanism, a controversial theory even today, arguing the existence of a special regional spirit, but also "a doctrine with an obvious political background" as considered by Gavril Scridon.[39]

By this exceptional mechanism of intercultural communication, the intervention of the elites transformed the culture into an instrument of adjustment for the political and social area of the society. Thus, the Romanian-Hungarian dialog embrased various cultural forms, from the mutual translation of literary pieces to bilingual anthologies and publications, common cultural conferences.

In Târgu Mureş, where the transfer of the political and administrative authority generated so much tension, the dialog determined a different attitude in the cultural area, reflected in an elegant transfer of authority for example, at the City Conservatory between Metz Albert and Maximilian Costin, or at the City Library, between Molnár Gábor and Aurel Filimon.

In 1936, another cultural initiative in Târgu-Mureş came to consolidate the way towards the elimination of the national connotation and of the mental restrictions related to ethnicity. The anthology *Cot la cot (Vállvetve - Side by side)*, an innovative project initiated by the journalist and historian Vasile Netea together with the orientalist Antalffy Endre, was edited with support from the mayor Emil Dandea who expressed his belief that "the presence of Romanian and Hungarian authors in the same book, chosen especially from the young generation, is a sign that the future generations will get along better and more honestly." [40]

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[37] Beke, G. (1972). *Fără interpret. Convorbiri cu 56 de scriitori despre relaţiile literare româno-maghiare (Without translator. Dialogs with 56 writers regarding the Romanian-Hungarian literary relationships)*. Buc.: Ed. Kriterion, p. 32.

[38] Ionescu, N. (1997). Reviste mureşene (Newspapers of Mures). In *Steaua*, XLVIII, 8, July 1997, p. 48.

[39] Scridon, G. (1996). *Istoria literaturii maghiare din Transilvania 1918-1989 (The History of the Hungarian Literature in Transylvania 1918-1989)*. Cluj-Napoca: Promedia Plus, p. 19.

[40] Şerban, M. (1999). *Mărturii prin vreme* (*Testimonies in time)*. Târgu-Mureş: „Vasile Netea" Cultural Foundation, Tip. Mediaprint, p. 127.



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To describe the general atmosphere of closeness and openness, Nae Antonescu uses the expression of an "illuminated nationalism" that "rejected the extremist accents, cultivating an atmosphere of trust between the intellectuals of the region, with no national difference."[41]

**Towards the future**

On the 20th of April 1940 the Municipal Council of the National Revival Front was formed in Târgu Mureş, as administrative institution till the 5th of September 1940 when, following the Vienna Dictate, the Horthyst military administration was imposed in the Mureş county.

In period of the transition from democracy to communism, shortly after the North Transylvania liberation, the installation of Petru Groza government brought the concept of the Romanian-Hungarian "brotherhood", which aimed two objectives according to the ministry of nationalities, Gheorghe Vlădescu-Răcoasa, who visited Târgu Mureş in March 1945. The first objective was the internal stabilization, since "satisfying the nationalities' requests eliminates the fight of the marginal tendencies", while the second objective aimed a good external image meant to assure "the Romanian integration in the frames of the democratic Europe".[42]

To facilitate the acceptance of this Romanian-Hungarian "brotherhood", so shortly after Transylvania has proven again its statute as apple of discord during the Horthyst administration, the propaganda set by the Petru Groza government launched the argument of Hungarian fascism as the only segment which had manifested an anti-Romanian attitude. In consequence, the good interethnic communication was being done by force now, institutionalized, as shown by the first Romanian newspaper of Târgu Mureş after the liberation , *Înfrăţirea (The Brotherhood)*, which wrote that "the old Transylvanian issues must be reexamined", a sufficient premise for handling those issues by hiding them under the thick carpet of the socialist dialectics. The Ploughmen Front, the organization controlling the publication, had set in 1935 a collaboration agreement with MADOSZ, the organization of antifascist Hungarian workers and peasants in Romania, trying to determine "a pacification between the Romanian and Hungarian working classes, provoked by the leaders by slogans of intolerance and revenge."[43]

But the Mureş press and public opinion faced the dark period to come by a valuable inheritance, due to the beginning of a mentalities harmonization reached at the end of the interwar period and described in 1939 by *Renaşterea Mureşului* (*The Mureş Revival*): "We attacked and were attacked. […] But we want to forget everything. […] Here, where the political passions have been so strong and unfair, we want to realize the union of all people who believe in the need and power of a national revival."[44]

Over the time, the stabilization of the Romanian-Hungarian relationships is considerably connected to the constant presence of UDMR in the governing process, which induced to the public opinion if not the acceptance of all its requests, at least the idea of the Hungarian

[41] Antonescu, N. (2001). *Reviste din Transilvania (Transylvanian Newspapers)*. Oradea: Biblioteca Revistei Familia, p. 216.
[42] Vizita la Tg.Mureş a ministrului naţionalităţilor G. Vlădescu-Răcoasa (The Visit of Minorities' Minister G. Vlădescu-Răcoasa in Târgu Mureş). *Înfrăţirea*. Târgu-Mureş, I, 13, 19 March 1945, p. 2.
[43] Păcurariu, F. (1945). Convieţuirea româno-maghiară (The Romanian – Hungarian Cohabitation). *Înfrăţirea*. Târgu-Mureş, I, 2, 11 Jan. 1945, p. 3.
[44] Programul nostru (Our Programme). *Renaşterea Mureşului*. Târgu-Mureş, I, 1, 19 March 1939, pp. 1, 4.



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permanence as a decisional factor in the Romanian public sphere of the last decades. The evolution of this perception followed a sinuous line, from the post communist context of 1990 with its interethnic conflict in Târgu Mureş that marked the image of Romania for a long time after, to the first bilingual indicators, the animosities of each March 15, and the general surprise regarding the first election of a Romanian as mayor of Târgu Mureş.

In an European present that modifies the perspective on the interethnic relations, valuing diversity for the benefit of the stability, we discover the validity of some old attitudes described by the old press, which noticed that "The righteousness and the truth are nowhere made by violence and fights, no matter how entitled a part might be. […] Why couldn't we deny the wrong by doing the constructive deed?"[45]

And along this "doing", rediscovering in the reserves of our past useful samples of how the search for the truth should or should not be done, Andrei Pleşu reminds us that today, maybe more than in the old days, "the unanimity is the death of the dialog."[46]

[45] Apariţii şi învăţăminte (Releases and Teachings). *Telegraful roman*. Sibiu, LXXI, 91, 7, 20 Nov. 1923, p. 1.
[46] Pleşu, A. (2007). *Obscenitatea public (Public Obscenity)*. Buc.: Ed. Humanitas, p. 56.



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